

# The Presbyterian Banner

September 2018



Editorial – The Seventh Day – International News - The Relevance of the Reformation – Baroness Cox visit –  
The Good Fight of Faith – Search Work – News from the Churches



## FROM THE EDITOR

There has been a lot of bad news lately. The Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse following on the similar Victorian Royal Commission has revealed the problem in religious, and other community organisation such as the Scouts, as well as in Government institutions. Of course it needs to be remembered that the incidence of sexual abuse is significantly greater in the general community. However, while sexual abuse can never be entirely eliminated from churches one is shocked at the behaviour revealed by the Royal Commission in the covering up offences and even shifting offending clergy from parish to parish.

Then we have the stream of revelations about underpayment of workers in a wide variety of businesses. James 5 is pertinent:

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. <sup>2</sup>Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened

yourselves in the day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

Then we have the behaviour of politicians on all sides. James 4 reads:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup>When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

The media has contributed to the problem, not least Fairfax owned 2GB on right-wing talk back. I have to subscribe to two newspapers – The Age (Fairfax) and the Australian (News Corp), the one of the left and other of the right, in an effort to get a proper picture.

The PCEA as a church does not take a stance on party political issues and I'll not meddle with that principle here. But we do need to pray for our leaders at all levels of government, whatever their factional alignment or political affiliation. For Scott Morrison, the new Prime Minister, there will be special responsibility. Leadership, whether in church or state or business, is a difficult task at the best of times. As a practising Christian and a member of the Centre Right of the Liberal Party, Mr Morrison will particularly appreciate the prayers of God's people as he seeks to lead the country in a positive way. A compassionate man without blood on his hands in the recent upheaval he is well positioned to do this.

The final piece of bad news is that we are not receiving news from congregations. Please help in drawing our church together by providing it.

Cover: *Cream Cliveas*

**The Presbyterian Banner** [ISSN 0729-3542] is the official magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The PCEA was founded in 1846 and adheres to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as a correct summary of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. There are congregations in Woolloowin (Brisbane), Qld.; Maclean, Grafton, Wauchope, Kindee, Taree, Cardiff, Raymond Terrace, Sydney CBD, Mt Druitt in NSW; Wantirna, Mulgrave, Narre Warren, Carrum Downs, Geelong in Vic.; Ulverstone, Tas.

The opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not necessarily of the editor or of the PCEA itself. Reproduction of articles is usually given but permission to do so must be sought first. The magazine is available as a pdf file for free download on the Church website: [www.pcea.org.au](http://www.pcea.org.au)

**Subscriptions:** Subscriptions for 2018 are now due - \$35 per year in bulk (5 or more) and \$40 for Australian individual subscriptions and \$50 overseas.

**Bank details for Direct Credit:** National Australia Bank BSB 083802 Ac 98 473 8955 Please add your name in the details panel when making payment.

**Editor:** Rev. Dr Rowland S. Ward, 2 Hadlow Drive, Wantirna 3152

T: 03 9720 4871 M: 0421 823 231 E: [rowland.ward@gmail.com](mailto:rowland.ward@gmail.com)

## The Seventh Day is a Sabbath to Yahweh: Exodus 20:8-11

Andres Miranda, Knox PCEA, Wantirna

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Unlike the other commandments, the fourth is not a rule that tells us to stop doing something. Instead, the commandment is an encouragement for positive action. The people of God are called to *remember*. The act of remembering here, means to think again and again about the Sabbath as “holy time” in order to strengthen behaviours completely dedicated to Yahweh.

The command to remember the Sabbath is explained by Moses in three stages. The first is the recognition of six legitimate days of work. The main focus of this article will be exclusively on the obligation of the Sabbath, but it’s important to start with a clear understanding that God wants human beings to work.

We were made by God to be worshippers and workers. The reason for this is found in our likeness to God. We, like God, are living beings that do things with thought and action. In fact, we are the creation of Divine thought and action.

Everything in existence is based on God’s thought and action. The history of human civilization is the movement of thought to activity. We conceptualise, invent and produce things like cars, buildings, and technological gadgets to satisfy material necessities. All these inventions presupposed thoughts and actions and carry within them our likeness to God. The statement in verse 9: *Six days you shall labour and do all your work*, tells us that human beings have been placed in a world that contains everything we need for our physical wellbeing, but we must work to get those things. The

ground is rich in resources for life, but we need to pound it with work before the soil can satisfy the demands that we make from it.

