

Engage



Quarterly comment from the **Jubilee** Centre

October 2018



Fire at Lake Elsinore, California

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The Heat Is On

Jonathan Tame

This year has been remarkable for the range and intensity of extreme weather patterns. A heatwave in July affected much of the Northern hemisphere: fires killed 92 people in Greece; Japan suffered severe flooding then a deadly heatwave, with a total of 350 fatalities; wildfires in California have caused billions of dollars of damage; and nuclear power stations had to be switched off where river water became too warm to be used for cooling reactors. Dust storms in Northern India killed 125 people in May, while 450 died in monsoon flooding in Kerala in recent weeks. For once, high income countries seem to have suffered as many fatalities as poorer nations.

Meteorologists and climate scientists are still investigating the extent to which these events are caused by man-made climate change, but it's clear that extreme weather patterns are becoming more common. 16 out

of the 17 hottest years on record have been in this century, and multiple different studies show overall temperature trends rising on both land and sea.

Sir John Houghton, the Christian who first chaired the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), argued that responses to climate change should be two-fold: mitigation and adaptation. The Paris Climate Accord is an international framework for mitigating the effects of man-made climate change, by seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such that global temperatures do not rise by more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. However, this is a very long term project as reduced emissions will take decades to work through to changed temperatures. Adaptation, on the other hand, is about helping people respond practically to changes in climate already, so as to minimise the adverse effects of heatwaves, floods and drought. Together,

the goal is living sustainably over multiple generations, on a planet with finite physical resources.

As I have reflected on this I have been reading Matthew 24-25, which is one long discourse about the end of the age and the signs of Jesus' return. Many Christians try to analyse the timing and circumstances around the second coming, but the overall thrust of the passage is being watchful and prepared for the Master's return – as 'faithful and wise servants' (24:45) who do what pleases God.

The book-ends of this discourse are pertinent. Jesus begins by warning that there will be wars and disasters – great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (24:6-8). Yet the end will not come before the gospel of the kingdom is preached as a testimony to every nation (24:14). The discourse closes with Jesus explaining that when he does return, he will gather the nations and separate people like a shepherd divides the sheep and goats (25:31-46). The righteous are those who care for the hungry, the stranger, the sick and imprisoned. If we connect these book-ends, then the way we respond to those who are caught up in disasters can witness to God's kingdom and will also be evidence of our own discipleship.

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Tattoo: Taboo, or no more than a skin deep issue?

Guy Brandon



'Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.'
(Leviticus 19:28 NIV)

Tattoos, once the preserve of sailors and criminals, have lost much of their stigma and grown in popularity over recent years. Surveys suggest around one in five UK adults has a tattoo. Attitudes towards tattoos are likely to be cultural more than religious, with younger people far more open to the idea.

Christian approaches are varied and tend not to break along denominational lines, with leaders advocating different stances. Historically there has been little official teaching on the practice of cosmetic tattooing, though in 330 AD the Emperor Constantine did ban the practice of tattooing convicts' faces, 'since the penalty of his condemnation can be expressed both on his hands and on his calves, and so that his face, which has been fashioned in the likeness of the divine beauty, may not be disgraced.'

Conservative and Orthodox Jews accept the ban on tattooing outright, and there is an aversion in segments of the Jewish community that may be driven by the Nazis' practice of tattooing those interred in the concentration camps. A Jewish myth (which arose in the mainstream media before Amy Winehouse's funeral) claims that people with tattoos cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery, though this is rarely observed and has little foundation in Jewish law. But tattooing is apparently banned by Leviticus, and similar practices are referred to unsympathetically elsewhere in the Bible. How should we consider it today?

Cutting words

Many translations of the Bible specifically use the word 'tattoo', though this may be misleading. 'Tattoo' is a Tahitian loanword that came into the English language in the time of Captain Cook, with its own semantic range and cultural significance. (Incidentally, the only other commonly-used Polynesian loanword is the Tongan 'taboo') The Hebrew word in question is *qa'qa'*, which may – possibly – onomatopoeically reference the same

repetitive tapping involved in the process as the Tahitian *tatau*. There are only so many ways to skin a cat, or indeed to tattoo a cat's skin (a niche but controversial trend that has gained traction among Russian tattoo enthusiasts who own hairless cats).

