

ISSUE 53:2 SUMMER 2023

POWER

power in church

power in the NHS

power in politics



nurses

the student journal of the christian medical fellowship

plus: power as a student, evangelism, safeguarding, Malawi, Western Europe, news reviews

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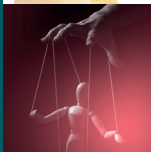
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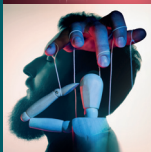
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With great power comes great responsibility.' You probably saw that coming for an edition that centres around the theme of *power* – something as obvious as the scandals plastered across the front pages of your local newspaper, yet as subtle as the imperceptible tinge of coercion in cheerful persuasion, or a quick glare. That adage, popularised by *Spider-Man's* Uncle Ben, reflects God's upside-down kingdom of servant-leadership,¹ and that 'everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required'. (Luke 12:48, ESV)

I'm Liz, your friendly neighbourhood student editor of *Nucleus*, CMF's student publication. Pieces written by students like you are welcome all-year round. This journal is what it should be – by students, for students. We will give feedback and guidance during the editing process as well, so why not try your hand at writing for *Nucleus* sometime?

Power in the context of the church, healthcare, politics, and as a student are all considered through in this edition – with invaluable personal experiences from a vicar, a paediatrician, and a recently graduated medical student in considering those perspectives. Chris Green infuses case examples and helpful categorisations with analogies of power in considering power and the church. John Greenall takes a practical approach in defining both the potential of power and Jesus' example in his use of power, with questions about how to better steward the power we have been gifted. Matthew Amer, the outgoing co-chair of the CMF's National Student Committee (NSC) weaves personal, societal, and biblical examples shedding light on the problems with power dynamics in the CU and CMF in his reflective piece on power in student leadership.

Ben Goddard-Fletcher returns to the topic of evangelism, a core competency of a healthy mature Christian, and yet feared even among prominent evangelists. He considers the calling of Jeremiah, providing practical action points and three simple,

encouraging reminders to take away. CMF is a member of the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA), and Ella Metry from ICMDA Western Europe amalgamates some basics on the Christian view of work in the Bible with real-life stories of how that plays out in countries across Western Europe – and ways students like you can get involved in ICMDA.

Two book reviews tempted me to add to my ever-growing collection of books. Katy Roberts reviews *The Air We Breathe* by Glen Scrivener, which considers how Christianity shaped the ancient world, and still shapes even secular thinking today. Rachel Owusu-Ankomah reviews a book by politician Tim Farron looking at the *Mucky Business* that is politics and why Christians should get involved, beginning with the political context and experience of the author, and finishing with application points for healthcare students and biblical advice.

We round off with some news and reviews hot off the press (or journal), such as the promising new Galleri blood test for detecting 50 types of cancer and the ethics of allocating scarce resources in light of COVID-19 – snippets that would work well as bite-sized food for thought on your next commute.

Hopefully, you will emerge from these pages a bit more sensitive to the powers at play around you, as well as to your own power as a healthcare student in your various roles towards those around you. Carefully consider how you may steward and wield wisely this God-given privilege of power now and in the years to come, as you seek to emulate Christ, who 'came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'. (Matthew 20:28, ESV) May the Lord bless you and keep you in the months ahead. Until the next edition.

Signing off,
Liz =

REF 1. Luke 22:26

not so with you

Chris Green considers power and the local church

'Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.'
(Matthew 20:25-26)





Chris Green is vicar of St James, Muswell Hill in North London. He is the author of several books, including *The Gift: How Your Leadership Can Serve Your Church* (IVP, 2021), *The Church in The Bible Speaks Today* series (IVP, 2013), and *'When your first love is loving to be first'*, in *Not So Among You*, eds. Mark Meynell and Mark Stirling (Wipf and Stock, forthcoming).

I was lying in my hospital bed, recovering from some pretty major surgery. All the team had been fantastic, caring for me through some hairy moments.

Then one day a friend from church dropped by. 'Hi, Chris! 'Hi Pete!' And we were off, chatting and laughing. Except he wasn't just Pete. In that hospital he was a very senior consultant, highly respected. As he left, cheerily waving, a little bit of his magic rubbed off on me. I wasn't just friends with him, I was his good, first name terms, friend. And suddenly it was as though my bed grew three inches in height. I'd been well looked after before, but now it was as though I was inside a charmed circle. Inside the jokes. Inside the group where favours were done.

Power. Pete had it, and he shared it with me. Perhaps you've seen something similar.

Alternatively, I think of Toby in a small church in the Scottish borders. He dared to run an all-age service to attract the families. After the first one, a local landowner glared at him at the door afterwards. 'Well, padre, we won't be having any more of those, will we.' It wasn't a question.

Let's have a think about power, first along some spectrums, examining their results, and seeing how they interact. At some stage you might be asked to join your church's leadership, and so we'll think about some of those particular dynamics.

All the way through, remember that Jesus insisted, as he looked at the cultural norms around his disciples, 'Not so with you.' He doesn't say, 'don't lead'. He says, 'don't lead like them'.

1. power exists on a series of spectrums

Power isn't a single or simple thing, so let's break it into six pairs, each on a spectrum. This isn't a complete list, so add more as they occur to you.

the formal/informal spectrum

Formal power boils down to, 'from my position

I have *been given* the right/authority/duty to tell you what to do'. Informal power is much less obvious, and it boils down to 'from my life I have earned the right/authority/duty/experience to tell you what to do'.

I know a church which is deeply committed to being governed by their eldership. They are all carefully vetted, theologically alert, respected, and listened to. It's a plurality of elders. That's what it says on the church governance papers.

Except I know that when the pastor enters the meeting, the elders all stand. He is 'just' one of them, accountable and equal. As an employee of the church, they could sack him. But they stand up. Nothing in the formal governance papers would lead you to expect that, but informally it's obvious. Who would vote against anything he proposes?

the visible/hidden spectrum

According to pastors' lore, the easiest way to discover who thinks they have power in church is not to look at the website (visible) but to change the locks. You'll find out who has keys, and who thinks they have a right to keys. That power is hidden deep in pockets and purses, but from a pastor's perspective, it is very useful to bring it out.

Sometimes, the hiddenness of the power is in its design. In *Atomic Habits*, James Clear tells the story of a hospital where proper communication had broken, and many worked in fear. Nurses had a secret code on the ward whiteboard. A doctor's name in green meant a good doctor and one you could talk to. The name in black, meant tread carefully and never get close to questioning their opinion. Reds would bite your head off and you'd be fired.²

That whiteboard was an expression of hidden power – the power of the doctors, and the power of the nurses, too.

the earned/inherited spectrum

Not long after I arrived at our current church,

a long-time member died, and I conducted the funeral. Despite the fact there were other clergy on the team it was thought proper that I took the service. I was the vicar. I *inherited* that power/authority with the role.

Now, when I take such services, the church knows I am doing it for my spiritual family. I have a lump in the throat, and a real hug for the bereaved, and they want me there. It's no longer 'proper' – it's a privilege. And I have *earned* the privilege.

the monitored/unmonitored spectrum

This spectrum has seen most attention recently, because of what's happened at the 'unmonitored' end. Churches have seen physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, so are now rigorously patrolled by safeguarding processes, to minimise risks. Safe ratios in the kids' ministry, domestic abuse training for those who serve with seniors – they all move ministry into a much more 'monitored' place, where power can rightly be watched.

And I imagine if you talk to medics who have been in post for a few decades, they will tell you of how things have changed since Harold Shipman.³

the high-control/low-control spectrum

When I walk our dog on the lead, I have high control. If I take her off it, I've exercised the power of giving freedom. Actually, I never do that in public because we've never been able to train her not to run up to total strangers and pester them. So, if I did that, I'd have abused my power to permit anarchy. Not low-control, but no-control. We'll come back to this one.

the personal/positional spectrum

Greg became the vicar of a church on the outskirts of Manchester. It was a lively church, but he became aware he wasn't able to introduce anything new. No change happened. At all.

He finally found the reason. His predecessor had been in post a long time, and then retired in the area. Whenever the church council was due to meet, his predecessor convened an informal gathering of the council at his home, and went

through the agenda, telling them what to say and how to vote.

Greg may have had *positional* authority, but his predecessor had personal authority, which trumped it. At least the problem was clarified, and Greg knew he had to tackle it.

2. each spectrum can grow either good fruit or poison at any point

Now let's take it to a more complicated level, because no spectrum is right or wrong itself. They're descriptive categories, not moral ones. If we look at one, we can see both fruit and poison lying all around, at both ends.