By the way, work is not the result of the Fall. It’s part of the intention of God for human beings. Genesis 2:15 tell us that when God planted a garden in Eden he put the man in the garden to “work it and take care of it”. The word-pair “work and take care” may also suggest liturgical activities (i.e., serving God). In either case, work belongs to the garden.

From the beginning of creation the human race has been given an occupation and is expected to share in God’s work. And who would have thought that this humble occupation would become the instrument for the control of earth. Through work we’ve been able to harness the forces of nature to increase the possibilities of our survival. So, it’s good to see that the vast majority of the human population is at least being obedient to this part of the commandment. Not always willingly, but very often out of necessity.

God understands very well the needs of his creation so he’s also provided every seventh day for us to put our tools away and enjoy another dimension of life. Look what verses 10 says: *But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your master or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.*

Sabbath remembrance is about total cessation from work. The way in which the seventh day is to be made holy, different and special, is by separating it from all the days that we are required to work.

I should point out also that this commandment is not just a male privilege. The commandment is addressed to all the members of the community. This includes the family even the animals and foreigners visiting the community are required to honour the Sabbath.

**‘The Sabbath is an opportunity to escape the ruthless cycle of productivity and consumerism and the social expectation to have more in order to be more...’**

This is important because work cessation facilitates a social context where people can think about God and think about their actions. The Sabbath is an opportunity to escape the ruthless cycle of productivity and consumerism and the social expectation to have more in order to be more, which is the twisted logic of Capitalism. The

celebration of the Sabbath is the celebration of life outside the stress of competition. It's spiritual resistance to the seductive pressures of the market.

In the book of Exodus the fourth commandment also has theological implications. Keeping the Sabbath is an act of devotion where the people of God announce their faith in God and reject all other gods, and religions and worldviews.

So, cessation from work and worship are so interconnected that you can't separate them. In the celebration of the day of rest we make a public statement that life doesn't depend on constant productivity, that if we stop our work, the world is not going to collapse, that we can take a break because the God we worship has promised to sustain us by his goodness.

Now, how does practice of resting from work reveal the character of the God who introduces himself? The answer is given to us in verse 11: *For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* Israel must rest because God rests. God is not a workaholic. He didn't spend the seventh day in exhaustion but in reflective thought. The objective was reached, the work of creation was completed and the Lord rested. So, in this commandment we see that God has ordained a beautiful rhythm for creation; work, rest, work, rest, not work, work, work. Only when that sequence is obeyed the creation becomes what God intended it to be.

To keep the Sabbath is to honour and participate in the divine intention for creation. If we refuse the Sabbath day we are violating the order of God and promote chaos and exhaustion and anxious ways of life for human existence.

So, let's honour the Sabbath day by refusing to see it as "business as usual". Let's treat it as a gift from God to experience his rest and unfailing generosity.#

---

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### TURKEY

The Rev Andrew Brunson is in the news. An American minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the USA, he has ministered as a pastor in Turkey for about 23 years and was applying for permanent residency. He has a small congregation (about 25 people) in Izmir (biblical Smyrna). In October 2016 he was imprisoned on the grounds he was a member of the Gulen movement which had been outlawed as a terrorist movement in May 2016 following a failed coup attempt. The Gulen movement, named for a Muslim cleric who has lived in the USA since 1999, had been a supporter of the AKP party

that secured government in 2002, but claims of corruption and the increasing authoritarianism of President Erdogan led to a parting of the ways, and dismissal and/or arrest of thousands of Gulen supporters or sympathisers including judges, military officers and other public servants.

Brunson was held in a crowded cell for nearly two years but in July 2018 was placed under house arrest. He and a number of other Americans are seen as a bargaining chip for the President to get Gulen back to Turkey from the USA. Brunson denies all charges and the trials thus far give no confidence in the Turkish judiciary. One young disaffected former member of Brunson's church admitted in court that he had created a false Facebook page in Brunson's name and posted pro-terrorist items on it, but the judge accepted the man's evidence that he had seen terrorist flags in the church. Most of Brunson's defence witnesses were rejected on the ground that they were 'suspects' too.

The whole matter is sad evidence of the lurch to an Islamist authoritarianism in Turkey. Given President Trump's support base includes a large proportion of evangelical Christians (many mindful of his character weaknesses but anxious to stop the radical left and see more conservative appointments to the US Supreme Court), it is understandable that Trump has taken a strong stand on Brunson's release.