While the mechanics of tattooing may have been the same, the Bible almost certainly refers to a specific cultural practice. This chapter of Leviticus mentions various activities that were associated with pagan worship and funeral rites, including the beard care of 19:27. The first part of verse 28 states 'Do not cut your bodies for the dead...' and that wider context can be assumed to remain unchanged for the second part.

Canaanite texts show that – as in some cultures today – it is still the custom for mourners to cut their bodies as an expression of grief (or in the course of pagan worship – as the prophets of Baal famously do when challenged by Elijah). The Bible mentions this repeatedly, alongside selective shaving. 'You are the children of the Lord your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead.' (Deuteronomy 14:1; see also Leviticus 21:5, 1 Kings 18:28 and Jeremiah 48:37) This cutting may have resulted in or deliberately been combined with permanent marking or tattooing, possibly using the ash that was often placed on the head and face, sometimes even from a funeral pyre. This disservice to the epidermis, which presumably itself occasionally resulted in fatal infection, was supposed to ease the deceased's passage to the next life or show sincerity to the gods in question.

Everything is permissible...

And so, when referring to this verse to decide whether tattooing is permissible, the phrase '...for the dead' must be at least as important as 'do not cut your bodies...' The Bible primarily places tattooing in the context of pagan worship, rather than as an aesthetic act (albeit one that often has broader symbolism for the recipient). When Paul discussed eating food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians, the point that requires nuancing is 'sacrificed to idols' – not the fact that members of the Church have

been eating in the first place.

In Leviticus and elsewhere in the Bible, then, tattooing and cutting:

- Have strong religious connotations
- Are discussed specifically in the context of funeral customs

The Bible does not suggest that tattooing is intrinsically pagan, even if the only references to tattooing it makes are within a pagan context. Either way, it does not have inherently pagan connotations today. A comparable practice would be cutting the side of the beard (something no one complains about today, but that appears alongside tattooing in Leviticus 19).

However, we also have to bear in mind Paul's warnings in 1 Corinthians. The body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and there are good arguments around needlessly altering or doing damage to God's creation and dwelling place. "I have the right to do anything," you say – but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything" – but not everything is constructive.' (1 Corinthians 10:23) Whilst these are certainly worth considering, this premise also locates tattoos on a spectrum of practices of varying permanence and severity, from dyed hair and pierced ears through microchip implants and cosmetic surgery. Motive is again important.

Mark of the cross

This also raises questions around tattooing in a specifically religious context, and also in the context of death. Some Christians have tattoos of crosses, Bible verses or other designs of significance to their faith; similarly, some people remember loved ones who have died by means of a tattoo – a name, date or other design. Is this sailing a little too close to the wind, a practice that is just too similar to the one banned in Leviticus 19?

Bearing the warnings of 1 Corinthians 8 in mind and remaining aware of other sensitivities, it is once again not the specific act or permanence of tattooing that is the problem, it is the pagan content. In our culture, and most other modern settings, tattoos no longer hold pagan connotations. A tattoo, even 'for the dead', is not an act of

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Archetypes

Jonathan Tame

On Monday 23rd July, we finally unveiled the sculpture exhibition by Liviu Mocan outside the University Church in the heart of Cambridge. Jubilee Centre commissioned the sculptures, inspired by the five 'solos' of the Reformation, to provide a new way of encouraging people to consider the Bible and its influence on public life.

The unveiling was hosted by the associate vicar of Great St Marys and began with a talk on the role of Great St Marys in the Protestant Reformation, which explained why it is the perfect venue for this exhibition. Jonathan Tame followed by telling the story behind the Archetypes project, and how the sculptures can speak not only to Reformed Protestants but to every Christian and even people from other religions.

Liviu Mocan then explored the spiritual inspiration for his sculptures and pointed out the relationship between Cambridge's Gothic architecture and the sculptures. We enjoyed musical interludes by brass musicians from the Salvation Army before the ribbon was cut by the Bishop of Huntingdon, who spoke of the power of art to bring pause to busy, 21st century life.