Let's revisit that *high-control/low-control* spectrum. This is a major tension for Christians in the West. Culturally we distrust high-control patterns, because they've led to totalitarian states, and we strongly prefer low-control patterns, because they value liberty, individualism, and self-expression. But Christianly, we live under the highest of control patterns, with a Lord who owns us, has the absolute right to tell us what to do, what is right and wrong, and who expects us to use self-control to follow him (see Titus 2).

The good fruit of *high-control* systems is that they run disciplined systems with efficient and highly predictable results. Take my surgery: I've researched the careful choreography of what happened during eight hours in theatre, the detailed movement of hands, the placement of parts. It's fascinating, because it is such a practiced ballet.

But, as we've said, the poison of *high-control* systems is tyranny. James Clear goes further in that story of the hospital with the whiteboard. It took the death of a patient after brain surgery, where the surgeon had operated on the wrong side of the brain because no-one dared to challenge him, before the issue was settled. Wouldn't you describe his power as a tyranny?

Now, as we've said, move to the other end of the spectrum and you'll find the good fruit growing from *low-control* systems. Freedom, autonomy, self-expression and creativity are all found here, and

they taste delicious. So, what's the poison? Anarchy, with no control over abuse. My dog, off her lead.

And here's a twist for church leaders like me: anarchy is not just the poison growing in the absence of authority – it grows when those who do have authority don't use it. The preacher who remains silent. The pastor who refuses to rebuke. The counsellor who only affirms and never calls to repentance. The non-use of good power is also a tyranny.

3. the spectrums interact

Let's play one of those flipchart exercises where you draw four squares, and fill them with possibilities. Two of our spectrums will interact: horizontally we'll put the *formal/informal* spectrum, and vertically the *personal/positional* spectrum.

Top left, both personal and formal, is my visitor Pete, the consultant. Someone would have to be occupying his role for the department to work, but Pete was the one who passed the exams, wrote the papers, to get there. And because it's him, that position of power will be exercised differently to anyone else, on a daily basis.

Bottom left, positional and formal, is your line manager. By design, little of her personality will come into this relationship, but if you've ever experienced an annual appraisal, you'll know that the person conducting it has great power.

Bottom right, positional but more informal, is where you'll find respectful but free discussion. With my surgery there were many meetings of a multi-disciplinary team: surgeons, oncologists, pharmacists, physios, nurses, all needed and contributing. Whichever one had the chair, everyone was there because no-one knew everything, and everyone knew something that no-one else was trained to see.

And top right, personal and informal, is where you find the indefinable things we call 'charisma',

'natural authority', 'born leader'. Research and publishing in this area is vast.

It's the area I'd least expect to find in a hospital (I might be wrong!), but it's what churches the world over think they want from their pastor. For them, the fruit growing in this garden is spiritual manna. But the poison comes from the pit of hell.

4. church

At some point, as a mature, articulate Christian, you might be invited to step into leadership in church. Maybe on the board, or the church council. Those are positions of authority and power, and the first thing that you need to remember is that everything we have seen above is true in church as well. Richard Hooker, an Anglican theologian, writing four hundred years ago, said 'the church is a society both natural and supernatural', meaning that even while we pray, worship, call on the Holy Spirit, the normal spectrums of human behaviour still apply, with their fruit and poison.

So, step one, don't be shocked by that. In fact, if you read your Bible, you won't be. Here's a quick Bible study for you. Take the little letter of 3 John, and without consulting any commentaries, try to reconstruct the twisted power dynamics that led to John writing. Make a cast list, and work out who has done what. It's eye opening, and sharply relevant.

Every Christian still sins and struggles, and we bite and devour each other in church.⁴ But step two, don't become cynical. This is church, where prayer works, the gospel is true, Jesus actively reigns, the Holy Spirit fills us with love and equips us to serve, and Satan has been defeated and will soon lie crushed at our feet.⁵

In some ways, church will always be a context where abuse of power happens, because it is where Satan has most to gain. He loves it when we lead like the Gentiles. And he hates it when we serve like our Master who first served us. ■

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3. Harold Shipman was a GP in northern England. In 2000 he was convicted of murdering 15 patients, though is thought to have killed up to 250. The reports of the inquiry into the case can be found at the UK National Archives. bit.ly/3p8LPy9
4. Galatians 5:15
5. Romans 16:20

power(lessness) in healthcare

John Greenall explores how we use the power we have as clinicians





John Greenall is CMF Associate CEO and a paediatrician in Kent

What's your superpower?' is a question I often ask children in my community clinic. Some say super-strength, or the ability to fly. One recently told me he would 'magic me out of the room'. My ego is only just recovering.

But seriously, have you attended a lecture on power? Or heard a sermon on the topic? I didn't think so. Power is 'the ability to make something of the world'. Power isn't 'out there' but 'in here'; and in the world of medicine we are told we have lots of it. We can prescribe powerful drugs; we can influence someone's decision making; we 'control' conversations to break bad news; we hold the keys to restricted investigations. We might not be superheroes, but we are sometimes made to feel like it.

power – really?

On the flip side, as we progress through our medical careers, we can sometimes feel the opposite. In my practice as a paediatrician, I can feel powerlessness when faced with a child who presents with an aggressive brain tumour. I sense my inability to slow down assessment unit referrals which are up by 50 per cent in four years, with no increase in staffing. I can feel helpless to change the course of a four-year-old's life who has already suffered multiple adverse childhood events and is going into care. The culture we live in, the systems we work in, and the reality of my human finitude seems ever-present.

power as a gift

Despite my daily feelings of impotence, we do of course exert a degree of power or 'influence'. God delegated power to humanity by commanding us to be fruitful; to multiply, subdue, and have dominion over the earth.¹ In this sense, we can view power as a gift from God to be exercised wisely in our workplaces and homes.

Andy Crouch in his excellent article *It's Time to*

Talk About Power, says power '*...is a gift – the gift of a Giver who is the supreme model of power used to bless and serve. Power is not given to benefit those who hold it. It is given for the flourishing of individuals, peoples, and the cosmos itself...Power is not the opposite of servanthood. Rather, servanthood, ensuring the flourishing of others, is the very purpose of power.*'²

In healthcare we will recognise that power means privilege, and when we exercise power well, we build currency. Patients trust our decisions. Nurses are confident in our reliability. Colleagues appreciate our integrity. Building that currency means we are given trust and space to work. This is a privilege and a gift to be exercised with care.

power is the ability to make something of the world

power distorted

And yet the fall of man is a reality; when unchecked, power can be abused. You will see this as you progress through your training. In my department one encounters victims of domestic abuse and child sexual abuse, which at their heart are abuses of power. You'll have perhaps already seen power 'tug-of-wars' between departments or even between consultants on your placements. Power is abused all around us in healthcare and we have a front row seat as this plays out.

But we need to look within as well. As medics we can be proud because of the power we yield, tempted to look down on those with less knowledge, be it someone in our tutor group or a friend studying another subject. We can also misuse power, not only through acts of commission but also omission. As James, the half-brother of Jesus, writes, '*If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.*'³ Doctors are often the first to speak out for their own

welfare when they could use that power to speak for others, both their healthcare colleagues and their patients, especially the unborn, the elderly and other vulnerable patient groups.

Jesus & power

Jesus confronts the issues of power when two of his closest disciples ask him a question in Mark 10:35-38: *'Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?"'*

we might not be superheroes, but we are sometimes made to feel like it

The disciples want power. And yet they soon realise that Jesus demands something different.

'Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."' (Luke 22:25-26)

He calls them to be servants.

Throughout his earthly ministry Jesus displays his power by spending it on others. He trades his reputation for our shame. He makes himself low to bring us high. Rather than be consumed by power, he demonstrates power through serving others.

Perhaps referring to Jesus washing his disciples' feet,⁴ the Apostle Paul writes,

'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God

something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' (Philippians 2:5-7).

It is a tremendous privilege to be invested with genuine power. Even though students often feel so power-less, we need to be aware of the scope of power, however subtle our power may be. And we need to develop skill to use power effectively.

so how do I steward power?

Firstly, Christians in healthcare are to see their delegated power as a privilege to exert a godly influence over our colleagues and environment, 'subduing and having dominion' over the places we live and work. We need to cultivate honest, accountable relationships with others, where we can confess our pride, our misuse of power, and our inaction when faced with the powerlessness of others.

Secondly, we need to be ready to share the good news with those who feel powerless. We will come across such people day in, day out, in our healthcare studies and practice. We can share that Jesus himself walked in their shoes. He knows what it means to be humiliated, shamed, rejected, and abandoned, that he can minister to people's pain. We may have a front-row seat to abuses of power, but we can interrupt the drama with the good news of Jesus to a hurting world. When we grasp the Christian worldview that power is a gift – we don't earn it – we will steward it for the good of God's world rather than use it for our own benefit, regardless of its effect on others. Instead of hoarding power and making it work 'for us', we will follow Christ's example by humbly spending it on others. True power is multiplied when image-bearers of the all-powerful God empty themselves of the benefits of their power and spread these benefits to others in ways that promote their flourishing.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In which areas of life do you wield power?
2. What temptations do you succumb to – pride, misuse of power, not using your power or even all three?
3. What does 'emptying yourself of the benefits of power' look like to you?
4. How you might prophetically speak out for those who have no power with the truth of the Gospel?

