

The Presbyterian Banner

May 2019



Joshua passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant

by Benjamin West (1738-1820)

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Contents: Editorial – ‘Good unto all men is the Lord’ : Psalm 4: Peace in the midst of pressure : Leading Muslim Cleric on Islamophobia : The Ark and Tabernacle Studies #2 : Margaret Hockett - Serving the Lord Church and Nation Report 2019 : Book Review – Grace Worth Fighting For : News



FROM THE EDITOR

There is often nothing worth watching on the television. One recent Friday night I clicked on SBS to view a 2017 film called *Churchill*. We've all heard of fake news but this was a fake film. Not merely some artistic modification of the facts, it was a complete fabrication. It represents Churchill as exhausted and depressed, fearful of a repeat of the Dardenelles campaign in 1915, vehemently opposing *Operation Overlord* (the invasion of Normandy by the Allies) a few days before it was due to begin in June 1944. It also represents Churchill's relationship with his wife as extremely strained. To be fair, the film picks up on Churchill's egotism, his early reservations in 1942 and 1943 about *Overlord*, and desire for a place in history, but reformats in a fake context. *Overlord* was firmly settled in 1943 and recognised as such by Churchill, while his relationship with Clemmie was nothing like that shown in the film. Looking up reviews I see the film cost US\$10 million and grossed less than that. That's something to be thankful for. Andrew Roberts writes: 'The only problem with the movie – written by the historian Alex von Tunzelmann – is that it gets absolutely everything wrong.'

Never in the course of movie-making have so many specious errors been made in so long a film by so few writers.'

Why am I mentioning this in *The Presbyterian Banner*? Well not simply to illustrate the importance of getting historical facts correct, but to make a further point about God's goodness to all his creatures even those who hate him. So, in Louis Berkhof's words, God 'curbs the destructive power of sin, maintains in a measure the moral order of the universe, thus making an orderly life possible, distributes in varying degrees gifts and talents among men, promotes the development of science and art, and showers untold blessings upon the children of men and part of that goodness is the distribution of gifts.' Now Churchill was no saint. His relationship with the church he likened to a buttress – support was from outside. He specifically rejected Christian belief for himself. But no one reading Andrew Roberts' acclaimed biography, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (Viking, 2018) can doubt the way Churchill was fitted for the task of leadership in the Second World War. It's a reminder that we should acknowledge the gifts of all those who are not followers of Christ and may even actively oppose him. (This includes politicians!) We can do this at the same time as we insist on the necessity of repentance and faith in Jesus for salvation. For what shall it profit a person if he or she gain the whole world of fame or fortune but are lost themselves?

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Psalm : 4

Peace in the midst of pressure

Rev. George Ball, Taree

It's a pity that this is a neglected psalm. It contains a number of striking texts (e.g. verses 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8). And it addresses an important theme – something that we've all experienced - facing pressure. It begins with David under pressure and ends with David at peace in the midst of pressure. It seems likely that this psalm comes out of the same period as the previous one. 'David is facing another night under the stars. Allowing Absalom's forces another twenty-four hours to pursue and attack; therefore, increased threat' (J. A. Motyer). There are many similar expressions in both psalms. E.g. Compare verse 1 with Ps. 3:4. Compare verse 2 with Ps. 3: 3. Compare verse 6 with Ps. 3:2. Compare verse 8 with Ps. 3:5. Both are 'Selah' psalms. They would seem therefore to be companion psalms. We note from the heading that though this is a song of David it was intended to be sung in the public congregation. (*In the Hebrew Bible these headings constitute the first verse of the psalm which suggests their inspiration*).

1. A Call to God for Help (v1)

It begins abruptly with an urgent call for God's help, '**Answer me when I call**'. Derek Kidner calls it, 'a well-founded prayer'. Why so? Because he appeals to God's character and to what He has done. The translations differ. NIV renders it, '**O my righteous God**'. ESV renders it, '**O God of my righteousness**'. Both are legitimate translations. God is absolutely, essentially and incomparably righteous in Himself. 'He will never deviate from what is right; from his righteous principles and promises' (Motyer). Everything He does conforms to His character. Abraham testifies, '**shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right**'? (Gen. 18: 25). He is also the God who is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

'**You have given me relief when I was in distress**' (ESV). David had known deliverance out of many tight spots before e.g. from the lion and the bear; from the giant; and from Saul. He anticipated more of the same. Spurgeon aptly comments, 'It is not to be imagined that He who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves and He will never cease to help us until we cease to need.' We can depend on the Lord's faithful record and reputation. It was that kind of logic that I applied when staying recently on

level 31 of an apartment block in the Gold Coast. I thought, 'what would happen if there was an earth tremor'? I had to remind myself as my head lay on the pillow – that this building has been standing for more than 30 years. It has stood the test of time. I can, therefore, trust it one more night. I lay down and slept in peace (v8). (And I believe the block is still standing!)