The event was attended by around 120 people, including Christians across many denominations, and those who had generously contributed towards the project.

The Archetypes will remain at Great St Mary's until January 2019, and the exhibition is expected to be seen by up to a million people. We pray that they will touch many people's hearts over the coming months as they bring to light many transformative themes in the gospel.



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idolatry; it does not emulate another religion's practices. In terms of specifically religious tattoos, the key question is the nature of the design. There is no reason to ban tattoos of Christian content (crosses, Bible verses). Obviously, tattoos that feature designs that do have specifically pagan or non-Christian connotations (e.g. pentagrams or Zodiac symbols) should be avoided.

But then, as a Christian, if you're thinking of permanently marking your body with the symbols of another religion, you probably need to be asking some deeper questions about your faith anyway.

You can find out more about the exhibition at archetypes-sculpture.org

The Humanity Behind AI

Calum Samuelson

Following considerable research and interviews with ten experts, this new report marks the culmination of our thinking about Artificial Intelligence (AI) over the past year. It begins by dispelling four 'AI myths' which receive a great deal of popular attention: *Unlimited Exponential Growth*, *Superintelligence*, *Computer Consciousness*, and *The Singularity*. Next, the paper soberly examines how AI actually functions. Based upon this examination, it is argued that AI should be understood primarily as a tool that helps people perform complex, repetitive, human-like tasks. Furthermore, it is argued that people should avoid anthropomorphic language when speaking about AI because of the power of computer simulation and the fact that computers are always objects encountered as 'it', never dynamic subjects encountered as 'thou' (to use Martin Buber's terms).

If AI is a tool that basically amplifies the activity of humanity, then it is crucial to discuss human nature in the debate surrounding AI. Thus, the third section

of the report considers some biblical perspectives on humanity that are essential to engaging with AI. The *Imago Dei* is fundamental because it helps Christians understand human purpose, which is found in relationships, responsibility, and self-giving love, rather than solely in illustrious accomplishments. The doctrine of the Fall helps developers be realistic about how AI may malfunction or be misused and also challenges much of the uncritical optimism that is taken for granted in the tech world. Finally, eschatology helps Christians understand the trajectory and ultimate end of humanity, which involves an embodied, dynamic, pan-ethnic community in the New Creation.

Having considered some biblical wisdom regarding human nature, the report proceeds by exploring how four of the most pertinent areas of AI engagement will both shape and be shaped by human relationships. The areas explored are: *Investment, Employment, Regulation, and Products/Services*. The report concludes



Credit - U.S. Department of Energy

by offering three general guidelines for AI engagement at a personal or local level. Firstly, communal rather than isolated use of AI can protect against biases and incubate genuine creativity. Secondly, separating the functions of AI tools can help users assess effectiveness and attain true mastery. Finally, prioritising cooperative AI designs instead of competitive ones can help ensure that humans continue to fulfil the vital and relational roles they are made for.

You can pre-order a copy of our latest booklet 'The Humanity Behind AI' using the response form.

Social Reformers Summer School Report

Ben Anderson



Each year, the Social Reformer's Summer School brings together Christians who want to influence public life. This year's Summer School took place on the 12th-15th July, with eighteen participants who came from all walks of life, and many different countries. We heard from one participant, Ben Anderson, on his experience at the School and its application for his work in social policy.

I decided to apply for the Social Reformers Summer School because I'd reached a point where I really needed some inspiration and direction on how I could be more effective as salt and light in my particular context. I work in financial services and serve as a local councillor in Wiltshire, with a special responsibility for public health and adult social care. This is a very challenging brief because (as is well-known) the cost of providing these services is currently in excess of what the state can afford. I was looking forward to learning from high-profile speakers on how they also tackled challenging briefs across their different sectors.

When I arrived at the Summer School, the first thing that struck me was how attractive Westminster College was! During

the School, the group of participants quickly made friends, and as I got to know everyone I was really impressed by their knowledge and experience. There were people from Switzerland, America and Africa, and I learnt so much from talking through my ideas with them. Their different cultural and social perspectives (on what I had assumed were one-dimensional issues) really tested my assumptions and provided me with new ideas about how things could be done. I think we'll all stay in touch and keep encouraging each other.