Thirdly, we need to be ready to be prophetic voices in our land. We are called not to fear power – be it political, professional, cultural or social – more than we fear God. And we are called to speak out against the abuse of authority. Making a stand for the powerless will inevitably challenge individuals or structures who have power. May we choose boldness and courage over bashfulness and comfort in those moments, as we live and speak for Jesus in medicine, starting as students as we mean to go on.

Finally, we are to embrace our feelings of powerlessness. When we sense our inability to influence people and situations around us, we are identifying with the majority of the world's population and are reminded that, in God's world, we are to live our lives dependent upon him.⁵

I'd disappoint you if I didn't finish with the great Marvel quote 'with great power comes great responsibility'. As medical students you aren't going to gain a superpower, but you will be invested with significant power through your status, knowledge and opportunities. What will you do with it? Will you hoard it, or spend it to the Glory of God? ■



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power & politics

Laurence Crutchlow encourages us to use our own political power





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

Who is the most powerful person in the world? The well-known (and correct) Sunday School answer¹ doesn't feature Google's selection of online lists, which largely plump for Xi Jinping (President of the People's Republic of China), though a few opt for Vladimir Putin (President of Russia). Joe Biden (President of the United States of America) is usually just behind. Even in an era of immense corporate power, Elon Musk (Space X, Twitter), Jeff Bezos (Amazon) and Mark Zuckerberg (Meta/Facebook) are generally a little lower down the top ten, usually followed by political leaders from the UK, France, Germany, and India, among others.

Politicians hold a great deal of power. They may command large military forces; some may command great public appreciation and affection. Others may be widely feared. But should anyone hold this much power? Doesn't everything on earth belong to the Lord? Should there be any power that might draw focus from him?

After all, politics can be a difficult place for the Christian. How do we deal with personal attacks on opponents, when a more polite approach doesn't get reported in the media? What about the attacks on politicians who have been open about having a personal Christian faith?² Does politics in the UK really ever change much anyway?

This article will look at what (if anything) we can glean from the Bible about our political power systems and suggest ways in which we might engage.

some governance is needed

Of course, God is in control, today, yesterday, and forever. But even in Eden, there was a need for some order to be brought. Adam was to work and take care of the Garden,³ and he and Eve had wider

responsibilities over living creatures as well.⁴ Adam was an authority instituted on Earth to carry out God's will; a first 'governor' if you like.

So, government existed *before* the Fall. Government is not itself a consequence of sin.

governance is affected by the fall

The Fall affects Adam's role as a governor just as everything in Earth is affected. His work will become much more difficult.⁵ Human relationships will quickly become toxic,⁶ and sure enough wickedness soon spreads.⁷ Even after the 'reset' of the flood, with nations establishing themselves and spreading over the Earth,⁸ the pattern doesn't change. The city of Babel must have had some sort of governance to organise building the city and tower, but it was clearly directed to the wrong ends.⁹

Two particular forms of governance are clearly not recommended by the Old Testament.

no king

Not a quote from *The Lion King*,¹⁰ but the altogether more disturbing book of Judges. Moses and Joshua had led Israel after being directly chosen by God. When Joshua died, 'another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel'. (Judges 2:10) During this period, out of mercy, God periodically raises up a 'Judge', and matters improve for a time, but when the judge dies, 'the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors...'. (Judges 2:19) The book chronicles a spiral of worsening anarchy in Israel, ending with a horrifying story of rape, civil war and the near-total destruction of the tribe of Benjamin.

It is clear that 'no government at all' was not an option for Israel - a constant refrain is 'In those days Israel had no King; everyone did as they saw fit'. (Judges 21:25)

godless governance

Israel clamours for a King, wanting to be like the

nations around them. They are warned of the consequences by Samuel, the final judge, but stick to their views.¹¹ Saul is eventually confirmed as King,¹² beginning a long and at best varied line.

After Saul, David (described by God as a 'man after my own heart' (Acts 13:22)) largely follows God's commands, barring one well-known exception¹³ following which he promptly repents.¹⁴ His son Solomon starts well, with Queen of Sheba's visit in 1 Kings 10 perhaps marking the high point of the power of the nation of Israel. However, Solomon is led astray as he marries foreign women against God's explicit command, and eventually is turned from God.¹⁵ Under his son Rehoboam, the kingdom is divided, with Jeroboam leading a rebellion among the northern tribes, and only Judah and Benjamin remaining loyal to Rehoboam in the southern kingdom.¹⁶

No king of the northern kingdom, Israel, gets a favourable review at all. Israel's story ends with King Hoshea, who like his predecessors 'did evil in the eyes of the Lord'. (2 Kings 17:2) The kingdom is exiled and cut off from God.¹⁷

Judah (the southern kingdom) fares slightly better, with some kings being much more faithful to God, particularly Hezekiah and Josiah.¹⁸ However the same pattern ultimately ensues, with King Zedekiah carried off into exile in Babylon and the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem with him.¹⁹

Non-Jewish kings seem little better, with the Egyptian Pharaoh's responses to Moses perhaps the most egregious example, but closely followed by the King of Assyria.²⁰

Anarchy appears to fail entirely. Given that Israel ought to have had some advantage over surrounding nations in at least having God's law, and the history of what he'd done for them, it is hard to argue that anarchy will work anywhere today.

Absolute monarchy also seems, in general, to work badly. But there are some exceptions which seem to stem from the ethics of the particular monarch; when the King follows the Lord and takes the nation with him, it seems to work a lot better.

government in the New Testament

Instructively, there is much less comment on the government in the New Testament. The entire canon plays out in the early period of the Roman Emperors. Although some more democratic systems were theoretically in place, the Emperor was effectively all powerful, not so unlike the Kings of Israel. The historical context however is very different, with the *Pax Romana* at its height, and the Roman Empire generally peaceful, powerful, and stable.

Early Christians faced hostility from both the Jewish authorities of the day, and the overarching government of Rome. Jesus appears to accept both Jewish and Roman authority over day-to-day matters of government (such as tax²¹), while being clear that God is ultimately in control. The apostles are little different, with Paul often appealing to his status as a Roman citizen when persecuted,²² yet Peter being clear that he must obey God over men.²³

is there any perfect system?

The very end of the Bible gives us an image of the 'perfect' system; God dwelling with his people in a place where there is no sin. Old Testament Israel should have worked something like this, with God's presence seen first in the tabernacle and then the temple; indeed, the church should work this way with God present through the Holy Spirit as we meet. But we are not 'there' yet; there is still sin in the world. Humans still tend to do the wrong thing, and don't always trust in God. Therefore, some other regulation becomes inevitable.

so how should a Christian relate to (imperfect) government today?

'Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.' (Romans 13:1) In general, we are to obey government unless there is a situation in which obeying God takes precedence.

But in a democracy, we shape some of the laws by voting or participating, so could be said to be the 'governing authorities' ourselves to a degree.

This can bring significant benefits – usually such systems have allowed more freedom for Christians (and those of other faiths) than non-democratic governments. It also brings responsibilities; the Bible is clear about the accountability of rulers for their actions,²⁴ and we share in this responsibility in a democracy in at least a small way.

It seems that the ‘better’ kings of the Old Testament were those who looked to God. Yet our rulers are not necessarily Christians. And those of us in the UK should remember that our monarchy today is very different from that of the Old Testament (whether in Israel or elsewhere). Although a great deal of power is in theory still vested in the King of the United Kingdom, it is in practice exercised by an elected government acting in his name.²⁵

pray for our rulers

We can pray for those who rule us, even if we have no say in who they are. Those in constitutional monarchies like the UK can pray for the monarch, even if their actual power is very limited. Those in one-party states can pray for the leadership of that party, and the individual in charge. This is the case even when we oppose what they do; Timothy’s exhortation to pray for those in authority²⁶ was in the context of the Roman Empire. It doesn’t stop us praying for a better government under different leadership.

use the power we do have wisely

For readers, at least in the UK and Ireland, we are able to choose our leaders, at least indirectly, as we vote for members of parliament or local councillors to represent us.

Christians can use our votes to influence government, or do more by engaging with consultations, lobbying politicians, or even standing for election ourselves. This article is applied mainly to national government, but similar principles might apply to a professional group such as the British Medical Association (BMA), or a student run body like the SU.

how then do we vote?