### NORTH KOREA

Christians in North Korea face special difficulties beyond the malnutrition that affects the majority of the 25 million population other than the military. There has been some improvement in the standard of living and parts of Pyongyang are architecturally impressive. There are also about five show churches in the capital as a gesture to the purported freedom of religion. In reality, atheism is the religion and believers are persecuted. As people are encouraged to inform on each other, Christians do not practice their faith openly. It is thought that about 70,000 Christians may be in concentration camps, the majority of whom do not survive.

From a political point of view one can understand that communist China values a buffer between it and now free democratic countries like South Korea. On the other hand if the recent discussions between President Trump and Kim Jong-un were to lead to the formal end to the Korean War, a significant proportion of South Korea's population of 50 million are hesitant. The two countries are so different than 70 years ago that it certainly is not something that would happen easily even if China had no objections. #

# THE REFORMATION OF THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: HOW IS IT RELEVANT TODAY?

Rowland S. Ward

*The first part of an address given by invitation at the AGM of the Uniting Church Historical Society (Synod of Victoria & Tasmania) 19 August 2018. It covers some background to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformation, some key features and their significance. The second part will consider its relevance for us today via a quick journey over the centuries since.*

## 1. SOME BACKGROUND

The Christian Church had experienced major divisions related to language, culture and personalities before the Reformation. Declared the official religion of the Empire in 380, much of the Church in the Middle East and North Africa separated over issues connected with the formulation of the Chalcedonian Decree in 451 concerning the person of Christ. These churches are represented in Australia today in bodies like the Coptic Orthodox and the Assyrian Church of the East. This is the first major division. Rivalry between the Eastern Patriarch and the Pope of Rome produced the second major division by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, that between the Greek East and the Latin West. This was formalised by mutual excommunications in 1054 which were only nullified in 1965. These two divisions seem to involve differences due more to language and cultural background than to anything else.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was the third great division and it involved many factors. As an institution the Western Church had become extraordinarily authoritarian and its role all pervasive in ordinary people's lives. But the revival of trade and the growth of towns; rising resentment by the nobility at the power of the Church, which typically controlled half the land of Western Europe; the upheaval in the feudal structure of society caused by the Black Death which hit in 1349 and killed some one-third of the European population; the crisis of authority in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century with two or even three competing Popes; and the restlessness aggravated by the various moral abuses in the Church which regularly brought public criticism centuries before the Reformation – these

were all involved. The introduction of printing into Europe in the 1450s was a factor too, as it meant the possibility, that had not existed before, of wide dissemination of ideas and the creation of public opinion. However, the key element that brought things to a head was a theological one that was not adequately articulated before Luther, whether by John Wycliffe of Oxford, Jan Hus of Prague or Girolamo Savonarola of Florence.

The Reformation of the Western Church can be seen as having two chief parts. If we ignore the radical Anabaptists and put the Lutheran and Reformed together, there was the Protestant Reformation sparked by Martin Luther in 1517, and there was the Roman Catholic Reformation exemplified by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). However, when on 31 October 1517 Luther put up his 95 Latin theses on the Wittenberg noticeboard for academic debate (assuming he did so at this time<sup>1</sup>), he was neither a Lutheran or a Protestant. Rather he was a Catholic with pastoral concerns about indulgences which some of his parishioners were going outside the Electorate of Saxony to Ducal Saxony to secure. These pieces of paper purported to give full remission of time in purgatory without the necessity of repentance and amounted to a ticket direct to heaven on the payment of the indulgence price. This was selling salvation with a vengeance.

The Roman Catholic Reformation was to correct some abuses and define indulgence requirements more strictly. However, the Roman Church did not deal adequately with the theological issues that came to the fore as Luther's thought matured other than by setting in stone a doctrinal position opposing the Protestant position – a position that is still officially part of Roman Catholic teaching.

## 2. THE KEY THEOLOGICAL ISSUE

Luther was an Augustinian monk and Professor of Theology. This is significant given that Augustine (354-430) had maintained a doctrine of the sheer unmerited grace of God to the spiritually bankrupt in contrast with the views of the respectable (probably) British monk named Pelagius (c.360-418) who thought Augustine's teaching on sin and grace would lead to lax living. Pelagius therefore denied original sin, advocated the freedom of the will in spiritual things and maintained an ascetic practice. But in fact, while revering his memory, Augustine's teaching on grace was in practice somewhat modified in the Church, despite the Council of Orange in 539 rejecting the semi-Pelagian view that gives the initiative to man in spiritual things but asserts the need of God's help to achieve salvation. Mind you, Augustine's teaching on the efficacy of the sacraments was such that it has been said that the Protestant Reformation was the triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over his doctrine of the sacraments.