Before the school, I knew that the state would not be able to continue to provide all the welfare and social support services that have been prevalent in recent decades—but there wasn't a clear plan for what would take its place. However, since the Summer School I've been delving deeper into how we can build social policy on Relational Thinking, an idea introduced by some of the School's speakers. I'd never heard this term before, but it encapsulates so much of what I've struggled to express. I've already been using the Relational Thinking theory to reflect on the policy agenda I've been working on. It feels this is the right time for a new approach to social policy and what a powerful theory to influence it!



Jubilee Blog Highlights

The World Cup Dilemma

The World Cup this summer drew record viewing figures in the UK—proving that football is as popular as ever. However, as Calum Samuelson argues, love for the sport sits uncomfortably with our knowledge of FIFA's corruption and injustices. How might we then approach reform? Firstly, the World Cup should not be pitched as an 'economic windfall' for low-income countries, but as a burden of responsibility for wealthy countries. Moreover, rather than trying to impress critics with peripheral perks (such as 'renewable energy'), we must focus on achieving the primary aim (enjoyment of a game) *without harming civilians*. Ultimately, we can agree that the system is bad, whilst affirming wholeheartedly that the game is good. This helps us to understand how the former profits from the momentum of the latter—and work our way towards reform.

Following the excitement of the most recent World Cup, our latest Cambridge Paper considers the role and influence of sport in contemporary society. Calum Samuelson considers the tension between the goodness and corruption of sport and argues that Christians should engage with it as a conduit of common grace and symbol of redemption.

Due to the impacts of globalisation and technological advancements, it may be that sport is more influential now than ever. Nearly *half of the entire world* watches the World Cup.

Although sporting analogies in the Bible have led many Christians to engage sport positively, there is a lack of robust teaching and insight which is required for grappling with the complex world of sport from a truly biblical perspective.

The first urgent need is simply to understand what sport is. Contrary to those who view sport merely as a type of recreation or even a domesticated form of war, it is argued that sport is a subset of play and occupies a world of its own. Consequently, the rules and goals of sport only make sense within its own microcosm. This renders sport ultimately unnecessary, but full of meaning.

It is argued that sport maximises at least three prominent facets of play: *enjoyment, competition, and excellence*. By constructing arbitrary rules and obstacles, sport engineers an environment in which more basic enjoyments of play can be concentrated. By competing with other sportspeople, sport creates a powerful community in which perseverance and strong relationships can be forged. By aiming at victory, sport stretches humans to excel beyond previous feats and manifest excellence in unprecedented ways.

Tragically, these facets of sport are regularly corrupted because of sinful influences both from within and outside the world of sport. Within sport, enjoyment can become addiction, competition can be twisted into antagonism, and excellence can take the form of arrogance. Additionally, the love of money and power can hijack sport and use it as means to accomplish ends that have nothing to do with sport itself. Exorbitant contracts, match-fixing, and even human trafficking can all result when sport is forced to serve ends beyond its own, self-contained world.

In spite of all the corruption in and surrounding sport, it can still be used by God in powerful ways. One example is that sport functions as a conduit of common grace, allowing people to vent frustrations and experience joy they do not deserve. Additionally, sport can be a powerful symbol of the New Creation as it offers glimpses of the ultimate peace, security, and innocence God's people will experience there.

Christians attentive to the work of the Spirit can play a part in helping sport act as a conduit of common grace and a symbol of redemption. The paper closes with three general suggestions about how this might be done: 1) Emphasising local sport over professional sport can help remind people of the simplicity and surprise of enjoyment. 2) Practising corporate rather than individualistic habits in sport can strengthen relationships and enhance communities. 3) Favouring participation over perfectionism can help teach people that true excellence does not consist of rules and regulations but of daily acts of love by members of God's kingdom.