We might think that the ‘easy’ answer is ‘get Christians to stand and vote them in’. This almost certainly won’t work. There are usually three or four competitive candidates in a seat in the UK, so usually 35-40 per cent of the vote is needed to win. 2015 figures suggest five per cent of the population of the UK are in church on an average Sunday. Even allowing for Christians not making it to church every week, the figures clearly don’t add up.

Even when Christians are elected, they face significant pressure in public life to conform to secular standards. Tim Farron’s book *A Mucky Business* describes this and is reviewed on page 30 of this edition.

We could look at how MPs have voted on particular issues in the past or seek indications of how new candidates might vote in the future. This might help to shape the law on that specific issue; this has been a common approach amongst pro-life organisations concerned to prevent liberalisation of abortion laws. But this approach is not foolproof. Past votes are not necessarily a guide to future votes, particularly if the question being considered is subtly different. An apparent abstention may simply mean an MP was out of the country on government business, rather than uninterested. A parliamentarian who agrees with us on abortion may hold views we disagree with on another equally important issue.

It is probably then more helpful for us to choose our vote using a broader method. We need to evaluate the programmes of different parties (sites like voteforpolicies.org.uk sometimes help). But we also need to consider whether these policies will ever be implemented (which is affected both by how realistic they are, and whether we trust the integrity of the politician promoting them), as well as the workings of whatever electoral system is in use in a given ballot.

is it any different for a Christian, then?

This may look much like the way any keen person engages in voting; and many of the principles are not

different. Perhaps the biggest difference for the Christian should be that in considering how we vote, we look not only at our own and our family's welfare, but also consider the most vulnerable in society and how a particular policy might affect them.

This might not always lead to the same conclusions – for example one voter may feel that high government spending on welfare (and consequent high taxes) protects the most vulnerable, while another may feel that high welfare spending harms the poorest by promoting dependency on government and makes everyone poorer in the long-run if higher taxes slow down the economy.

It always helps to remember that there are Christians in all the major UK parties. While we might well look beyond ourselves in choosing how to vote, we will still come to differing conclusions. This should make us very wary of saying 'all Christians should surely vote for...' or 'can you really be a Christian if you voted for...'. I hope this article has shown that politics is rarely as simple as one single issue.

people as well as policies – a possible solution?

Character really matters. That is clear in both the story of Israel's kings and in the way the church should govern itself. The qualifications for elders in the church a primarily about character rather than skills.²⁷ Unexpected things frequently happen in politics. Public health hardly featured in the 2019 General Election campaign in the UK yet came to dominate the tenure of Boris Johnson as Prime

Minister within a few months of his winning that election.

Personal attributes and character may give us some idea how our leaders are likely to react to an unforeseen event. It is not only the leader. Who advises and surrounds them or deputises for them should they be unable to work (as Boris Johnson was for some weeks after contracting COVID-19 himself)?

Of course, Christians can pray for the character of our leaders, but I wonder if we also need to do all we can to encourage those of good and honest character into leadership? Currently there seems to be little trust in politics, with a lot of effort made to 'catch-out' politicians or impugn their motives. Do we really need to share that accusatory news post that misses out much of the context? Do we speak well of the good things politicians do (even if they are someone we didn't vote for)?

conclusion

The Bible does not, ultimately, recommend a form of government, though it has plenty to say about how governments can go wrong. Our primary calling is to follow Jesus, and any participation we have in politics should be a part of that. But in a democracy where we bear some responsibility for governing, our discipleship surely includes using this responsibility well, both in selecting those who govern, and considering whether we are called to this ourselves. ■

1. Jesus
2. A recent example is Kate Forbes of the Scottish National Party. bit.ly/3NA6fsm
3. Genesis 2:15
4. Genesis 1:26
5. Genesis 3:17-19
6. Genesis 4:8
7. Genesis 6:5
8. Genesis 10:22
9. Genesis 11:1-9
10. Be Prepared, The Lion King. Walt Disney, 1994. imdb.com/title/tt010357
11. 1 Samuel 8
12. 1 Samuel 11:14
13. 2 Samuel 11
14. 2 Samuel 12
15. 1 Kings 11:9
16. 1 Kings 12:1-22
17. 2 Kings 17:21-23
18. See this helpful reference guide: www.providenceacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Chart-of-the-Kings-of-Israel-and-Judah.pdf – the links in the document will take you to the relevant Bible passages regarding each King
19. 2 Kings 25:1
20. Isaiah 10:12 (among others)
21. Matthew 17:24-27, Matthew 22:21
22. Acts 16:37 among others
23. Acts 5:29
24. Isaiah 10:1
25. This is technically known as 'Royal Prerogative', bit.ly/44nVpfN
26. 1 Timothy 2:1-2
27. 1 Timothy 3:1-12

power in student leadership

Matthew Amer reflects on the power of Christian students in leadership



Matthew Amer is a newly qualified doctor and past CMF National Student Committee Chair

The headline 'Partygate' filled our news feed for much of 2022. Those of a certain position in our society had broken stringent lockdown rules that were so heavily enforced on the rest of us. The news struck a chord deep within our societal structure; those with power and authority had abused their elevated position, consciously or otherwise, at the expense of everyone else.

I wonder what the word 'power' makes you think of or feel? Power so often has negative connotations in our current culture. The big cultural scandals of the last few years have all

involved the abuse of power: 'Partygate', the murder of Sarah Everard, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, to name just a few. Generation Z, my generation, are acutely alert to power dynamics. It is through the lens of power, and only power, that many of us view the world. However, rejecting this worldview, and considering scandalous, power-hungry politicians as distant news stories, I considered my own life unassuming, believing I was neither the recipient nor creator of unjust treatment. But power features across the landscape of our lives more than we might anticipate. Although the concept of power in our lives as

Christian students may not be immediately evident, I hope to explore how we should be aware of, reflect on, and manage well power in our Christian lives.

why this topic?

The past two years have brought tremendous joy and growth as I've served as a co-chair on CMF's National Student Committee (NSC). This service has brought an element of authority with it (unwanted it should be said). I have reflected on this, and how I have viewed my position as a student leader, with the intention of helping others in student leadership to reflect on their own experiences and positions.

With Christians being new creations, and likely having a heightened sense for injustice and exploitation, we would hope that abuse of power is uncommon in our churches, CMF groups, and relationships with each other. But there have been several well-known Christian figures in recent years that have used their position, notoriety, and power to abuse, intimidate, and coerce those around them. It is vital to think through our positions of leadership and interactions with others to prevent similar situations arising. Recognising power dynamics now, as young adults and students, is essential if we are to live out the rest of our lives as good and godly leaders.

authority dynamics do exist in CMF/CU

Marcus Honeysett's book *Powerful Leaders*¹ is a wonderful exploration of how power can turn sour, particularly in a Christian organisational context. This book helped me realise that power plays a role in our interactions with each other, consciously or otherwise, and that the Christian student environment is no exception. I'm sure we can all relate to arriving at our first event as a fresher and looking up to the apparently wise, godly, and competent third year students running the Christian Union (CU) or CMF group. This dynamic is an example of power and authority; that between older more experienced students in certain

positions and younger, less experienced students. Often, as students we hold the feeling of being at the low end of the dynamic, without realising that in our later years of study we may now inhabit a position of authority in the eyes of younger students. Holding a position of leadership, whether on a committee, in mentorship, or other role, brings with it a certain standing in the eyes of other students. We all recognise this in the abstract, but rarely do we recognise it as something we inhabit right now. With this image comes influence, and with influence comes the wielding of power. Like all things, the corruption of goodness can lead to the malicious twisting of power. It is therefore essential to consider further what this authority might look like, and how we can stay vigilant in preventing its exploitation.

your image may not be what you think

One lesson I've learned is that there is often a divergence between how you view yourself, and how others do. Whilst making an announcement at CMF student conference or leading a small group session, I view myself as nervous, timid, full of mistakes, and weak. I see with hyperfocus how silly my arms look dangling by my side or become obsessed with whether I'm clapping correctly. Do you relate to these feelings? Yet others can and will view you in ways you do not expect. Some roles bring an image of position, authority, and influence whether we desire it or not. To be aware of this helps us to be more understanding and gracious in how we interact and work with other students.

I remember attending a 'Dial a Donut' CU event in first year, where the CU president joined our group. I remember my perception of him and the alienation I felt from him as being far more respected and competent than I. He is now one of my closest friends and, knowing him the way I do now, the veneer of authority is certainly not the same as it was!

an example for reflection

As I reflected on these ideas, I started to remember

instances when I may have utilised a position to gain something. I once asked a younger student if they would like to take over my role on the CU committee. With doubts and worries, they initially said no. I persisted, despite the obvious fact they did not feel comfortable taking the role at that point in time. Eventually they said yes. I was content and self-righteous in knowing how wonderful I thought they'd be at the position.