<sup>1</sup> Luther does not himself record it but he certainly wrote on this date to the Archbishop of Mainz and to his local bishop sending each a copy of his 95 propositions.

Luther's Augustinian Order debated the subject of indulgences at a meeting in April/May 1518 we know as the Heidelberg Disputation. Wisely advised by Johann von Staupitz, the leader of the Order, Luther concentrated on the wider question of the nature of the evangel itself. Luther set forth a theology of the cross, a theology which debases man and finds true theology and recognition of God in the crucified Christ. He repudiates the theology of glory which exalts man, desires wisdom, glory and power for him and despises the folly of the cross. The last of the 28 theses stressed that a person loves another because he or she finds something attractive in the other. On the other hand, God does not find anything attractive in us but rather bestows on us that which makes us attractive. The general approval given Luther's views at this meeting led to John Eck's challenge to a public debate with Luther the following year and to Luther's subsequent excommunication by the Pope. Most of the Augustinians were to join the Reformation.

The medieval doctrine of grace - as still today, see the references to the 1994 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] - thought of baptism as infusing God's grace and human co-operation with Christ: penance was to be done to fully satisfy or make amends for sin (CCC 1459); believers could, in co-operation with the Holy Spirit, gain 'merit' before God (CCC 2010); and purgatory, being the final purification of the believer after death before entering heaven, was necessary (CCC 1030-1032). In effect Christ's atonement had dealt with our guilt but had not fully dealt with the temporal punishment due to our sins. This deficiency had to be met by action of the Church in applying authoritatively 'the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints' (CCC 1471), that is, granting indulgences in full or in part from time in purgatory from the claimed excess merits of the super pious 'saints' stored in the 'treasury'.

Luther's troubled experience, somewhat echoing Augustine, is described by the Reformer in this way:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous

lives by a gift of God, namely by faith.... And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word "righteousness of God." Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise. (*Luther's Works*, 34:336-337)

What Luther discovered, and could articulate from 1519, was that justification was not a process but an act of God, an act of God in declaring the believer accepted as righteous in God's sight on the basis of the merit and worthiness of Jesus Christ alone. Our sanctification is a fruit of the new relationship not a means of establishing it.

**I like to express this teaching this way: (1) We are justified by Christ *meritoriously*, so any talk of our merit is out of order and undermines the sufficiency of Christ's saving work in his life, death and resurrection; (2) we are justified by faith *instrumentally*, that is, it is the person who is the object of faith who is the One by whom we are saved, faith being the instrument that grasps Christ, the empty hand that receives God's gift; (3) we are justified by works *evidentially*, that is good works flow from a true and living faith as the evidence it is a true and living faith, but they are not part of the basis on which the believer is accepted.**

In an age when religious questions were central this teaching wrought a revolution. It freed people from anxiety and fear and gave comfort and assurance enabling them to live productive lives in the service of the Lord. With the elimination of priestly intermediaries between the sinner and the Saviour, one could speak of the priesthood of all believers. For after all, the Reformation was at root a religious movement. Luther famously said in 1520: "A Christian is a free lord over all things and subject to none. A Christian is a servant in all things and subject to all."

Writing in 1543, John Calvin in Geneva explained why the Reformation was necessary and specifically names Luther whom, as far as we know, he never met face to face.

At the time when divine truth lay buried under this vast and dense cloud of darkness; when religion was sullied by so many impious superstitions; when by horrid blasphemies the worship of God was corrupted, and his glory laid prostrate; when by a multitude of perverse opinions, the benefit of redemption was frustrated, and men, intoxicated with a fatal confidence in works, sought salvation anywhere rather than in Christ; when the administration of the sacraments was partly maimed and torn asunder, partly adulterated by the admixture of numerous fictions, and partly profaned by traffickings for gain; when the government of the church had degenerated into mere confusion and devastation; when those who sat in the seat of pastors first did most vital injury to the church by the dissoluteness of their lives, and, secondly, exercised a cruel and most noxious tyranny over souls, by every kind of error, leading men like sheep to the slaughter; then Luther arose, and after him

others, who with united counsels sought out means and methods by which religion might be purged from all these defilements, the doctrine of godliness restored to its integrity, and the church raised out of its calamitous into somewhat of a tolerable condition. The same course we are still pursuing in the present day.<sup>2</sup>

Luther, Calvin and the many other Protestant Reformers, were only human and they were creatures of their time, as are we all. Luther was, as he said himself, ‘rough, boisterous, stormy, and belligerent. I am born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils.’<sup>3</sup> Calvin was a second-generation reformer, trained for the law, who would rather have lived the quiet life of a scholar rather than be forced by duty into public life. Their backgrounds explain a lot about their particular emphases.