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

Following the summer break, the Jubilee Centre blog is back with new posts each week exploring current issues from a biblical perspective. You can read the above post in full, along with other recent blogs, at jubilee-centre.org/category/blogs

Congratulations and Farewell to Calum

Congratulations to Calum and Andrea Samuelson on the birth of Clive Daniel on 7th September. After two years working with Jubilee Centre, Calum with Andrea and their baby will be returning to the United States in November. Calum came to Jubilee Centre first as Project Manager for the Reformation 2017 initiative, which included the campaign to produce 95 new theses, and his paper, 'The Enduring Power of Vocation: From the Reformation to 2017'. In the past year Calum has taken on a research role for Jubilee Centre. His writings include, 'The Steering Wheel: Confronting the ideologies driving western culture and society', 'The Humanity Behind AI', 'The Ethics of Remuneration' and the Cambridge Paper published this quarter. We are most grateful to him for his contribution and wish the family well as they return to the States.

Biblical Foundations for Public Leadership

Join the Online Course in 2019

Our flagship training course **Biblical Foundations for Public Leadership (BFPL)** begins in January 2019 and runs over a 12 month period.

It is an innovative training programme to develop and serve young professionals seeking to make an impact for Christ in the 'secular' world. The curriculum is based on Jubilee Centre's research over 30 years and comprises eight modules: Foundations for Reform, the Economy, Politics, Justice & Law, Family & Sexual Ethics, Science & Technology, the Arts and Welfare. This year offers a new, more flexible timetable for the participants to complete the eight modules of the course over a longer period.



How can the course equip you for public leadership?

James Maidment-Fullard (photo) is Managing Editor at Trans World Radio UK, and in 2017 he completed the self-study version of Biblical Foundations for Public Leadership.

A self-confessed news addict, when James first became a Christian he had found himself wondering why the 'Christian News' agenda looked so different to mainstream news.

'At the time, I was reading about major shifts in the political world but the Christian news agenda was very focused on what seemed to mostly be sexual ethics issues.'

Despite being advised by one church leader to 'focus on the things of the kingdom, not the things of this world', James eventually joined the team at Trans World Radio.

'When I began working at TWR-UK, I was encouraged to explore the mainstream news from a Christian perspective. I was broadcasting news and current affairs programmes, covering topics including the Syrian civil war, politics, humanitarian disasters and (of course!) Brexit. During that time I found myself questioning what the Bible has to say about economics, justice, politics, the arts, culture and science. That's when I came into contact with the Jubilee Centre.'

Through our online course, James was introduced to Relational Thinking—a perspective that has changed the way he views the news and the world around him.

'I think I probably drive my news team round the bend. Every time we meet to talk about a story I'm always thinking about the relational side of the story.'

Since completing the course, James has collaborated with Philip Powell in order to produce a 13-part radio show for TWR-UK called 'Theology of News'. The show helped listeners learn to think biblically about the news, and features many of the Jubilee Centre authors (including Michael Schluter, Paul Mills and Jonathan Burnside).

'I wish I'd known about this years ago, and I'm so grateful to Philip Powell and Jonathan Tame at the Jubilee Centre who've helped me to work out how I can process news stories from a Christian perspective.'

Now in its third year, Biblical Foundations for Public Leadership (BFPL) begins again on the 7th January 2019. Participants complete eight modules over twelve months, and attend the Social Reformers Summer School in July as part of the training. This year's course also includes a

new module on Welfare covering lessons on education and healthcare.

For more information, and to register for the BFPL online course, please email our Training Director Philip Powell at: p.powell@jubilee-centre.org

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.

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So what are the opportunities for faithful and wise discipleship in the context of climate change? Much has been written about personal responses – the many ways we can reduce the amount of energy we use directly and indirectly, by living more simply. At the church level, we can make contingency plans for responding with practical love and care to people who get caught up in extreme weather events, both locally and globally – for example by forging partnerships with churches in lower income countries. More ideas, both to mitigate and adapt to climate change, are suggested by Operation Noah, Climate Stewards, the John

Ray Initiative and A Rocha.

At the public policy level, governments must be persuaded to stick to the accountability set out in the Paris Accord. Both the USA and Australia have pulled back this year because of pressure from groups that bear the short term cost of reducing emissions. Our generation must speak out for the poor and vulnerable, and the generations to come, and not act as if history ends with us.

Jesus said we should learn to interpret the signs of the times. Could climate change be a sign that challenges the quality of our discipleship in a globalised world?