Reflecting on this now, however, I realised I used my position and influence to corner this poor student into a position where it was very hard for them to say no to, just to satisfy my own conviction of prudence. Did I actually leave them with any choice?

It is in situations like this that we can so often exploit our positions. Are you fully aware of the influence you have impacting another student? We can, so often, forget that our position on a committee or experience on our course gives us influence and an element of power. This can easily be used in ways we might not even be cognisant of, as in my example above. We must be purposefully vigilant in all we do to ensure the exploitation of influence is never used against another.

we are sinful and so can actively exploit our position

We have leaders for a purpose; to ensure a group or organisation functions well and remains steady in its course. There is nothing inherently wrong with power structures in themselves. However, our nature can lead to the manipulation and desecration of these meaningful and essential dynamics. *'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?'* (Jeremiah 17:9) We are prone to rejecting righteousness, meekness, kindness, and sacrifice, and embracing exploitation, selfishness, and greed. All good and wonderful things, like having the opportunity to lead other students, can be twisted by sin, even unconsciously. We should reflect on how we might fall into the trap of actively exploiting our position and influence. We should

engage with structures that prevent us from doing this. But to ultimately prevent this, we must turn to the one who conquered sin for help.

what does the bible say about preventing the abuse of power?

We must, of course, turn to the Bible to help us live our lives well, for the glory of God and those around us. Colossians 3 explores the qualities of those made alive in Christ. We find here important lessons on how we can lead well. We are encouraged to: *'Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.'* (Colossians 3:2) The end goal of our leadership position lies not in this life, but in helping to bring as many people to know and see God as possible. If we find ourselves looking for significant worldly benefits, it may be time to reconsider our goals and uses of power.

'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another...' (Colossians 3:15-16)

It is to Christ we look and from Christ we receive instruction on how to lead. Christ came to serve, not to be served,² and our leadership should be modelled on this. As creatures made alive in Christ, we should strive towards emulating him in all facets of life. We should serve others whilst in positions of authority, as Christ did for us. Recognising that we may have authority, praying we wield it wisely, and looking to Christ as the example of how to handle power, are essential in ensuring we do not use it for wrongdoing, even unconsciously.

Set these habits and thoughts in process now, as students, and we will take great steps in serving others and glorifying Christ into the future. ■

REFS

1. Honeysett M. *Powerful Leaders*. London: IVP, 2022
2. Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45

safeguarding everyone

Many of us will be familiar with safeguarding in a medical, church or youth work context



At first sight, some might think there should be little need for formal safeguarding within an organisation like CMF. We have limited dealings with children, and most of our adult members would not usually fit the profile of a 'vulnerable adult'. Yet according to NHS England's definition, safeguarding extends beyond this, to protect all citizens.

NHS England defines safeguarding as follows: *'Safeguarding means protecting a citizen's health, wellbeing, and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. It is an integral part of providing high-quality health care. Safeguarding children, young people and adults is a collective responsibility.'*¹

a Christian duty

It is easy, particularly for healthcare professionals and students, to think of safeguarding as something that is part of work; another box to be ticked, yet another piece of mandatory training to complete.

Yet recent history has made clear that Christian organisations across denominations are not free from safeguarding concerns. Poor safeguarding practices are often picked up in case reviews, with one recent example citing 'lack of value placed on safeguarding'.² Safeguarding issues can arise whether an organisation is Christian or not.

Indeed, for a Christian, protecting the most vulnerable should always be more than a legal and



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statutory exercise. *'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* (Matthew 25:40) Safeguarding should simply be an expression of our concern for the most vulnerable we come across.

what about CMF?

We might not want to think of CMF as a place where power is exercised, but inevitably there are some power dynamics in an organisation like ours. However much we encourage humility and fellowship, the medical hierarchy still exists. We rightly respect and hope to learn from our older members, but this creates uneven relationships between more senior and more junior members. There is some necessary hierarchy within the CMF staff and volunteer team to ensure that the organisation can work properly.

None of these things in themselves might meet legal thresholds for being 'safeguarding', but this does not mean that we should not take care that our structures do not unwittingly create situations where abuse of power occurs. Matthew Amer's article in this edition is quite clear that some power dynamics will be present even in a student group. 'Spiritual abuse' has been widely discussed in recent years, and it is important that our internal culture minimises the likelihood of this happening.

actions as student members

It can be hard to separate our role in healthcare (where, even as a student, we are expected to escalate safeguarding concerns) from that in church, CU, or CMF. If we hold a formal role outside our day-to-day work, we should be familiar with safeguarding procedures in that organisation and make sure we have undertaken any training required.

Within CMF, the staff and formal volunteers use a safeguarding policy and have access to a safeguarding lead with whom we can discuss any problems. While members do not have this level of accountability, it is easy to envisage a situation

where, for example, a student link becomes aware of someone who may be in an abusive relationship, perhaps finding out because of providing prayer or informal support.

The exact right and wrongs of what to do legally are complex (and indeed assuming you are dealing with a competent adult, there is often little that can be done if they do not consent to be helped). You do not need to take on this burden (even when the 'healthcare' part of you may be tempted to do so), but it is important that you share concerns, rather than try to take responsibility for managing them yourself.

however much we encourage humility and fellowship, the medical hierarchy still exists

If the issue has arisen within a CMF context, the best action would be to speak to one of the Student Ministry team (which can be done without identifying the person involved initially); we can then discuss internally utilising our safeguarding support services as necessary, not only to make sure CMF fulfils our legal obligations, but also so that we can suggest the most appropriate organisations or people that may help locally. If you are a student union affiliated society, they will also have policies you need to follow. Of course, if someone is in immediate danger, your first response should be to call the police rather than the CMF Office.

If thinking through this issue has left questions or concerns, please contact one of the Student Ministries team. If you feel you need more personal support, the Pastoral Care and Wellbeing team (contact via cmf.org.uk/doctors/pastoral-care-and-wellbeing-programme) might well be able to help initially and signpost you to other suitable services. ■

REFS

1. NHS England. england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/about
2. Independent lessons learnt review concerning Jonathan Fletcher and Emmanuel Church Wimbledon. 2021. bit.ly/3Xf12u6

back to basics : evangelism

Ben Goddard-Fletcher brings evangelism hints from Jeremiah to the wards

I find evangelism hard.' Thus opens Rico Tice's book *Honest Evangelism*. Rico has been at All Souls Langham Place, a large Church in central London, for more than 25 years. He is now Senior Minister for Evangelism. If you ever hear him speak, you'll soon realise that he's an excellent evangelist.

And yet, this is how he opens his book. I think many of us (if not all of us) find evangelism hard; I know I do. And in a sense, it's encouraging to hear Rico open with these words because I know that if even he, a seasoned evangelist, finds evangelism difficult, then my experience isn't abnormal; in fact, it's normal.

why might evangelism be hard?

Maybe we don't think we know what to say, and worry we'll get it wrong, so either people won't actually hear the gospel, or they won't want to believe because I've made the gospel sound stupid. We might think that people will respond negatively (either thinking that I'm stupid for believing it, that

the Christian worldview is harmful and evil) or just won't care. Might they stop being my friend, or even report me for what I've said? Or maybe we ourselves are just not that confident in what we believe to think its worth sharing.

how did Jeremiah do it?

Jeremiah was a prophet who was to speak God's word of judgement to a people that didn't want to hear it (sound familiar?). I have found some truths from Jeremiah chapter 1 helpful when I've been in situations where I've felt compelled to speak God's word but haven't wanted to do so.

Jeremiah can find evangelism hard in the same ways we can

He doesn't feel like he's any good at telling people the gospel: *'I do not know how to speak, I am too young'* (verse 6). He know the people who listen to him will fight against him (verse 19) and so God has to tell him, *'Do not be afraid of them'* (verse 8).

God really is in control of his word

The almond tree in verse 11 at first seems a bit random; what has an almond tree got to do with



anything? The Hebrew the word for 'almond' sounds like the word for 'watching' – so perhaps God is making a pun here - but why? Puns can show us that the person delivering the pun can see how all the words fit together and has mastery over them; and this underscores the point in verse 12 – he really is watching over his word. God is faithful to his word and will make it come to pass.

What Jeremiah says ends up coming true. So also of course with God's promises about Jesus' first coming. And so, we ought to trust him with his word as a whole for us today. Whether we're able to speak it well or not, whether people want to hear it or not, in a sense, it doesn't matter; God is watching over his word to perform it.

both judgment and hope

But what is this word Jeremiah had to speak? Verses 9-10 and 13-16 speak of judgment, particularly coming for Jerusalem because of their sin in forsaking God. Yet one line in verse 10 gives a glimmer of hope: 'to build and to plant'.