Luther was content at justification by faith in Christ alone and viewed everything through that lens. If a teaching or practice suggested human merit in salvation it was out, but otherwise was allowed as before. Luther did not give the same emphasis to the positive use of the law as a guide in sanctification as Calvin did. Centuries later Dietrich Bonhoeffer was to lament the impact of ‘cheap grace’ in Lutheran Germany. Luther regarded his book on *The Bondage of the Will* (1525) and his Catechism as his best works, although in truth the impact of his translation of the Bible into a German understood by ordinary people was his great achievement. Luther remained a conservative man in many matters not least his view of Christ’s presence in the Supper, and his dependence on rulers for the protection and advancement of his work. His surprisingly favourable attitude to the Jews in the early 1520s, when he anticipated their conversion and the imminent return of Christ, reverted to the common European hostility in the bitter invective of *On the Jews and their Lies* in 1543.

Calvin was a much more systematic thinker. If he had a central doctrine it certainly was not predestination, on which he differed little from Luther, but the glory of God. This explains his more radical approach to the reform of worship, as well as his often-frustrated desire for the independence of the church from civil control. His facility in French, as well as through the Bible translation work of his cousin, Robert Olivétan, made a great contribution to the modern French language. He was a sickly man but maintained an impossibly large workload. He preached several times a week, wrote commentaries as well as revising and expanding his great text, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, whose first edition he wrote at age 26, and maintained a large correspondence across Europe. He was concerned for public health – the drains had to be cleaned and food standards

maintained. He was concerned for education – he was responsible for the founding of the Academy which became the university. He made Geneva, a city of ten to fifteen thousand people, a missionary-sending centre. He approved of the execution of the unstable anti-trinitarian genius Michael Servetus (1509-53), as did Protestant and Catholic rulers throughout Europe, although Calvin’s plea for beheading rather than burning fell on deaf ears. The impact of a millennium of linking unity in faith and membership of society still held sway.

The outspoken John Knox (1514-72) famously regarded Geneva in Calvin’s time as ‘the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion to be so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place.’<sup>4</sup> Forms of church government that were not hierarchical in an episcopal sense encouraged individual responsibility and contributed in time to a more democratic form of government in the State. While it took time for Presbyterianism to be established adequately in Scotland, it is noteworthy that Calvinistic Scotland became the most educated nation in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was a point of pride that ‘a lad of pairs’ could progress in Scotland more so than in episcopal England, and a godly crofter could sit in the elders’ meeting alongside the local laird.

The authority for the Protestant Reformation was the Bible properly interpreted and the confessions of the Lutheran and Reformed churches set out what was regarded as the correct interpretation of Scripture so as to avoid idiosyncratic teaching. While recognising the light of nature can tell us enough to leave us without excuse, the Scriptures were essential to saving knowledge of God. The Reformers rejected the authority of the church to lay down doctrines not found in the Scriptures, and in this sense they held to Scripture alone. They regarded the Bible as the word of God and the ultimate authority, but they did not discard what was correct in the pre-reformation church, such as the early ecumenical creeds. They rejected the papacy as an ivy-like growth on the church sucking out its life, but recognised – and this is often forgotten – that vestiges of the church remained under the papacy with a remnant of God’s people preserved in the papal church despite its corruptions.<sup>5</sup>

Pope Francis claims, not without opposition from within his own church, that Luther did not want to divide the church but to renew it.<sup>6</sup> In a sense this is true. If Luther could have reformed it he would have done so but was, like so many, forced out because he could not submit to the unbiblical teaching and practices which the Roman magisterium would not give up and still largely has not given up.

(to be concluded)

<sup>2</sup> *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (Dallas, TX: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995) 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> Preface to Melancthon’s *Commentary on Colossians* cited in C. E. Hill (ed.), *The Loci Communes of Philip Melancthon* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2007) 30.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2015), 151. The quotation from Knox has been rendered into contemporary English.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*, Book 4: ii, 11-12. also *Select Practical Writings of John Knox* (Edinburgh 1845) 253ff.

