

Engage



Quarterly comment from the **Jubilee** Centre

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Christ's Appearance to the Two Disciples Journeying to Emmaus

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Which story are you living in?

Jonathan Tame

Our lives can be shaped powerfully by the narratives around us – the accounts of reality which view events and circumstances through a particular lens, often with a certain goal or agenda in mind. Significant secular ones include the idea that we can be whatever we want to be – our identity isn't fixed by social constructs such as gender. Another is that metropolitan elites control the country and those who hold political or commercial power cannot be trusted. We could include the broader cultural ideologies of consumerism, individualism and capitalism in this list of grand ideas that shape our thinking.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to positive cultural engagement. This must begin with assessing where we ourselves are adopting these narratives uncritically, and going on to evaluate them in a constructive

way. There are some elements of truth behind each one, otherwise they wouldn't be persuasive. But from a biblical perspective, most dominant cultural narratives hinge on false assumptions and include significant omissions or distortions, which can make them dangerous in the battle for people's hearts and minds.

One of our favourite verses in the Jubilee Centre is Romans 11:2, 'Don't be conformed to the pattern of this world,' which could be paraphrased as, 'Refuse to allow the dominant cultural narratives to have the last word in your heart and life.' But that is only half the story; Paul goes on to say, 'But be transformed by the renewing of your minds' – or perhaps 'immerse yourself in God's great story so that it captures your heart, fills your imagination and drives your life forward.'

At our Forming a Christian Mind

Conference in November, Dr Chris Wright challenged participants by saying they shouldn't be asking, 'How does the Bible apply to my life?' but, 'How does my life fit into the Bible, and the great – yet unfinished – story which it tells?'

As the New Year unfolds, I want to suggest three ways for followers of Jesus to participate more deliberately in God's great narrative.

First, expose the subtle ways we accept the false messages coming from our cultural narratives (Col 2:20-21, 2 Cor 10:5). This is difficult to do alone, as such a stance of cultural defiance is best worked out in fellowship with other Christians who want to resist conformity to the pattern of this world. So why not take this up in a small group at your church?

Second, delight yourself in the biblical story afresh. Embrace the one true narrative of how God is redeeming his rebellious and broken creation in Christ and calling the Church to participate in restoring all things to his good, pleasing and perfect ways. Let your goal be to align your priorities with what God is doing (John 5:19), for your life is not about you – it finds its real meaning in relation to God's story.

Finally, cultivate your imagination of

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There will be blood

Guy Brandon

'Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it...' (Leviticus 19:26)

'...because the life of every creature is its blood.' (Leviticus 17:14)

Among its many varied and often obscure laws, Leviticus 19 bans Israelites from eating blood. On the surface of it, this would restrict us from all kinds of foods including rare steak or steak tartare (which is entirely raw); biltong (thinly-sliced raw air-cured meat); and black pudding – which of course is doubly banned since it contains both blood and pork.

This series has previously looked at contemporary Christian approaches to tattoos (mostly fine) and mixed-fibre clothes (feel free to wear polycotton). Presumably the laws around eating rare steak and black pudding are – much like biltong – cut and dried?

Well, not so fast.

Blood loss

Blood is an ideal host for pathogens and it is standard practice in all abattoirs to remove it from animals by strategically puncturing them and hanging them to drain. Then they are gutted, washed and processed into cuts of meat. Most countries require that animals are stunned before draining for reasons of animal welfare and convenience, and death actually occurs from lack of blood to the brain.

In a kosher slaughterhouse the animals are not stunned first and their throats are cut by a licensed Jewish shochet, before non-kosher elements are removed (including certain fat, veins and sinews). The meat is soaked and salted to remove remaining blood, but this is not the sole concern. There are many rules surrounding who is allowed to slaughter the animals, how the knife should be wielded, and how the meat is subsequently processed.

The pink liquid you see in many packs of meat – kosher or otherwise – is therefore not blood. It is a mixture of water and the protein myoglobin. In the Jewish halakhic tradition, this is called *mohul*, meat 'juice', or *chamra boser*, 'the wine of the meat'. Cooking meat doesn't remove blood, it just cooks it. In short, while there are some things that are best left in the 70s (like collars made from repurposed hang gliders and Captain and Tenille's emetic song 'Muskrat Love'), there is no biblical reason why steak tartare should not be eaten.