The word we are to bring is not just of God's coming judgment on sin, for which we need to repent, but also his wonderful salvation offered to us in Christ, which we need to trust. In a sense, it's easier for us than for Jeremiah, because we have a better message not just of judgment, but also of salvation! God is bringing judgment and salvation, so repent and trust him.

who was to speak God's word of judgment to a people that didn't want to hear it (sound familiar?)

the fate of the messenger

What will happen to the one who brings God's word? Both verses 4-8 and 17-19 show Jeremiah being commissioned to go and speak whatever God tells him. But as he goes he will ultimately be saved because God is with him. God doesn't lie to Jeremiah; he lets Jeremiah know what is going to come.



Yet God gives Jeremiah comforting words; God's messenger will be opposed, but God will be with him to deliver him, so don't be afraid.

the ultimate message

These three things can be really helpful to remember: God is in control of his word – so you better believe it. God is bringing judgement and salvation – so repent and trust him. God's messenger will be opposed, but God will be with him to deliver him – so don't be afraid.

God's messenger will be opposed, but God will be with him to deliver him, so don't be afraid

This all points to Jesus, who brought God's word of judgment and salvation, who was opposed on earth, but whom God raised from the dead. We must be hearers of Jesus' words ourselves, who repent and believe, and no longer oppose him but come to him for salvation. But also, we join his mission and are sent out into the world carrying his message of judgment and salvation; people will fight against us but ultimately, whether now or on the last day, God will save us, and he will be with us until that day when we see our Lord face-to-face!

practical tips

Now there is another reason we find evangelism difficult, namely, we have no clue where to start! So as the old med school adage goes, 'see one, do one, teach one' goes, here are a few tips that I have found helpful to get me started:

- **pray.** Ask God to give you opportunities to speak about him, but also pray that God will give you the courage to speak when these opportunities come. I find that if I've prayed about it beforehand, then I'm often more likely to speak when the opportunity comes.
- **drop things in.** If you're a Christian, then I'm sure you do things in your life that flow out of this, like going to Church, or spending time praying or reading the Bible. So, if someone asks you what you did at the weekend, you can tell them you went to Church. You could even ask them what they did at the weekend and then, if they ask you what you did at the weekend, you can tell them you went to Church. Nothing may come of it, but something might; and people will at least know that you're probably a Christian.
- **ask questions and listen.** Be (genuinely) interested in people and hear what they have to say; it will show them you care about them and help you to see exactly where they're coming from, so you can tailor what you say in response (just like taking a good history is needed for having a good management plan). So, if you've mentioned you go to Church, you could ask them if they've ever been to a Church, why or why not, and whether they'd like to join you.
- **be real.** If someone asks you a question about what you believe or why, tell them the truth. If you don't know the answer, tell them you don't know but you'll go away and think about it or ask someone at Church who might know (and then actually do that).
- **be prepared.** If you're a Christian, then you believe some basic facts about the story of the Bible: since you believe this, if you want others to believe it too, it might be a good idea to prepare a few sentences that explain this story so that you're ready to tell someone whenever they ask. A previous *Nucleus* article looks at one way to do this.¹
- **have people around you.** As much as you can, meet with other Christians in your workplace; you never know what opportunities this might present between the two of you.

- **Saline Solution.** Saline Solution is a course CMF runs periodically that is immensely helpful in training healthcare professionals to speak for Jesus in the workplace.² I highly recommend it.

the healthcare context

We have unique challenges and opportunities as healthcare students. Start thinking how you can be prepared to respond to the challenges you may face and utilise the opportunities you may have.

In healthcare we meet lots of people – both patients and colleagues – and we often meet them in times of distress. Sometimes it may be appropriate to ask them about their spiritual situation and offer them the hope that we have.

But many patients or colleagues will not want to talk about these things. Some who profess to be Christians around us will not necessarily believe the fundamental beliefs of the historic Christian faith. Our placements can often be fleeting, with lots to do, so we may not get a lot of time with the people we meet, limiting the interactions we can have.

The Saline Solution course helps in learning to use the opportunities and overcome the challenges.

I'd like to close with the three simple things from earlier; encourage yourself with them each day, and if you do so, then maybe next time you have an opportunity to speak of Jesus, you'll feel more able to do so:

- **God is in control of his word**
 - so you better believe it.
- **God is bringing judgment and salvation**
 - so repent and trust him.
- **God's messenger will be opposed but God will be with them to deliver them**
 - so don't be afraid. ■



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be inspired

counterparts: ICMDA Western Europe

Ella Metry introduces nearby international CMF groups



A Christian witness through doctors and dentists in every community in every nation'... this is the vision of the

International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA). CMF UK is a national member of this overarching body, which unites Christian medical movements all across the world.

As early as in the 1950s, it was clear that many issues faced by Christian healthcare professionals were similar across different countries, and that some kind of international network was desired. In 1963, the first International Congress of Christian Physicians was held in Amsterdam, with 16 countries represented. This summer, sixty years later, Tanzania hosted the 17th ICMDA World Congress, at which we welcomed 16 new members which brings the total number of member countries to 100. A worldwide, interdenominational family of

Christian doctors and dentists (to be) is a reality... and you are already part of it!

our daily work

Let's get back to the basics. How do we see our daily work? Do we expect to be made Christ-like through everything that we experience? And do we long to reflect Christ in everything that we do? Does the Bible teach us this, using images that we see in our daily work? To find out, we'll explore a few examples.

'As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people'. (Mark 1:16-17)



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The apostle Paul was a tentmaker, and in the second letter to the Corinthians he uses this image to describe that *'For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.'* (2 Corinthians 5:1)

And when we consider the trade of a carpenter, we realise that our Lord had daily used wood and nails, knowing that one day he would be nailed to the wood himself.

The Bible often uses images of professions, including references to the shepherd,¹ the potter,² and the physician.³ Through our secular jobs, the Lord teaches us Kingdom lessons that change our perspective. We find that there is no 'secular' and 'sacred' in the life of a Christian, but that we belong to him, both on Sundays and Mondays.

our Lord had daily used wood and nails,
knowing that one day he would be
nailed to the wood himself

We read that:

*'You know when I sit and when I rise;
You perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
You are familiar with all my ways.'* (Psalm 139:2-3).

Our days of studying or nights on duty are included! He is not far from us. And he has given us each other to walk together as we face challenges of different kinds in the 21st century workplace.

UK CMF is one of the strongest member bodies in the world, with many active members, and a wealth of resources. As a student, you may find that you've already been blessed by getting involved with a local group or bigger conferences. Be thankful! But why not then broaden your view and look across borders? Because there is even more, both to give and to receive. From the very early

days of the church, we see the idea of one body, united across countries. The testimonies of our Christian colleagues abroad encourage us, give us new ideas and stir us up to love and good works. We receive from them and may also give to them from what we have.

We hear from our Spanish friends how the local group in Madrid gathered daily to pray during the strikes of general practitioners for an entire month. We hear how our Italian friends trusted the Lord for raising 12,000 euros (£10,328) within a month, to be able to buy a mobile clinic for medical missions.

we get inspired by true stories of what God is doing in our personal and professional lives

This included the project 'Take care of your heart' which offers free cardiovascular screening and a free copy of the gospel. We hear how our Belgian friends continue to see each other, though they are very few and scattered across the country. We build friendships with students and junior doctors and meet each other whenever and wherever we can. We get inspired by true stories of what God is doing in our personal and professional lives. And now we invite you to come and see!

how can I get involved with ICMDA?

- Every month, students and juniors from across the region gather *online to pray*. Every month, we put one country of the region in the spotlights, inviting a representative to share from Scripture and to share prayer requests. Feel free to join on the last Thursday of the month, at 7pm UK time. Even if you are not able to join with camera or microphone, you're most welcome to listen along and pray with us in your heart.
- Take part in one of the *ICMDA training tracks!* These are online courses on a variety of topics and an amazing opportunity to get in touch with the ICMDA family. Details can be found on



the ICMDA website (icmda.net/regions/europe).

- From 5-8 October 2023, all students and junior doctors in the region are invited to the ICMDA Western European conference in Portugal. The theme echoes 2 Timothy 4:2: 'Be ready, in season and out of season'. We are looking forward to four days of fun and fellowship in a refreshing environment near Porto. See you there!
- Follow our social media channels to stay updated. ICMDA Western Europe is on Facebook (ICMDA Western Europe) and Instagram ([icmda_western_europe](https://www.instagram.com/icmda_western_europe)).
- Do get in touch with Julien van der Does (Area Representative, covering the North-Western European countries) or myself, using the ICMDA contact forms on the website (icmda.net) or our e-mail address (icmdawe@gmail.com) ■

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1. John 10:11
2. Romans 9:21
3. Matthew 9:12, among others

my trip to... Malawi

Alice Wood shares her experience at the Fistula Care Centre



Alice Wood is a medical student in Liverpool

During February and March 2020, I volunteered at a Fistula Care Centre (FCC) in Malawi, where the *Freedom from Fistula* charity provides surgery and rehabilitation for women with obstetric fistulas.