<sup>6</sup> The Joint Commemoration of the Reformation in Lund Cathedral on 31 October 2016.

## VISIT OF BARONESS CAROLINE COX

Baroness Cox spoke at Melbourne School of Theology, Wantirna, on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018, on the topic, *Challenges to Faith and Freedom at Home and Abroad*. This Report is by Anna Ward.

Those of us who were privileged to hear Caroline Cox on her visit to Melbourne in 2009 will probably remember it. There were perhaps 50 present at 5pm on this occasion. Her visit to Australia was short and the meeting time was awkward for younger people - our future leaders in church and state.

At 81 Caroline Cox has lost none of her ability to pour out facts, statistics and information. She has lost none of zeal for the weak, the poor and the marginalised. Most importantly, she has lost none of her zeal for Christ and commitment to him and over all, her compassion shines through.

She was a nurse, then a university lecturer, joined the Conservative party, was active in humanitarian work, and was given a seat in the British House of Lords during Mrs Thatcher's Prime Ministership. She describes herself as a nurse by training and a baroness by astonishment, the first baroness she had ever met! Before she became famous she put in many years of hard ground work, developing competence, and was then able to draw attention to the plight of the persecuted overseas. She said it was a privilege to speak up for the voiceless and the victims of persecution and has worked in countries as varied as Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Burma, Syria and Timor Leste. She then became aware of the oppression of Muslim women in Britain suffering as a result of sharia law.

The address given in Melbourne was highly informative, outlining the situation in Britain today, especially regarding Muslim influence. As a committed, caring Christian in a position of influence, she has assisted in drawing up legislation and continues to give help at a practical level. She gave ideas on how we can help too; not to be scared of Muslims and or them as pariahs, but to show them Christian compassion. Her address particularly focused on the oppression of women.

She described the build-up to the present threat as starting with extreme relativism and hedonism in the swinging sixties, then the Marxist influence in education in the 1970s and 80s. These were a fundamental assault on human values that created a vacuum which has led to the current situation and opened up the way for the growth of Islam. Some of us might think the roots of our current situation started long before 1960, but she made her point well.

It was stressed to us that the majority of the world's 2.1 billion Muslims are law-abiding, hospitable people who favour religious tolerance and democratic freedoms. We were shown power-point presentations, which listed the 7 forms of strategic Jihad – political,

cultural, demographic, financial, legal, humanitarian and terrorist/military.

### Sharia court rules

However, Baroness Cox's main focus was on Sharia law and the devastating impact it has on women and children. There are over 80 known sharia courts in the UK and their gender discrimination inflicts great suffering on Muslim women and children. The reality is that for many women in Muslim communities in the UK, sharia courts are in practice part of an institutionalised atmosphere of intimidation, backed by the ultimate sanction of a death threat. Women have no effective rights under Islamic law, are often not able to access British law, and many are reduced to destitution.

Divorce: A husband can unilaterally divorce his wife, sometimes by declaring 'I divorce you' three times, but if a wife wishes to be the one instigating divorce she may have to obtain her husband's permission, apply to a sharia council or 'court' for a ruling, and pay money. In other words, divorce is difficult or impossible under sharia particularly if the marriage is not registered with the government.

Custody of children: Children born to a woman who is divorced are 'legally' liable to be placed in the father's care from the age of 7. This contravenes British official child custody policies.

Rape: If a woman wants to bring a charge of alleged rape, she is obliged to provide 4 independent male witnesses.

A woman's witness: In any sharia court this counts as half the value of a man's.

Honour based violence: The true scale cannot be known. An organisation has been set up by a Muslim lady in UK to help victims and potential victims of abduction, mutilation, acid attacks, beatings, and murder.

Polygamy is rife, with some men having 20 children to several 'wives', all growing up in dysfunctional families. It was pointed out in the question time that the situation here in Australia is of women as single mothers claiming government benefits, whether they are in a polygamous 'marriage' or in a 'relationship'. The suffragettes, who fought so hard for women to have the vote and equal rights, would be appalled.

### How can this be overturned?

\*Baroness Cox is seeking an amendment to the marriage act to ensure that all marriages are legally registered in UK ie. including those taking place overseas. This would help to address polygamy.

\* Support Muslim women enabling them to stand up to pressure and intimidation.