'**Be gracious to me and hear my prayer**' (ESV). David is aware that God can be approached by grace alone - which is His sheer, undeserved goodness. Here we have the theology of prayer in a nutshell. God hears, He is holy, He has helped in the past, He is able to do so again, and He is gracious.

2. A Challenge to his Critics (vv2-5)

After speaking 'upwards' he now speaks 'downwards' to his detractors. '**O men, how long shall my honour be turned into shame?**' These men (i.e. the supporters of Absalom who had removed David from office) were guilty of slandering David. They discredited and maligned him. David questions them, '**How long will you people ruin my reputation? How long will you make groundless accusations? How long will you continue your lies?**' (NLT). It's a surprising fact that of all the sins condemned in the 10 commandments it's the 9th commandment ('**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour**') that receives the fullest treatment in the Psalms. (E.g. Psalms 5: 6 and 9, 10: 7, 12: 2, 15: 2-4, 27: 12, 28: 3, 34: 13, 35: 11, 50: 19-20). '**The tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness**' (James 3:6).

Here's something we all need to know, '**the Lord has set apart the godly for himself**' (v3). David knew it. There was nothing controversial about the doctrine of election for him. It was the source of great peace, and assurance, and encouragement, and praise. Kidner comments, 'God's choice of a man . . . is the ultimate answer to the most wounding of aspersions and discouragements.'

'**Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your hearts on your beds and be silent**' (v4 ESV). It's hard to know who David is addressing – whether it's his enemies – or the hotheads in his own camp. Probably the latter. You can imagine they were provoked to anger with Absalom & Co. But show should they act and react under pressure? Anger can be good if it is controlled and directed against the right object. But David warns that anger can quickly become a sin. NLT translates, '**Don't sin by letting anger control you. Think about it overnight and remain silent**'. Don't act rashly. Think the matter through. Sleep on it before you act. Let your words be controlled and considered. And make use of God's means of grace in the spirit in which they were intended. He counsels, '**Offer right sacrifices and put**

your trust in the LORD' (v5). We are not to behave like Absalom who was deceitful when he asked permission to go to Hebron to supposedly 'pay a vow' and offer sacrifice (cf. 2 Sam. 15: 7-8). When under pressure we need to maintain an attitude of complete trust, he says, '**put your trust in the LORD**'.

'**There are many who say, who will show us some good**'? (v6). He directs his comment to the moaners and groaners – the complainers – the doubters and defeatists – among his followers. They were feeling the pressure and starting to crumble under the strain. They couldn't see where help was going to come from. (With friends like this you don't need enemies!) These are the kind of people who long for 'the good old days'. It's been well said that 'the good old days' are a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination!

He prays an arrow prayer for his followers, '**Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD**' (v6). He utilises the ancient priestly benediction, the Aaronic blessing, '**The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace**' (Num. 6: 24-26). He prays that the Lord would do them good and transform their darkness and doubt into light and trust. The benediction at the end of the church service is not the signal to escape. It's a rich announcement as well as a prayer. It's a statement of the blessings we have in our triune God. Pay attention next time to the benediction – and believe it. We need it.

3. His Contentment and Confidence in God (vv7-8)

'**You have put more joy in my heart than they when their grain and wine abound**' (v7). Harvest was a time of great joy and gladness. But David is able to say that his joy is greater than any pure earthly joy. Despite the stresses and pressures all around him, he can remarkably experience enjoy peace and joy within. Spurgeon comments, 'Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn or wine in the vat'. He concludes, '**In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety**' (v8). Such knowledge and trust is a great sleeping pill. When you know that the LORD is the keeper of Israel you can sleep anywhere.

This psalm, like the previous one, is not only a psalm of David; it's also a psalm that Jesus sang and speaks of him. He too was slandered, maligned, mocked, and misrepresented by powerful people (wicked people) who turned His glory into shame (v2). They called him a blasphemer, the friend of tax-collectors and sinners, and mocked him on the cross as the King of Israel.

Jesus knew he had been, '**set apart by the LORD**' as the suffering servant (v3). Jesus is the only truly godly man who never sinned but was always faithful to God. Jesus was the only one able to say when he prayed, '**Father, I thank you that you hear me. I know that you always hear me**' (John 11: 41-42).

The benediction at the end of the church service is not the signal to escape. It's a rich announcement as well as a prayer.

Jesus offered himself as the perfect sacrifice and entrusted himself to God who judges justly (5). Jesus is the only one who can do us good and enlighten us (v6). He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the light of the world. He is the resurrection and the life, etc.

Jesus spoke to His disciples of a peace and a joy that He knew despite the impending cross (v7). '**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid**'. (Jn. 14: 27). '**I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete**' (Jn. 15: 11). Jesus slept through a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee because He trusted in His Heavenly Father (v8).