Obstetric fistulas affect between 50,000 and 100,000 women annually.¹ Being young, of maternal age, with poor healthcare access, and limited education about prolonged labour are associated with obstructed labour, which is the most common cause of obstetric fistulas. As these factors are more common in low- and middle-income countries, fistulas tend to be restricted largely to such countries.² Fistulas ruin the personal hygiene, self-esteem, relationships, societal contribution and employment opportunities of women who are often forced into divorce, ostracised, and isolated. Furthermore, the fistula may have been associated with stillbirth, further worsening a woman's suffering. Most fistulas are experienced by women in rural settings, where there is very little awareness of fistula care services, meaning a lot of women suffer for many years. I met a woman who had suffered with a fistula for 20 years.

Most women enter the FCC's two week-long rehabilitation programme after surgery. The programme develops camaraderie between women and teaches them skills (such as English, craft, and how to make solar-powered phone chargers), empowering them with the ability to financially support themselves upon discharge. I was incredibly privileged to witness a 'Gladi Gladi' ceremony – a jubilant celebration of a woman's freedom, involving song and dance, and gifts of the centre's chitenge (fabric) and a dress. It is a glorious moment in a woman's journey of healing and is a beacon of hope and inspiration for women recently admitted to the centre.

Many past patients are employed at the centre, performing a variety of roles including cleaning, cooking, reusable sanitary pad production, and



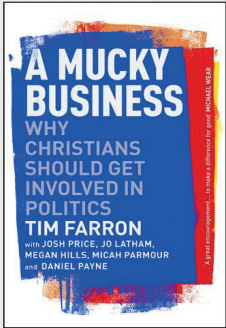
nursing. The centre is passionate about the eradication of fistulas, and organises the advertisement of reusable sanitary pads in schools, raising awareness about obstetric fistulas, and addressing the prevalence of teenage girl absenteeism from school due to a lack of sanitary protection. The charity equips past patients with a bicycle to enable them to travel to villages to spread awareness about obstetric fistulas and the services available for them.

Although not explicitly Christian on advertising media, the centre operated with openly Christ-centred rhythms. A daily morning devotion was observed, involving Bible study, song, and dance. The grace, hope and faith that women displayed, despite profound suffering, was incredibly humbling and inspiring. It also developed my gratitude for the relative lack of obstetric fistulas in the UK, as well as a deep sadness for the parts of Christ's body that still suffer in this way. The zest for spreading awareness of the freedom available following immense isolation felt deeply familiar, echoing Christ's redemption of us and his call to spread awareness of it. ■

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More information about the charity Alice volunteered with can be found at freedomfromfistula.org/projects/malawi



A Mucky Business

Tim Farron

IVP, 2008
£12.99, 80pp
ISBN: 9781789744453

Rachel Owusu-Ankomah
is CMF Head of Student
Ministries

Tim Farron will be familiar to many of us – the Christian, Liberal Democrat MP and former party leader who resigned because it seemed too difficult to ‘lead the party well whilst remaining a faithful Christian’. He was frequently asked his opinion on ‘hot topics’ like gay sex and abortion, and by his own admission gave wobbly answers. Since stepping down, he has spoken honestly about his struggles in navigating faith and a political career – succumbing to vanity, people pleasing, and trying to blend in. He’s emerged however as a strong and unashamed Christian voice in politics, and the fruits are this book and a podcast of the same name.¹

Co-authored with colleagues from Faith in Politics, the case is made for why Christians should be involved in politics and not avoid or ignore this all too often ‘mucky business’. It’s helpfully divided into three sections looking at: why Christians don’t get involved in politics, why they should, and the different ways that could look like. These are not arm’s length discussions, but rather Farron’s own story and testimony are weaved in alongside case studies from across the political spectrum.

There is honesty infused throughout this book, as those who feature (from MPs to local organisers) share their challenges and failings, something that can all too often be absent from our leaders. It is both a convicting and encouraging reminder to them (and us) to continue to stand and stand for Jesus in the political space and beyond. More than discourse, it is helpfully practical to the reader by providing ways we can be involved politically; from simply being aware and praying to standing for political office. In seeking to be faithful to

biblical, orthodox Christian principles, *A Mucky Business* shows us how politics can be viewed through this lens and engaged with well, whilst acknowledging that ‘we can compromise politically without compromising theologically’. As fellow faith and politics advocates from the AND campaign also write: ‘two Christians can disagree on an important policy without one or the other necessarily being unfaithful’.²

So, what can we as Christian medical, nursing, and midwifery students do? Should some of us enter the mucky world of politics? Some of us may feel called to that, not just in the context of Westminster, Holyrood, Stormont, or Cardiff Bay but also in the BMA and our professional colleges. More than that, it is a reminder to be salt and light wherever God has called us; to remain in him and faithful to him and his word, whether than be in the lecture theatre, on placement, in the hospital or the GP surgery.

This doesn’t happen passively, but through intentionally walking with the Lord, gaining knowledge and understanding. Like the men of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32) knowing the signs and times, the issues in our own areas of healthcare are important. Not in isolation but firmly rooted in Christ, with our Bible in one hand and our stethoscope or scalpel in the other.

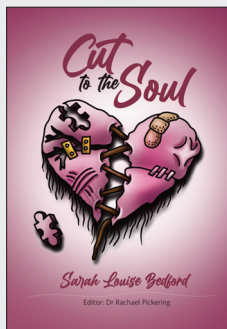
Finally, it is a challenge to pray earnestly and persistently for our leaders and those in power; for Christians involved in politics that God will keep them, give them wisdom and work through them, and for ourselves that we may truly love the Lord God will all our heart, mind body and soul and love our neighbour in politics, in healthcare, wherever God may call us. ■

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Reviews

book: *Cut to the Soul*



Cut to the Soul

Sarah Louise-Bedford
 editor: Rachael Pickering
 CMF & Intregitas, 2023, £10,
 158pp, ISBN: 9781789728446

John Hindley, an elder at Broadgrace Church in Coltishall, Norfolk, and author of several books, including *Serving without Sinking*.



In her preface, Sarah Louise expresses her hope that this book will be helpful – practically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is!

I do not self-harm, but as a pastor and friend I know those who have and do. I have found *Cut to the Soul* helpful in my own faith, but also in giving me insight and real help in walking with those who self-harm. By providing honest and straight-forward insights into her own journey, coupled with a feast of wisdom, truth and care from the Bible, Sarah Louise has equipped me to better serve others.

She has also given me a book I will give and commend without hesitation to those who are self-harming or who are trying to navigate this confusing, hidden, and dark world with those who are. This is not only because of the deep and accessible content of the book, but also because of its tone. This book is kind. Written by a kind author, she reflects the kindness of Jesus Christ. Such gentle kindness will make this book a source of healing and hope to Christians who are self-harming and, wonderfully, to those of other faiths or none. Here is an offer of hope, peace, and wholeness. If you are reading this short review, please read this book! ▀

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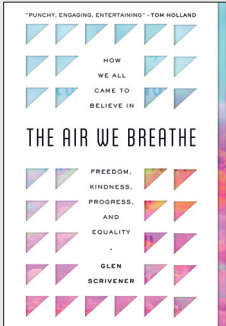
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The Air We Breathe

Glen Scrivener

The Good Book Company
2022, £9.99 Paperback pp232
ISBN: 9781784987497

Katy Roberts is a medical student in Bristol

You are a goldfish, and Christianity is the water in which you swim', claims Glen Scrivener in his new book, *The Air We Breathe*.¹ Believing we've lost sight of just how radical the Bible's values are, Scrivener seeks to give his reader, 'a deeper appreciation for the values you cherish, and most of all, that you'll see the power and profundity of Jesus and his revolution.'²

Scrivener's three target audiences are 'the nones' – those unfamiliar with biblical teaching, 'the dones' – those who think they know Christianity and are hostile to it, and 'the wons' – Christians. Starting in Genesis and heading through to the 20th century, he unpacks seven core values which, he argues, originate from the Bible: equality, compassion, consent, enlightenment, science, freedom, and progress. It's deliberately Western-focussed, but Scrivener wants to make clear that this is not because 'West is best', nor because Christianity is a Western phenomenon (it's not). He doesn't shy away from the ugly parts of Christian history.