The food laws

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus states he has come to fulfil the Law. Although he makes it clear he is not doing away with the Law, this does abolish the kosher rules. Practice around which animals it is permissible for Christians to eat was decided long ago. Peter's dream in Acts 10 established that even 'unclean' animals could be eaten, and Paul is also vocal about the matter. There are no kosher laws for Christians: bacon and seafood are on the menu.

However, when it comes to black pudding, we're not just talking about clean and unclean animals. We're dealing with one of the oldest laws in the Bible, reiterated multiple times in both the Old and New Testaments. It's very hard to ignore.

The Jerusalem Council

In Acts 15, a group of Apostles and elders in the Church met to address a pernicious problem. Jewish Christians were preaching that Gentile converts had to accept Jewish law, including circumcision and the food laws. Peter and Paul both argue vehemently against this. (In Galatians 5, Paul graphically condemns those who are preaching circumcision to non-Jewish Christians.) The result is a letter from the Jerusalem Council sent to Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, clarifying

the Council's position (Acts 15:23-29, also 21:25). 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.'

These instructions reaffirm the covenant God made with Noah after the flood. This 'Noahic Covenant' took place before Abraham or the nation of Israel and applies to all humanity. God allows Noah and his descendants to eat all kinds of animals, but clearly states: 'You must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.' (Genesis 9:4)

This will be controversial. As Christians, we're not used to this idea. We live under grace. Dietary restrictions aren't for us, surely?

To summarise: the prohibition on eating blood is one of the only demands made of Gentile Christians (i.e. most of us) in the New Testament. Paul, Peter and other giants among the apostles and elders all agreed on it, and – while ensuring the burden on non-Jewish converts was as light as possible – they nevertheless felt this important enough to state unequivocally. It reiterates a command given by God to Noah, and by extension to all humanity, and that remains consistent across the entire arc of scripture. Hermeneutically, it is very difficult to argue that it is now irrelevant.

Of course, this hasn't always been Christian practice – but then, neither has Sabbath observance or the ban on interest. And yes, there are other verses that suggest some nuance might be possible here, but it's certainly not one we can put aside lightly.

So the next time you tuck into a plate of black pudding, you might feel slightly uneasy. And not just because of the ingredients.

Training graduates in biblical social reform

Introducing the SAGE Graduate Programme and our 2018-9 participants.

Where will the next generation of Christian social reformers like William Wilberforce, Elizabeth Fry and Lord Shaftesbury come from? This is a challenge we decided to take on, so in October we welcomed four recent graduates to join us for SAGE, a year-long discipleship programme in social reform. The participants are here to learn to think biblically about issues in public life, develop research skills and set up a project to help Christians engage in social transformation. All the while they're living together in a shared house in Cambridge, as a community of social reform.

Jubilee Centre's track record of identifying and investing in future leaders is significant — we count among our alumni the only Professor in Biblical Law at a secular university in the UK (Jonathan Burnside), an economist who headed up the London office of the IMF (Paul Mills), and a Times columnist and political journalist (Tim Montgomerie). The latter described his time with Jubilee Centre as one of the richest and most influential of his life. Similarly, as we disciple recent graduates through the SAGE initiative, we believe that we will be bringing a biblical rigour to bear on the lives of future economists, teachers, journalists, politicians, academics, business people... the next generation of social and political influencers.

The programme is structured in three parts: a Study Phase (October to December), a Research Phase (January to April), and a Project Phase (May to July). The SAGE participants (or SAGEites, as they've become known) also spend a half day each week in volunteering at a social action project in a local church or ministry.



SAGE participants visit John Wesley's House



SAGE participants with course director, Philip Powell

The SAGEites

Katherine Martin



Katherine has graduated from Trinity College, Dublin with a BA degree in Geography and Philosophy, where she was president of the Christian Union. She is originally from Northern Ireland.

'I decided to apply for SAGE because it included a number of aspects which I found interesting and attractive compared to the other programmes available: the academic course, opportunities for research, social engagement and a focus on building a community within the programme.'

'So far, I've enjoyed the first term of study. The smaller class size has given more opportunities for discussion, research and learning, and I'm learning to use a Biblical and relational lens when thinking about policy and ideas. I've also found that living in community has been a great experience.'

Peter Redmayne



Peter studied Modern Languages at Durham University where he gained his BA degree. He is from St Albans, and more recently has been doing an internship at St Nicholas, Sevenoaks.

'I applied for SAGE because I wanted to get a Christian 'baptism' in the area of politics. If I wanted to influence politics for Christ, then I knew I needed to think more like him. I've found this term stimulating as we've studied and discussed Jubilee Centre's approach to a wide range of areas including politics, the economy and the arts.'