When we sing this psalm we do so as New Testament believers. When we call upon the LORD we do so through the name and by the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ (1). God is the God of 'my righteousness' because he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3: 26).

We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and have every spiritual blessing in him (v3). To know God in Christ is the greatest joy (Rom. 14:17). To know God in Christ is to know peace with God (Rom. 5: 1-2). To know God in Christ is to know peace in our hearts (Phil. 4: 6-7). We can sleep without fear because Jesus is our companion who cares for us (v8).

When finally, the sleep of death comes we are assured that, '**blessed are the dead who die in the LORD from now on**' (Rev. 14: 13). We can know peace in the midst of pressure. We can say with Paul, '**I can do all things through him who strengthens me**' (Phil. 4: 13). #

Leading Muslim cleric says Islamophobia a result of Islamic extremism and not racism

3 April 2019

The senior member of the world's biggest Muslim organisation has insisted that Islamophobia is not rooted in racism and that the distrust of Muslims in many countries is a result of Islamist extremism and terrorism throughout the world.

Yahya Cholil Staquf, the secretary-general of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama movement, which claims to have more than 90 million adherents, wrote in an article in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* saying that the traditional Muslim mindset needed to change.

He called for a rejection of Islamic orthodoxy, condemning it as "obsolete and problematic" and "fuelling violence on both sides".

Yahya Cholil Staquf, secretary-general of the world's largest Muslim movement, believes Islamic extremism based on "obsolete" religious orthodoxy is fuelling Islamophobia

The influential cleric wrote that the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims was "factually incorrect" in linking the definition of the word "Islamophobia" to racism, and that it was "counter-productive" to do so.

"The truth, we recognise, is that jihadist doctrine, goals and strategy can be traced to specific tenets of orthodox, authoritative Islam and its historic practice. This includes those portions of sharia that promote Islamic supremacy, encourage enmity towards non-Muslims and require the establishment of a caliphate. It is these elements – still taught by most Sunni and Shiite institutions – that constitute a summons to perpetual conflict," he wrote.

Staquf stated that Brenton Tarrant's murder spree, which killed 50 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March, was part of an "ancient cycle of violence" and that the killer

shared a "historical framework" with many Muslims that went back almost 1,400 years. He explained the traditional Islamic teaching that "Muslims and non-Muslims are and shall remain in a state of permanent conflict, until the end of time (according to Islamists) or the disappearance of Islam (according to advocates of a 'counter-jihad')."."

"If Muslims do not address the key tenets of Islamic tradition that encourage this violence, anyone – at any time – can harness them to defy what they claim to be illegitimate laws and butcher their fellow citizens, whether they live in the Islamic world or the West. This is what links so many current events, from Syria to the streets of London," he added.

- Barnabas Fund



Another similar interview in August 2017 printed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and translated into English appears at <http://time.com/4930742/islam-terrorism-islamophobia-violence/>

Staquf says: 'The West cannot force Muslims to adopt a moderate interpretation of Islam. But Western politicians should stop telling us that fundamentalism and violence have nothing to do with traditional Islam. That is simply wrong... If you refuse to acknowledge the existence of a problem, you can't begin to solve it. One must identify the problem and explicitly state who and what are responsible for it.'

About 87% of Indonesia's 262 million people are Muslim followed by Protestant at 7% and Roman Catholics 3%. The population of Saudi Arabia is 33 million.

The Ark and the Tabernacle

PART 2

Rev. S. N. Ramsay

Exodus Ch. 25:21. ‘You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.’

Within the gates of the court, within the door of the tabernacle of Israel, in the innermost recesses of the Holy of Holies, beyond the veil, where no man might enter save the High Priest alone, once a year, not without blood, there stood the Ark of Testimony – ‘The mercy-seat above the ark, and in the ark the testimony.’”

‘In the Old Testament there lies the new, concealed.
In the New Testament, there lies the old, revealed.’

The religious life of Israel centred throughout their long wilderness journey upon the Tabernacle, and for many a long year to follow, in the Temple in Jerusalem. What are the lessons that lie, as hidden mysteries, beneath the shining splendour of the gold, the silver and the brass, the curtains and the fine-twined linen of the Tabernacle of the congregation? It is an absorbing study, surely, for anyone with a living interest in the things of our God and of His Christ, to go back, and see how He revealed Himself to the saints and the prophets of those who looked forward to the One who was to come to be our Saviour.

The Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, reminds them of the priests who served, ‘after the example and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain

Now our concern to-day is with but one item of the pieces with which the Tabernacle was to be furnished; **the ark of the testimony** which stood within the innermost recesses, veiled from the eyes and separated from the presence of the people.