\* Collaborate with Christian and Muslim organisations seeking to stamp out these abuses.

\* Get to know your Muslim neighbours and befriend them. Many Muslims are concerned about lax morals, immodest dress standards and alcohol abuse in what they assume is a Christian society. Only through getting to know them, can they find out that Christians see these as sinful too. – AFW

## The Good Fight of Faith

*Covius, one of whom the world was not worthy.*

Translated from *A Kalendar in Boek Form* (Groen 2004) by Bert Stasse, Geelong PCEA.

**H**is name was Covius, a Jew born in Russia, but he had never really settled in the land of his birth. The Jewish customs and laws gave him no inner peace. He felt that something was not right. Those of the same faith were still expecting the coming Messiah. When Covius pointed out that they might be mistaken they became very angry with Covius. He himself was not sure either. But, after studying God's word, it pleased the Lord to open his mind to the reality that Christ was the promised Messiah.

When he bore witness to this to those who were willing to listen (and to those who were not) the reaction of his family and friends was one of anger and hostility. His life became unbearable and he decided to leave Russia and settled in the Netherlands, a country known for its hospitality to the Jewish people.

Well before the Second World war he arrived in Amsterdam. He was well educated in Hebrew and Greek and decided to give private lessons. He earned a good living and lived a very sober life. Most of his earnings were spent in buying Bibles to pass on to those of the Jewish faith. In those days Amsterdam had a Jewish population exceeding 100,000.

At one time he became seriously ill. After a long time in hospital he recovered but no one ever visited him. He continued teaching Hebrew and Greek until one day he walked past a hospital and noticed that it was visiting hours. He thought there would be patients there who never had visitors. So he decided to buy some fruit and entered the hospital. He asked the first nurse he saw if there was someone who might be lonely. The nurse

pointed him to a man at the end of the ward. He was a young man and Covius realised that he too was Jewish. The name of the young man was Sam Franck.

Sam had always lived in Amsterdam and his family also adhered to the Jewish faith, but Sam had found the Messiah. On the Day of Atonement his father had expelled him from the family, because he was not willing to go to the synagogue. He had said: 'Father, there is already an offering accomplished at Golgotha. We don't have to celebrate the Day of Atonement. The Messiah has already come.'

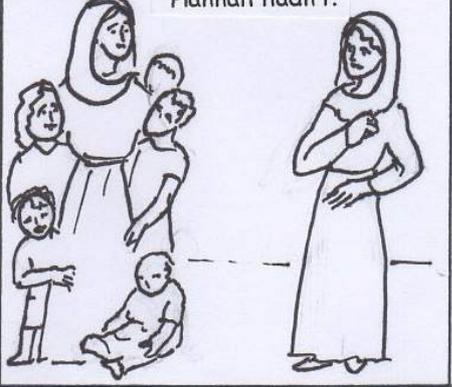
But there in his hospital bed he witnessed of the hope in Christ that was in him. That day was the beginning of a firm friendship between two of God's people.

**I**n April 1940, years later, somewhere in Holland a funeral is being held for Sam Franck and many are present for the service of this child of God. As the last speaker Covius stepped forward and his speech is one that is seldom heard. Pointing out from the Old Testament and the New Testament that the Messiah has come. He tries to convince those present that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God's word, and that his brother in Christ, Sam Franck, has now entered into that wonderful salvation.

A few months later the Netherlands is invaded by the Germans and a terrible period begins for the Jews of Amsterdam. One of the first arrested is Covius and he is interrogated before the court. He truly is a witness there too. He points out the great need of Israel, of the Jews in the Netherlands, and he witnesses that Jesus Christ is the one sent by God. He points out to the Germans God's care for his people, and that the day will come when they will be held responsible for their criminal deeds to God's people.

No surprise that the death penalty was the outcome. In an inner court in a prison somewhere in Amsterdam one of first executed by firing squad was Covius. Covius' fight had come to an end. #

*Precious in the sight of the death of his saints.*

<h1>Hannah's Prayer</h1>	<p>Elkanah had two wives.</p>  <p>Peninnah and Hannah</p>	<p>Peninnah had children. Hannah hadn't.</p> 
<p>Every year they all went to the tabernacle to worship.</p> 	<p>Peninnah taunted Hannah....</p> 	 <p>....until she cried.</p>
<p>Hannah prayed to God. Old Eli the priest thought she was drunk. "I am not drunk; I am very upset so I am praying about things"</p>  <p>"May the Lord give you what you have prayed for" said Eli.</p>		<p>God answered Hannah's prayer. She had a baby boy - Samuel.</p>  <p>When Samuel was old enough Hannah took him back to the tabernacle to serve God, as she promised.</p> 