'I've grappled with how we apply biblical law from the Pentateuch to contemporary society: do we apply the principles to society as a whole, or just the life of the Church and individual Christians? Biblical law does seem to provide a paradigm – or model – from which we can draw principles and apply them to public life today.'

Hannah Eves



Hannah is from Bangor in Northern Ireland and has graduated from the University of Nottingham with an MA in Governance and Political Development. She was also a student leader in the Navigators.

'In this first term, I have found that my confidence in my capacity to engage in debate and discussion has grown and I have enjoyed grappling with subjects (such as economics) which are far from my academic comfort zone. The Jubilee Centre provides a context where discussion is whole-heartedly encouraged and there is no idea not on the table for engagement. While this exposes us to hard ideas, including some of the more 'extreme' ideas in the Old Testament, it also allows us to be authentic in our study of the biblical text and to have freedom of thought.

'I've also gained understanding of the importance of networks for social reformers. This has been illustrated to me through the intentional community-building of our housing situation and has taught me practical lessons about how to do fellowship well.'

Andrew Phillips



Andrew has graduated from Oxford University, where he took a BA in Classics with Biblical Hebrew. He is from Dorset and is a keen musician, playing both piano and violin.

'I have appreciated learning the important Jubilee Centre principle of connecting a consistently biblical worldview with excellent research on issues in the public square. Both aspects of this equation are vital, and I have found our study and discussion very insightful on how to connect and integrate the two. Christians are called to be salt and light, engaging with the world rather than withdrawing from it, and committing to changing and challenging culture rather than accepting things as they are.

'I've also been volunteering at Fairbite, a branch of the Cambridge foodbank scheme, which has provided an excellent counterpoint to the academic side of the course. I am interested in engaging with social and welfare policy in the future, so gaining insight 'on the ground' has been valuable and rewarding.'

Do you know anyone who might be interested in the SAGE programme?

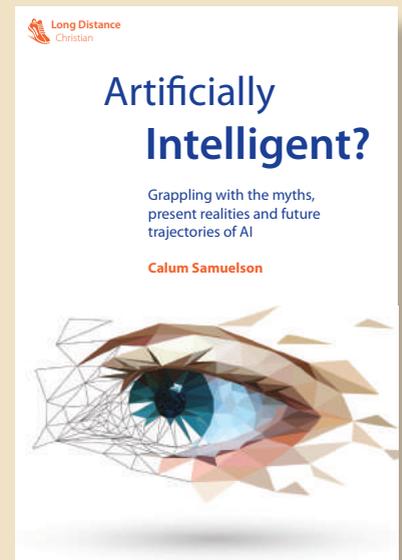
SAGE is a unique, year-long leadership programme for aspiring social reformers, based at the Jubilee Centre in Cambridge.

Participants will:

- Discover the Bible's social vision and how it addresses 21st century issues in public life
- Embrace a framework for Christian social reform based on Relational Thinking
- Learn how and why to base social transformation initiatives on thorough research
- Develop skills for biblical and issue-based research and for communication of ideas
- Form and implement a strategy for engaging other Christians around the issue
- Grow in personal, social and spiritual maturity

To find out more about the course, and how to apply for the October 2019 intake, visit: jubilee-centre.org/SAGE

New booklet



This new booklet grapples with the myths, present realities and future trajectories of AI.

'Informative, authoritative, insightful and practically orientated – I wholeheartedly endorse this paper which provides a helpful, theologically informed roadmap for the rapidly changing world of AI. Essential reading for church leaders and all those who wish to understand and engage with the challenges which lie ahead.'

Professor John Wyatt, Professor Emeritus of Ethics & Perinatology, University College London

'Without doubt advances in AI look set to disrupt and transform the way in which we live our lives. This agile and evocative paper from the Jubilee Centre helps Christians to navigate this emerging landscape, identifying the risks and opportunities whilst grasping the significance of them within a biblical framework. People remain at the heart of God's purposes and the more 'intelligent' machines we build, the more important it is for us to keep our eyes on the needs and opportunities of humanity to flourish. This paper begins to provide us with the tools to do just that'

Nola Leach, Chief Executive at CARE (Christian Action, Research & Education)

You can order the 48-page booklet using the response form, or download a free PDF copy on our website.