The starting point

If we could look down upon the Tabernacle, we would see the outer court, with its gate of 20 cubits wide, the inner shrine, its door reflecting the colours of the purple, the crimson, the white and the blue, but into the inner shrine we could not, dare not look, for there dwelt the ‘Shekinah’ – the GLORY – upon which the people could not look, and live.

But perhaps you are wondering in your own minds now why, if we are going to examine the meaning of the Tabernacle and its worship, we do not begin with a general overall description of its construction and its furnishings, and begin our examination at the outer gate and from there go to the inmost sanctuary. Would not this be the logical

way to go about it? Let us get the outline before we begin with the details!

There is a reason for beginning the inner shrine. You will notice that when God gave commandment to Moses concerning the Tabernacle, and set down the instructions recorded in Exodus 25:8-10 ‘And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, just so you shall make *it*. And they shall make an ark of acacia wood.

This ark would be the very centre of the Tabernacle – the **last** piece of furnishing to be encountered in it once it was erected, but **the first to be mentioned** in the specifications of it. **Why?** We will give you the answer in the words of Alexander McLaren, and then make our own observations on them.

‘The enumeration of the furniture of the Tabernacle starts from the innermost shrine, and goes outward. It was fit that it should begin with God’s special abode. The **Holy of Holies** – was a tiny chamber, closed in from the light, the form, dimensions, material and furniture of which all was significant. It measured ten cubits every way, thereby expressing its cubical form, and in the predominance of the number ten, stability and completeness. ... there in the thick darkness, unseen by mortals except for the one approach of the High Priest on the day of atonement, dwelt the ‘glory’ which made light in the darkness, and flashed on the gold which covered all things in the small shrine.’

And now we would make some observations.

Salvation is of the Lord

Can we not see here an expression of the Divine sovereignty? Can we not discern the fundamental principle of a God-centred religion, worship and faith?

We could begin at the outer gate, and trace our way, step by step, to the presence of the Most High. But that is to begin at the wrong end. Salvation is of the LORD not man by his virtuous efforts climbing up to God... but God for His own Glory and out of the great fullness of His boundless love...reaching out and PROVIDING AND OPENING UP A WAY and that according to His own appointment...opening up a way of access unto Himself.

The way does not open from the dwellings of Israel up to and into the *sanctum sanctorum*...but the way opens **outward** from the presence of the God, which is primary and central...outward...to receive whosoever will. Yes, friends; when all the types and symbols of the worship of this earthly Tabernacle came to be realised and fulfilled...when the Great High Priest set to His hand to offer up one sacrifice for sins for ever...when for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross...despising the shame...IT WAS FROM THE HOLY OF HOLIES...IT WAS FROM THE VERY SEAT OF MERCY...IT WAS FROM THE PLACE WHERE CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM CRY HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY...THE LORD...THE CHRIST stepped out upon that journey to travel all the way to Calvary; or, as Dr. D. H. Dolman has it, ‘Our Lord

The Presbyterian Banner

Jesus Christ travelled all the way from the Mercy Seat to the altar of burnt offering.'

The Moral Law

But now what of these furnishings of the Holy of Holies? What are they, and what do they mean? "*The mercy seat above the ark, and in the ark the testimony*". The ark itself was a small chest of acacia wood overlaid with gold. This ark would symbolise the very throne of God; and what did it contain? All around, the gold, the linen, the silver and the brass, but within, just two tables of stone, the ten commandments! *And why are they laid up there...as though the whole structure of the Tabernacle were built up around them? It is because they are the overt expression of the mind and will of God toward men.*

On the craggy sides of Mt Sinai there lay the shattered remnants of the tables God had first delivered into the hands of His servant Moses. But here is a new *unbroken testimony* speaking to us of the perfect righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, THE ONE WHO WAS MADE SIN, WHO KNEW NO SIN, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.' (2 Cor 5:21) In those inmost recesses were laid up the table of the law, and all Israel would know that the entire fabric of their worship was to make atonement for the breaking of that law.

And what a sobering thought for the people to remember that those commandments were of such solemn import that they were laid up in that ark of gold before the presence of the Lord.

Let us never forget that they are the same Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God and which are laid upon us to this very day.

Grace and law

But there is something more than this... 'the mercy seat above the ark...and in the ark the testimony'. And these taken together, as in fact they were together...speak to us plainly of the things of the LAW and GRACE.

The mercy seat...yes, an open ark, its tables of the law uncovered, must stand for ever as a witness and a testimony against us. BUT praise be to God He has set the mercy seat above the ark...He has set a covering upon the Commandments...even Jesus Christ the Righteous.

'Thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold'!

Yes, the tables of the law are stone; they are inflexible and cold; but the mercy seat is of purest gold; and sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice.

What a message then has the mercy seat for us to-day? Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. (Heb. 10:19ff). #

[From Notes transcribed by Nola Tibbs, Wauchope.]