## SEARCH WORK

SEPTEMBER 2018

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE

Intermediate omit questions 7 and 8

REVELATION chapter 6

1. What did John see when the first seal was opened?
2. When the fifth seal was opened, what did the souls under the altar cry?
3. What did the kings of the earth and the great men say to the mountains and rocks? (2 verses)

Chapter 7

4. How is the multitude described that stood before the throne?
5. How did the elder describe those arrayed in white robes? (4 verses)

Chapter 8

6. What did the angel with the golden censer offer with the incense on the golden altar?

Chapter 9

7. What is the name of the angel of the bottomless pit? Find out what the name means.
8. After the sixth angel sounded, did those not killed by the plagues repent of their works? (2 verses)

## JUNIOR

GENESIS chapter 18:15—33

1. When Abraham prayed God to spare Sodom if there were ten righteous in the city, what was the answer?

Chapter 19:12—29

2. What did the angels say to Lot in the morning to hasten him [urge him to hurry], and what did they do while he lingered? (2 verses)
3. What happened to Lot's wife?
4. When God destroyed the cities of the plain, whom did he remember?

Answers to Mrs Irene Steel, PO Box 942, Epping NSW 1710 [iesteel@gmail.com](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

## CAMPS

The **Brisbane Family Camp** is at Camp Drewe, Lennox Head Friday 7 to Monday 10 December 2018. Registration from \$40 per night.

The church-wide **PCEA Family Camp** will be held at Elanora Heights, Sydney 1 to 4 January 2019. Approx \$240 (adult) \$210 (child) The Speaker will be Rev Andres Miranda.

Family rates are available for both camps. Details from Stewart Carswell [sccarswell@optusnet.com.au](mailto:sccarswell@optusnet.com.au) 07 3397 1138

## NEWS

### NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

Congregations are to be visited by Presbytery every five years to see how they are doing and to strengthen the work. On Saturday 18th August, Northern Presbytery met with the Northern Rivers Congregation at Maclean for the Quinquennial Presbyterian Visitation. The Presbytery met with Session and Deacon's Court in the morning, and then enjoyed a wonderful fellowship lunch with members of the congregation. Moderator, Rev. Jim Klazinga, led worship and met with the congregation in the afternoon. Many expressed the thought that the day was very encouraging and helpful. We are looking forward to the next time we can gather in this way to edify and encourage one another in the Lord in other centres in the Presbytery.



The employment agreement for the Rev John Forbes of Scotland, who is under Call from the Hastings Congregation, has been approved by immigration authorities so paving the way for the issue of visas.

**KNOX, WANTIRNA**



Knox Knitters are at it again clicking their way through a particularly chilly winter. The group meets on Thursday mornings from 10am to 12 noon at Knox P.C.E.A. church.



It's a loud and lively morning when all fourteen are present and its lovely to see how all chip in and help with practical matters. On the quieter side, each session concludes with a prayer about issues relevant to the group.



A special morning tea was held to farewell Cheryl Bradford who has moved to Western Australia with her family. She will be missed.

Knitted goods from the group and from other home knitters are delivered both to the Salvation Army Centre for the homeless in Bourke St. and to the Kogo Organisation which distributes widely to the needy.

Thanks to our minister Andres for his recent visit which is much appreciated by all. Thanks to the ladies for their beautiful work. We thank God and pray for His ongoing blessing.

**NARRE WARREN**

Bertha (Beth) Aalberts, a long-standing member of the Narre Warren Congregation, went to be with the Lord on 19 August 2018 at the age of 87. She had been a widow since the death of her husband John in 2005 and had been in poor health for several months. Beth was a spiritually minded lady with a clear testimony to the grace of God. The service was conducted by the Rev. Stephen Giles, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria but also frequent supply preacher at Narre Warren. Rowland Ward led the singing. In line with Beth's request



there was no eulogy. She wished all the focus to be on Christ and that the Gospel be clearly preached to the family and that was done very clearly by Mr Giles. On a pleasant day of sunshine she was laid to rest in the family plot at the Bunurong Memorial Park, Carrum Downs.

**The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and immediately pass into glory and their bodies, being still united to Christ, rest in their graves until the resurrection. *Shorter Catechism, 37***