

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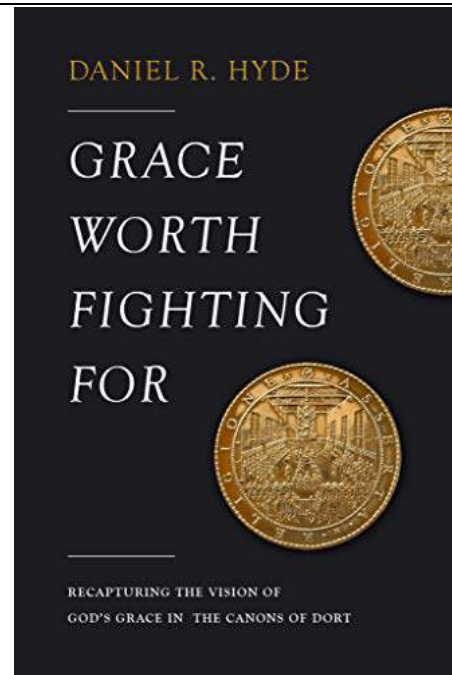
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of the Bible. Male leadership is to be patterned on the example of Jesus servant leadership. Nowhere in Scripture is a husband told to force his wife to submit, and nowhere is a wife told to cajole her husband to lead. DFV is repugnant to God, rejected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