Still Serving the Lord: MARGARET HUCKETT, WAUCHOPE

This column pays tribute to one of our older members. Margaret Isabel Ramsay, born at the old Manse, Fry Street, Grafton, on the 8th May 1922 nearly 97 years ago. Her Father, Rev. Herbert William Ramsay, was born at 'Lang Green', Dingo Creek, Manning River on 18 September 1876. Her mother, Mrs Flora Ross Ramsay, neé McQueen, of Lower Lawrence, Clarence River, was his 2nd wife -(married April 1916). [Herbert had 5 sons by his 1st wife, tragically taken when the last little boy was only a babe-in-arms. (1914)]. There were two children born to Herbert and Flora: Stewart Neil Ramsay (1917), and Margaret. Margaret grew up in a very busy and ordered household. 'One needed to be on time at the meal table, and no one left before family worship'.

Educated at Grafton and at Sydney Teachers College 1940-42, Margaret taught at Inverell Infants and after her father's death on 18 February 1945 she taught at Maclean. She was a student at Melbourne Bible Institute 1951-52 and taught at the United Aborigines Mission at Mt Margaret, WA in 1953. Back to teaching at Maclean (Intermediate High school 1954-56; Infants 1957-60), she was at Wauchope Infants 1961-63, Head at Dungog Infants (1964-68), where Cameron Ramsay was Principal; Mistress at Port Kembla 1969 and Head Mistress at Grafton Infants 1970 to 1975 when she retired.

Margaret's mother died at Grafton in 1977 age 96. On the 24 April 1980, Margaret married James Edward ('Ted') Hockett, a godly elder and they settled at Wauchope, from where they later moved to Bonny Hills. In 1986, the year before Ted's death, they were able to travel on a Reformation tour. Margaret returned to Scotland in 1989 and served at Colegio San Andres in Lima for 9 weeks in 1990 and 4-5 months in 1991. A further visit in 1992 was cut short due to serious illness. Margaret soon took up residence at Bundaleer Gardens in Wauchope and currently lives in the hostel. #



Stewart and Margaret in 1938

Church and Nation Report to Synod 2019

G. D. Ball, Convener

We are in the 'post-Pell era'. The conviction of Cardinal George Pell on child sex abuse charges sent shock waves through the Roman Catholic community. His conviction was also a lightning rod for the community to express its anger, contempt and disgust toward all organised religion. As far as the public is concerned all churches are tarred with the same brush. Their cynicism and distrust is understandable. This is the hostile environment in which we now live, and are called to witness in. Changing times. Difficult days. However, these days may be more like the conditions the New Testament Christians faced in the book of Acts. They too were treated with suspicion and contempt. But it didn't muzzle or intimidate them. They refused to be silenced (Acts 5: 29). They challenge us. We must not be silent either. As the four lepers said, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news and we remain silent' (2 Kings 7: 9). We must not fear. We too have good news. The Lord still reigns. He is still able and willing to save all who call upon Him. Peter exhorts his original readers who were enduring persecution, 'Do not fear what they fear. In your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect' (1 Peter 3: 15). It we are to be authentic and credible witnesses we must be different. We must reverence the Lord in our hearts. We must seek to live godly lives. We must demonstrate humility. We must not fear the things the world fears – whether that be illness, cancer, ageing, death, terrorism, global warming, or fears of a stock market crash. We may not be immune from these things but the Bible counsels us how we can face such things with hope and courage. When we live such lives, it will provoke questions and enquiries that we must answer in a gentle and respectful way. There is no place for arrogance or rudeness.

A Puritan prayer puts it aptly: *'Keep me from high thoughts of myself or my work, for I am nothing but sin and weakness; in me no good dwells, and my best works are but sin. Humble me to the dust before thee. Root and tear out the poisonous weed of self-righteousness and show me my utter nothingness . . . Grant me to rest on thy power and faithfulness, and to know that there are two things worth living for: to further thy cause in the world, and to do good to the souls and bodies of men. This is my ministry, my life, my prayer, my end. Grant me grace that I shall not fail'* (*Valley of Vision*, page 188).

We must also examine ourselves as a church before a watching and critical world. As far as the world is concerned the church has reached its expiry date. But the

church remains the bride of Christ. The task of the church remains the same: to worship the Lord (1 Peter 2: 9); to gather for mutual encouragement (Heb. 10: 23-25); to take the gospel to those beyond its bounds (Matt. 28: 18-20); and to exercise a ministry of compassion to those in need (Acts 6: 1-6). The church's source of strength remains the same. 'Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth' (Ps. 124: 8). We must not be discouraged or distracted. Like Nehemiah we can say to our detractors, 'I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?' (Neh. 6: 3).