Pitfalls in combatting persecution

Philip Powell

In our latest Cambridge Paper, Dr Judd Birdsall writes about the global challenges of religious persecution and discusses the common pitfalls that limit and undermine Christian advocacy efforts to combat persecution.

Birdsall begins by considering the life and legacy of the French Protestant theologian Sebastian Castellio. Castellio was convinced that coercing religious conformity does not engender social harmony. His best-known work, *Concerning Heretics, Whether They Are to Be Persecuted*, was published in response to the execution of anti-trinitarian Michael Servetus in Geneva. However, Castellio lost his position as Rector of the College of Geneva, and despite being one of Europe's most promising intellectuals, he was at times reduced to dire poverty. But now, four centuries later, his central idea that civil authorities should not punish persons with dissenting theological beliefs is taken for granted in Western democracies. But what about the ongoing religious persecution outside the West? We still have much progress to make before we live in a world in which Castellio's vision is fully actualised.

What are some of the pitfalls that may lead to ineffective and counterproductive ways of working for religious freedom? Birdsall identifies seven pitfalls:

1. Ignoring the problem all together.

Although this is uncommon, it must be acknowledged at the outset that this is one of the pitfalls – wilful blindness and inaction. Because of guilt from past mistakes, some Christians don't want to have any part in some latter-day 'White Man's Burden' of combatting persecution. Western Christians should recognise that we have opportunities to humbly steward our relative wealth and power to resource indigenous reform efforts.

2. Exaggerating the problem. In a well-intentioned effort to compel action, some advocates exaggerate the problem or offer imprecise accounts that misrepresent the scale and severity of Christian persecution. But this is counter-productive. Birdsall argues that Christians must be people of integrity; it's better to risk understating the extent and severity of persecution than to risk

overstating the problem.

3. Showing uncritical partiality and credulity towards certain favoured groups, namely Christian organisations and persecuted Christians. This has led some Christians to present a picture that was partial, anecdotal, unverified, dated, sensationalised or politically biased. It is crucial to listen critically to stories of persecution.

4. Worse than showing undue partiality to persecuted Christians is the pitfall of ignoring the plight of persecuted non-Christians. Any assault on a person's freedom of conscience is an affront to a Christian view of human dignity. If we fail to acknowledge this, we can miss that Muslims are the primary victims of Islamic terrorism and of repression in Muslim-majority countries.

5. Mimicking the rhetoric of authoritarian government officials and monopolistic non-state actors. While it might be politically advantageous to scapegoat some minority group in the West, we must recall that Christians are the minority in 71 countries. We make life more difficult for those Christian minorities when we mistreat minorities in the West.

6. 'Persecution Complex'. There is a tendency among Christians in the West to present their own experience of minor legal discrimination or social marginalisation—or, frankly, loss of relative social privilege—as akin to the brutal repression Christians face in other parts of the world.

7. It's important to remember to use language that encourages rather than encumbers the cause of combatting persecution. The terms 'religious freedom' and 'freedom of religion or belief' can be foreign, even threatening, to non-Western societies that emphasise collective norms above individual rights. It might prove more useful to draw on vernacular concepts like social harmony and equality that can be contextual footholds for religious freedom.

You can order a copy of the full Cambridge Paper using the response form, or read it on our website.

Jubilee blog highlights

The dangers of oversimplification

'Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated,' said the philosopher Confucius. Simplicity is needed in our frantic world, but what about the dangers of oversimplification? In this blog post, Philip Powell argues that oversimplification makes a matter so simplistic that it leads us away from truthful understanding towards a distorted view of the world. He offers three solutions: 1. Trust what the experts have to say, 2. Reject an 'us vs. them' narrative and 3. Embrace ambiguity and paradox. These solutions can foster an appreciation for complexity and nuance that makes room for asking hard questions and moving beyond shallow answers. Only with this fresh understanding can our societies truly address and solve today's complicated social problems.

We want a king!

1 Samuel 8 and strongman politics

In November, Brazil elected the highly divisive former military captain, Jair Bolsonaro as President, also known as the 'Trump of the Tropics.' Perhaps the most worrying aspect of Bolsonaro's rise to power is his open admiration of dictatorship and military rule in a country that has only recently emerged from a military dictatorship. In this blog, Charlee New argues that the rise of 'strongman politics' is not a new phenomenon. 1 Samuel 8 presents a comparable situation and offers a timely reminder that willingly (collectively) handing over your power to a political saviour is a sure pathway to that same power being wielded against you. Moreover, where Christians uncritically join other voices in a cynical disparagement of democracy, without also affirming its good, they are liable to fall into an apathetic relativism about different political structures. Instead we should affirm and protect the value of freedom.