Scrivener is fast-paced and ambitious in the amount of ground he covers. His style is conversational and sometimes humorous. It's an easy page-turner, despite the weighty topics covered, and eye-opening to the profound impact that Christianity and biblical values have had in shaping the Western world. Scrivener paints a vivid picture of the ancient world, contrasting it with the radical beauty of Jesus' humility and servanthood. You can't help but be amazed by the way in which Jesus' compassion and upside-down order provides a basis for many of the values that society subscribes to today.

However, at times questions are unanswered or there is a lack of detail – the danger of moving too quickly is to lose nuance when each topic could merit a book of its own.

Scrivener isn't unique in his desire to uncover the immense impact that Christianity has had on the Western World – both Christian (Vishal Mangalwadi)³ and secular (Tom Holland)⁴ authors have explored the topic. Tom Holland's acclaimed book *Dominion* has long been on my reading list, and I've made a number of failed attempts to listen to it as an audiobook. So it was with great excitement that I picked up *The Air we Breathe* at a Christian bookstall – Scrivener makes the topic accessible for a much wider audience who, like me, might struggle to wade through meaty history books!

The final chapters are challenging for the unbeliever. Scrivener writes, '*Everyone is confronted with the absurdly improbable event: Christianity rose to life to have dominion over the world. Christians say: We have an explanation: Christianity rose to life because Christ rose to life.*'⁵

This book succeeded in lifting my eyes beyond the beauty of biblical principles to Jesus himself. It's a timely reminder of the subversive nature of his love for the unlovely. ■

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comparing treatment options for non-alcoholic steatohepatitis

Alcohol is not the only cause of liver disease. Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis is a potentially serious condition affecting over half of individuals with type 2 diabetes and three-quarters of those suffering from obesity – thus a significant proportion of the population globally (estimated at 24%).¹ It can lead to cirrhosis, liver failure, and cancer, as well as being implicated in some cases of cardiovascular disease.

A randomised trial in Italy² compared the benefits of bariatric metabolic surgery (Roux-en-Y gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy) with lifestyle interventions and medical therapies (at three different hospitals) in the treatment of non-alcoholic steatohepatitis among obese patients. The relative success of the treatment pathways were judged by 'histological resolution of NASH without worsening of fibrosis at 1-year follow-up'.

Since weight loss and lifestyle changes are crucial to the reversal of non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, it is not surprising that the study found that surgeries limiting calorie intake were overwhelmingly more successful than education and medical therapies.

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aging populations and long-term care

Much has been written about the 'demographic time-bomb' expected to occur as birth rates, especially in developed countries, decline and longevity increases. Whether or not this proves to be a serious problem, given high rates of immigration from developing to developed countries, the fact remains that longer lives mean more people in need of expensive long-term care (LTC).

A recent article in the *Lancet*¹ acknowledges the challenges of meeting this need, especially at a time when the infirm elderly can be considered a burden and a drain on scarce resources.² The article defines good quality LTC as that which 'aims to enhance the functional ability of individuals with a substantial loss in intrinsic capacity, or a risk of such a loss'. By 'functional ability', they mean quality of life that includes human relationships, mobility, and meaningful activity.

This is the UN-declared 'Decade of Healthy Ageing', and a *Lancet Commission* of relevant experts has been established to 'devise a roadmap to person-centred LTC that respects and restores human rights and optimises the functional ability and wellbeing of older people with ongoing loss in capacity or who are at risk of such a loss'.

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ethical framework for sharing scarce medical resources

In the past 100 years, no other event or novel technology – not the advent of penicillin, dialysis, organ transplantation, or new genetic therapeutics – has necessitated the allocation of scarce health resources for more people worldwide than the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ The pandemic highlighted inequities in the availability of vaccines and medical interventions as these gradually became available. Besides the obvious preferential distribution of vaccine and therapeutics to countries that could afford to pay for them, for example, there were also inequities within countries. This has led policy makers to consider a set of principles that should underpin the allocation of medical resources in times of high risk and low preparedness.

This *Lancet* article sets out five universal ethical values that have come out of the many reports and

assessments prompted by the pandemic: 'maximising benefits and minimising harms, mitigating unfair disadvantage, equal moral concern, reciprocity, and instrumental value'. These are high ideals that will be called upon whenever we face a new threat to global health, as there will always be a time lag between a novel threat and the development of preventative and curative measures.

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campaign to prevent student suicide

Families who have lost children to suicide while they were studying at university had started a petition, signed by over 100,000 people, asking the government to extend existing 'duty of care' responsibilities for children to adults attending institutions of higher learning.

There is resistance to this idea by universities represented by Universities UK and the Department of Education as there is already a general duty to provide education and pastoral care. With many students living off-campus, there is a limit to how much responsibility university staff can be expected to take for the wellbeing of adult students who are largely autonomous. MPs debated the petition's proposal on 5 June, and the Minister for Higher Education has asked universities in England to prioritise mental health and sign up to the University Mental Health Charter. They have also been advised to let family or friends know if there are concerns about an individual's mental health.¹

1. Universities told to step up to prevent suicides. *BBC News* 6 June 2023. [bit.ly/3MSZhxZ](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-67361000)

development in Galleri test for cancer

Though further testing will be carried out, a recent large-scale trial within the NHS has confirmed what earlier research in America

found – that the Galleri blood test¹ can detect and identify DNA signals from 50 different kinds of cancer.

Lead researcher Prof Mark Middleton said that 'The test was 85% accurate in detecting the source of the cancer – and that can be really helpful because so many times it is not immediately obvious when you have got the patient in front of you what test is needed to see whether their symptoms are down to cancer.'²

This development promises to revolutionise the early detection and treatment of a disease that still presents huge challenges to the medical profession.

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preventing heat-related deaths in a time of global warming

Last year saw temperatures soaring to over 40C in the UK for the first time, but almost certainly not for the last time.¹ Global warming is leading to life-threatening temperatures globally, and the very young and the elderly are most at risk, though anyone can suffer from heat exhaustion.

High temperatures cause blood vessels to dilate, lowering blood pressure, and making syncope (collapse) more likely. Excessive sweating can lead to electrolyte imbalances which further compromise well-being.²

The Heat Health Alert System³ is a new initiative that aims to warn of impending high temperatures and offer advice to prevent health consequences, thus reducing pressure on the NHS.

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egg freezing on the rise

With many women now wanting career success before they settle down to have a family, it is perhaps not surprising that more are choosing to put some of their eggs on ice against the risk of decreased fertility in later life. Covid, with its associated social disruption, is also believed to account for some of the increased numbers (from 2,500 in 2019 to more than 4,000 in 2021).¹

The procedure, technically known as oocyte cryopreservation, involves treatment with hormones that stimulate the production of more eggs than would normally be produced during ovulation.² This takes a toll, both physically and emotionally. In addition, there is a considerable financial cost involved with this fertility insurance policy - in the region of £30,000 according to an article in the Guardian warning women about the risks and calling for greater transparency on the part of clinics offering the service.³

The chances of a frozen egg resulting in a live birth are not high – just 2-12% – and this needs to be taken into account when making the decision to go down this route.

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depression – an epidemic?

You might think so when you read that over 8 million people in the UK are prescribed antidepressants, and up to 2 million of these use them long-term (five years or more).¹ A BBC Panorama programme investigating the use of antidepressants obtained these depressing figures from the NHS. While there is no doubt that many people are helped by taking antidepressant drugs in the short-term, there is currently no evidence to

suggest that taking them long-term is beneficial and may even result in negative physical side-effects like heart problems or diabetes. However, the Panorama investigation is primarily concerned with the challenges of drug withdrawal and how pharmaceutical companies have not always been transparent about this aspect of their productions.

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sickle cell – a neglected problem

Sickle cell disease is prevalent wherever there is malaria because (it is commonly believed) having a single copy of the sickle cell trait gene provides a small survival advantage to those infected, but at a huge cost to those who inherit two copies of the gene. It is 'a chronic and progressive condition associated with frequent painful, vaso-occlusive episodes, multiple end-organ complications, and detrimental effects on the psychosocial wellbeing of those affected, their families, and communities.'¹ Yet because it affects mainly people living in low and middle-income countries, it has not received the attention it deserves even though around 300,000 children are born with it every year, and the number is rising with birth rates. Many will die before they reach the age of five.

The greatest incidence of sickle cell disease is in sub-Saharan Africa where nearly 79% of affected children are born. Globally, more than 1,000 people, children and adults, die daily because of the condition. Progress towards a cure and effective treatment has been made, but this *Lancet* article concludes with an exhortation to 'move swiftly as a global health and haematology community towards purposeful action to improve the lives of the global population with sickle cell disease.'¹

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