It's glaringly obvious that the Roman Catholic system needs reform, though a 'Reformation' would be better still! Man can reform, but only the Lord can bring a 'Reformation'. One practical lesson from the George Pell saga is surely the importance of having a comprehensive (and comprehensible) 'safe church' policy.

Ruddock Report on Religious Freedom: Nothing to report. We anticipated having a report on the Government's response to the Ruddock Report but because of the Parliamentary situation with the government in a minority the matter has been parked. The outcome will probably depend on who wins the election in May. It's a matter of grave concern.

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). It's a sad fact that reports of domestic and family violence have increased in all states over the past ten years. It's also believed that there are many more cases that go unreported for various reasons. DFV can take many forms including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial abuse. DFV must be condemned in all its forms. It's particularly reprehensible when the Bible is used to try to justify violence, male domination and chauvinism. The Bible's teaching is very clear. 'Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (Eph. 5: 25). 'Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them' (Col. 3: 19). 'Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner' (1 Peter 3: 7). Likewise, wives are required to, 'submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord' (Col. 3: 18). It's important to note that male leadership is to be patterned on the example of Jesus servant leadership. Therefore, any attempt to twist the Biblical teaching to support the idea that a male is permitted to rule by force or intimidation is a gross abuse of Scripture. Nowhere in Scripture is a husband told to force his wife to submit, and nowhere is a wife told to cajole her husband to lead. Domestic and family violence is therefore repugnant to God, rejected by Scripture, and the polar opposite of the biblical model of sacrificial love and service.

Abortion: The home is not a safe place. Neither is the womb. And it's just got a lot more dangerous since Federal Labour announced that if elected in May they will provide free abortions in all public hospitals across the country

The Presbyterian Banner

(and build an abortion clinic in Tasmania). It's estimated that there are about 80,000 abortions per year in Australia and that one quarter to one third of Australian women will choose to terminate a pregnancy at some point in their lives. These figures can only rise if Labour has its way.

NSW is the only state at present where abortion is not permitted under ordinary circumstances. But if Labour is elected the NSW Government will be pressurised to legalise abortion under threat of losing their Commonwealth funding. QLD passed a law in October last year permitting abortion up to 22 weeks. Victoria has the most liberal abortion laws; it's legal up to 24 weeks; and legal thereafter upon the approval of two doctors.

Church: When is a crisis a crisis? We don't want to cry 'wolf', but as we look at our church we can safely predict that the next five years will bring certain changes. We are all ageing. There will be retirements in the ministerial ranks and some of our retired ministers and elders will be no longer active. Many of our older saints will be gone. Who is going to replace them? We haven't been good at reproducing. And we haven't been good at producing elders and pastors. Where are they to come from? Paul reminds us that leaders are ultimately God's gift to the church (Eph. 4: 11-12). We need to make it an earnest matter of prayer that the Lord would gift us with suitable ministers and elders. Rev. Jim Klazinga has done a great job encouraging us to pray by sending out a daily prayer request. One recent text was, 'pray that the participants in our congregations may be given wisdom and strength to make use of opportunities to invite family, friends, colleagues and others to church'. While visitors do occasionally drop into our services, it is much more effective when we invite them.

Psalms: It's encouraging to see evidence here and there of an emerging interest in singing the Psalms. Could it be that we who have never known any other song book take it for granted, while others with no such tradition behind them are excited by what they are discovering in the Psalms? One recent article entitled, 'Five Reasons Pastors Should Not Allow the Psalms to be Sung in Church,' illustrates the point. The writer (Baptist pastor, Chris Hume) says several pastors in recent days have made the huge 'mistake' of singing the Psalms in church. He goes on to state (satirically) that singing the Psalms will result in making people feel uncomfortable (and upset their 'worship experience'). It will offend people (by correcting their view of God). It will challenge to Pastor to adjust his message (he will have to teach the sovereignty of God and the justice of God). The pastor will have to deal with difficult aspects of the Christian life (such as dealing with the Law of God; because God's Law has fallen on tough times in our antinomian age he will have to address how we are to love God's Law and obey it). Finally, if you sing Psalms you will be playing a part in the downfall of modern worship music (if God didn't want us to use modern songs, He would have inspired a songbook for the church!). It's a thoughtful piece of writing. See <www.reformedhope.com>

It's a pity we can't have a PCEA Psalter; one that can bring us together in harmony (pun intended). The 'Sing Psalms' published by the Free Church of Scotland is an excellent translation, but the tunes are unfamiliar with many difficult metres. It's important that the Psalter we use, if it is to be used at home and appeal to visitors in public worship, should be user friendly and include tunes that are familiar and uncomplicated. Perhaps the time has come to consider an update of the 'Complete Book of Psalms for Singing' (Melbourne 1991). It has served a number of congregations well for many years now. A revision might include incorporating (with permission of course) some of the best psalms and tunes from other available psalters and sources, as well as enlisting help from suitably gifted people in the church. Rev. Dr. R.S. Ward holds the copyright, and nothing could be achieved without his cooperation and support. He has indicated he is very willing to co-operate in such a project.