Every week, we post a new blog exploring current issues from a biblical perspective. You can read the above posts in full, along with other recent blogs, at jubilee-centre.org/category/blogs

Recent events

Sally Bertlin



Dr Chris Wright at FACM conference

applying a biblical framework to his own discipline and career. Those that listened were inspired by his personal journey: 'He encouraged us to pursue what we are passionate about in our research and careers, trusting that God will use it to bless others.'

The feedback from participants was extremely positive and the day provided many moments of insight and reflection for the Christian postgraduates and researchers working in the secular Academy.

Festival of Ideas

Jubilee Centre again participated in the University of Cambridge's annual Festival of Ideas, which is held over a two-week period in October. All four of our events were well attended (between 25 and 35 people each) and received very positive feedback.

The first talk, 'Extreme Inequality: A New Ethic of Remuneration' by Calum Samuelson was a presentation of his new research on remuneration. His reading of the Bible opened three new ideas for understanding and reforming remuneration: justice, dignity and reward.

The second seminar by Philip Powell was on the Japanese Christian social reformer Toyohiko Kagawa. Philip provided insight into the legacy of this extraordinary man of learning and passion who served his nation during a time of crisis, bringing social change to those on the margins of society.

A particular highlight was Rodney Green's talk on integrity in public leadership based on his recent Cambridge Paper. This presentation by the former Chief Executive of Leicester City Council helpfully defined the key ingredients of Christian integrity in terms of moral accountability, relational consistency and personal discipline.

The climax was the final Saturday when participants gathered for a tour of the Archetypes exhibition by the sculptor, Liviu Mocan, to hear first-hand his inspiration for the Reformation-themed sculptures.

Talks from both the Festival of Ideas and the Forming a Christian Mind conference can be viewed on our YouTube channel: [youtube.com/JubileeCentre](https://www.youtube.com/JubileeCentre)

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what God's kingdom might look like in the specifics of your neighbourhood, workplace or sphere of influence. And then use that as faith's fuel to pray for and seek God's agenda and strategy in your context. What priorities, values and attitudes can you champion that will be a sign of the justice and righteousness of the age to come?

Forming a Christian Mind

Revelation and Reality: The Bible and Scholarship was the theme of our sixth annual Forming a Christian Mind (FACM) conference on Saturday 17th November. The 60 or so participants were primarily postgraduate students and post-docs, from the University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University, and other institutions within the UK.

Tim Laurence introduced the day by setting out the vision for Forming a Christian Mind, which is to equip Christians in the academic world for their double calling: to study excellently from the basis of a biblical worldview, and to use what they study for cultural apologetics and mission. Andrew Fellows, then gave an insightful talk on how postgraduates and scholars can re-awaken 'the biblical mind'. One participant commented: 'He challenged us in our thinking as to how our presuppositions are fundamentally different to those of non-Christians.'

He was followed by Dr Chris Wright, who gave two excellent and stimulating plenary talks: the first, on how the biblical narrative gives us a comprehensive picture of the work of God creating and then restoring creation through Christ, and the second on the relevance of Old Testament ethics today.

The theme was further explored in the afternoon as Christopher Townsend interviewed Professor Jonathan Burnside, who shared from his own experience of

No matter what this world's narratives are currently saying, the Christian message is one of unshakeable hope. Although the biblical drama in which we are living is still unfolding, let's play our part in it with faith and confidence in 2019, for we know how the story eventually ends: evil does not prevail, justice is fulfilled and love has the last word.

Farewell to Maggie

Maggie Jones, our Supporter Relations Administrator, has now moved on to a new job in operations at Romsey Mill, here in Cambridge.

We are most grateful to Maggie for all that she has contributed during the past three years within the staff team and for faithfully maintaining Jubilee Centre's contact with supporters and developing that work. We wish her well in her new role.

About Jubilee Centre

The Jubilee Centre is a research and policy think tank that offers a biblical perspective on social, economic and political issues. Through our research, publications, events and training we equip Christians to be salt and light in the public square.

Jubilee Centre is based in the centre of Cambridge, which is ideal for collaborating with local churches, like-minded charities, students and academics in the two universities and our sister organisations Relationships Foundation and Relational Research.

Jubilee Centre, 59 St Andrews Street, Cambridge CB2 3BZ

Tel. 01223 566319

Email: info@jubilee-centre.org

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