The Presbyterian Banner: We are thankful for the industry and willingness of Rev. Dr. R. S. Ward who as editor has continued to produce the Banner this past year. We share his disappointment that not more participate in providing church news.

Proposed Deliverances: -

Synod acknowledges the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ over the nations and the obligation this places upon leaders and others to acknowledge and serve Him. 'Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way' (Psalm 2: 10-12).

Synod expresses its concern over ongoing threats to our religious liberty. We urge government to ensure that churches, schools, colleges, and all other religious institutions be allowed to operate according to their particular ethos. 'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people' (Prov. 14: 34).

Synod encourages every member to pray for our church and nation. The biblical principles stated in 2 Chron. 7: 14 are still relevant. 'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land'. Prayer and repentance must begin with the people of God.

Synod thank Rev. J. Klazinga for preparing daily prayer texts which assist us to pray for various ministries in the church.

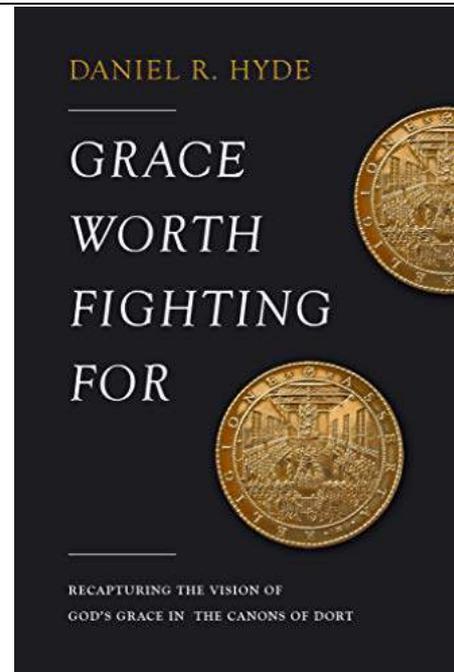
Synod disowns and condemns all forms of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). It is particularly repugnant when Scripture is used to defend DFV. Any attempt to twist the Biblical teaching to support the idea that a male is permitted to rule by force or intimidation is a gross abuse

The Presbyterian Banner

of the Bible. Male leadership is to be patterned on the example of Jesus servant leadership. Nowhere in Scripture is a husband told to force his wife to submit, and nowhere is a wife told to cajole her husband to lead. DFV is repugnant to God, rejected by Scripture and the polar opposite of the biblical model of sacrificial love and service.

Synod affirms that human life is sacred from the womb, and therefore condemns the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being at any stage of its development from the point of conception to the point of death. The only possible grounds for an induced abortion is when the life of the mother-to-be is genuinely threatened by the continuation of the pregnancy. The Bible teaches that God created human beings in His image (Gen. 1: 26-27). In Exodus 20: 13 the Lord says in the sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder'. Little ones in the womb are defenceless human beings made in the image of God who have feelings (Luke 1: 41-44). Therefore, God forbids the destruction of human life in the womb. Nevertheless, Synod encourages its members to show Christian compassion and offer support to those experiencing unwanted pregnancies as well as those who have undergone abortions.

5. Synod affirm the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith concerning the parts of worship namely, 'The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience to God, with understanding, faith and reverence; singing of Psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God. Besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions which are in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner' (21: 5).
6. Synod agrees that it would be desirable if all our congregations sang from the same Psalter. Toward that end Synod requests Rev. Dr. R. S. Ward to consider producing a revised and updated edition of 'The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing' involving the help of suitably gifted people.
7. Synod records its thanks to the editor of the Presbyterian Banner, Rev. Dr. R. S. Ward, for his industry in producing the magazine over the past year. Synod commends this ministry to the prayers of the church.



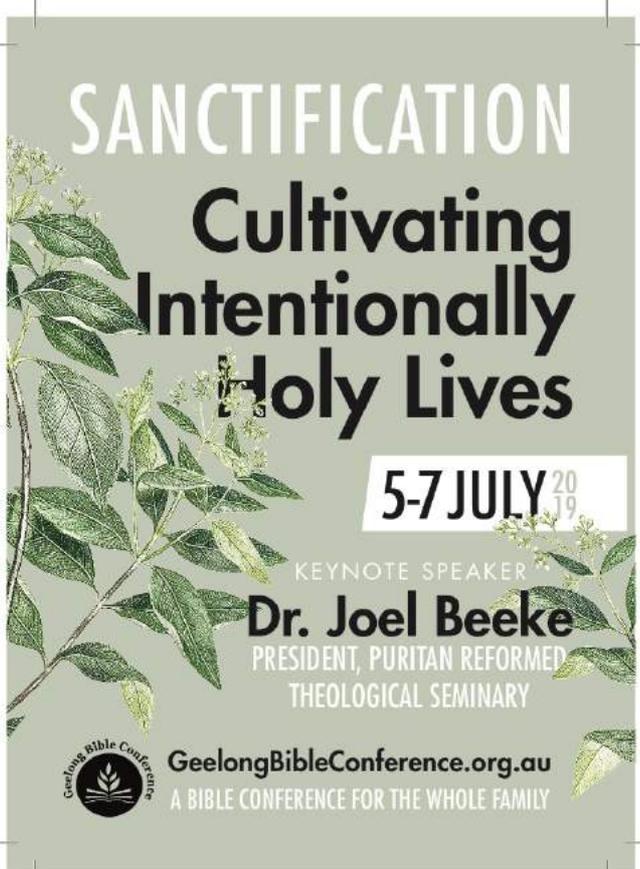
Daniel Hyde, *Grace Worth Fighting For* (Davenant Institute, 2019) Xi + 419 pp.

Daniel Hyde, minister of the Oceanside United Reformed Church in California since 2000, is an able minister in the reformed tradition and author of a number of titles. There are several books on the famous Synod of Dort (1618-19) which responded to criticisms of the doctrines of grace maintained by Reformed and Presbyterian churches and whose canons are subscribed in orthodox Reformed Churches. As a pastor scholar, Hyde has provided something rather special in his latest book which celebrates the 400th anniversary of the Synod.

(1) There is a very readable explanation of the points of dispute which boil down to what the Father intended his Son to do on the cross (p.191). Was he to secure salvation for his people or only to make salvation possible for everyone? If we say the latter, we must reckon with the fact that Jesus himself tells that he came to do the will of the Father and that all that the Father had given him will come to him. There was specific design and intention in Christ's coming and perfect harmony in the plan by the Father, the provision of redemption by the Son and its application to the individual through the Holy Spirit.

(2) As well as the explanation of the Canons of Dort there is adequate and up-to-date background scholarship on the Synod that acknowledges the differences that existed among the genuinely Reformed. The British school of Davenant is rightly distinguished from the Amyraldian position. This is an excellent resource for Presbyterian pastors who subscribe the Westminster Confession of 1647, since it helps them grasp the catholicity and balance of the Reformed position. The publisher is seeking to do just that with a number of British, American and South African scholars involved including people like Carl Trueman and Mark Jones. Details: <<https://davenantinstitute.org>> - RSW

GEELONG BIBLE CONFERENCE



The Carrum Downs group became part of the PCEA in 2010, having had existence as the Frankston Reformed Fellowship for some years with Rev David Kumnick as their pastor. While most of the original group have died or moved away, we are encouraged by progress over the past year with a typical attendance of 19. Folk from Samoa, the Cook Islands and South Sudan enrich our fellowship. David Kumnick continues to have challenging health issues, but has been mostly able to attend worship of recent times. The Lord is good.

CARRUM DOWNS

The Lord's Day 21 April 2019 was the first anniversary of the opening of our place of worship. Rowland ward preached on Two men (Adam and Christ), Three Gardens (Paradise, Gethsemene, the garden where Jesus was buried) and One City (the New Jerusalem). After the service we enjoyed a lovely fellowship lunch with most being able to stay for it. One of our newer members, Suzanne Hales, surprised us all with a cake with an edible picture in the icing!



NARRE WARREN

The Narre Warren Congregation has been vacant for a little over a year. At a meeting of the congregation on 17 April the congregation elected the Rev Andres Miranda of Knox to be their minister. The Presbytery will meet with the congregation on Saturday 11 May to moderate in the matter of the call.

ALL NATIONS

The plans for the extension have been lodged and advertising to adjoining property owners is currently been prepared by the City of Monash. It is hoped that a permit can be secured by the end of the financial year.

We have had two youth outings so far this year aimed at fostering cross-cultural harmony and better understanding of the particular needs in the wider African community.

ULVERSTONE

Ten ladies enjoyed a time of craft, lunch and fellowship on 9th April , and produced some useful items. The meeting was led by Denise who showed us how to recycle doilies and hessian. Sandra gave a helpful devotion on ways of showing each other love. [The capacity of these ladies never ceases to amaze. – Ed.]



Margaret Ramsay in 1975

See report page 10

SYNOD

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is to meet in the Taree Church Building on Tuesday 7 May 2019 at 4.30pm. Rev Tut Wan Yoa will conduct public worship. The incoming Moderator is the Rev Robin Tso of the Hunter parish. Synod will conclude by lunch time on Friday 10 May 2019.



Ted and Margaret Hockett, December 1980