



*Look at the birds of the air;  
they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,  
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.  
Are you not much more valuable than they?*

**Matthew 6:26**

# the presbyterian banner

November 2013

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## Editorial

A helpful comment came up in one of our study groups the other day. It was in connection with a prayer request being made for one of the group having difficulty with the manager at work. That seems to be an ever increasing dilemma for folk these days. As the moral fabric of society unravels so also on a personal level people aren't practising the basic courtesies and considerations we once all commonly understood. Thus you have the whole range of bullying happening – whether at school or in the work place. You could even say that much of modern business practice actually exalts anti-social behaviour in its drive for corporate and personal profit.

Anyhow, when this request for prayer was made another one in the group raised what had been helpful advice for them in such a situation. Because while we pray for being able to forgive such a person he said it would be more helpful if we could pray to deal with the resentment we have in that situation. We reflected that forgiveness cannot be given unless one is sorry and seeks to change. But our attitude to that person can help to bring that about. That's why the advice was given that we should focus on what is positive and upbuilding when we feel so drawn down and negative.

We turned to Philippians 4 and read the verses 4 till 9 there. The apostle is clear there about the joy that should permeate our whole lives. In verse 8 Paul exhorts us to think about what is excellent or praiseworthy.

This is certainly a different spirit than what we see in the world around us. But it is the Holy Spirit that will be shown out there when we think and speak and act in this way. Then the hearts of those we work or study or otherwise interact with might be opened to the gospel.

*Always be prepared to give an answer  
to everyone who asks you to give the reason  
for the hope that you have.*

1 Peter 3:15

*Cover Photo: Mrs Val Phillips*

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## Hot Potatoes

*Considering Romans 14*

*George Ball*

I don't know who said it first – you've heard it before – but I like it. ***'To dwell above with the saints in love – ah yes, that will be glory. To live below with the saints I know – well, that's a different story.'***

It's got a ring of truth about it. God's people can be a difficult lot to live with. It was no different in New Testament days. There were lots of quarrels then, too. There was, for example, a dispute among the widows (Acts 6); there was a dispute between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15); there was a dispute over the importance of circumcision (Acts 15), and so on! Furthermore, Paul was likely writing his letter to the Romans from the city of Corinth. There was plenty going on in the Corinthian church to make any pastor weep or have a breakdown!

As for the church in Rome, there were obvious differences of opinion about special diets and observance of days. Some were meat eaters and some were vegetarians by conviction (2). Some still observed the Old Testament holy days while others did not (5). I don't think by the way, that this was a disagreement about the Lord's Day – that matter was already settled. More likely it was about the observance of Jewish special days and holidays – e.g. Passover, Pentecost, etc. Obviously Gentile converts felt no compulsion to observe these days, while many Jewish converts observed them 'religiously'. These were contentious issues.

I don't think Passover and Pentecost are burning issues among us today. However, we have successfully managed to replace these issues with our own hot potatoes. We have established our own list of 'Do's and Don'ts,' which as far as we are concerned, is the standard of orthodoxy, and the measure of our fellowship. Let's think of a few examples. Some drink alcohol and enjoy a

glass of wine with a meal – some don't. Some think that the communion wine should be alcoholic – others disagree. Some think communion should be every week. Some think the KJV should be the only Bible version used in church. Some think a woman should have long hair and never wear slacks. Some think a man should wear a tie to church and certainly never wear shorts or thongs. Some watch TV on Sunday – others do not. Some think baptism should only be by immersion. Some think we should only pray standing. Some think we should always recite the Lord's Prayer in church. Some think that we should only address God as 'Thee.' Some think we should get new soft seating in church; others think we should continue to use the old wooden pews. Some think we should use the overhead projectors; others think that's the thin edge of the wedge. I'm sure you can think of other examples. I'm sure, too, that you (like me) may have a strong opinion about some of these issues. But what are they? Opinions! Paul refers to them as, 'disputable matters; doubtful things (1)'. These are matters which the Bible does not clearly legislate upon. They are grey areas. Are they important? Not very. They are not primary saving doctrines. They are not about the character of God, nor about the Son of God, nor about the sufficiency and authority of the Bible, nor about the way of salvation, not about heaven or hell. Yet they are big enough to create disharmony, alienation, and bad feeling in the church. Big enough to cause us to be at loggerheads; big enough to divide a congregation and to polarise believers; big enough to cause people to leave a church – or at least to refuse to attend.

How does Paul approach the matter? The first thing to note is that (even though he has a clear con-

viction on the matter himself – see verse 14), yet he doesn't take sides. It's a temptation for any leader to insist on conformity to his will; 'agree with me and you're in, disagree with me and you're out!' There will be areas that we will disagree over. There are however, doctrines that are non-negotiable; these are the primary doctrines that Paul has been writing about in the earlier chapters of this letter. But there are also these grey areas – which are not black and white. When we cannot agree on these matters we may have to compromise. And we must insist on understanding, generosity, tolerance, acceptance, love and maturity.

Paul identifies and addresses the two opposing groups in the church as the 'weak' and the 'strong.' The distinction has nothing to do with physical strength. The weak are those who are less mature believers; who are weak in knowledge and understanding of their beliefs. The weak are those who have a conscience and scruples about diets and days. They often have a list of taboos which they want to impose on others. They fail to understand the freedom we have in Christ. Ironically, the weak are often blind to their weakness – and usually consider themselves as the strong! The 'strong' on the other hand, will have a mature understanding of their faith and freedom in Christ; they are strong in the application of their faith – but their temptation is to despise the weak.

As the apostle addresses this matter we discover that the real problem was not about diets or days but about underlying sinful attitudes, as he identifies the sins of arrogance, pride and contempt. In this chapter Paul lays down certain principles to help us han-

dle our differences. In doing so, Paul was not trying to paper over the cracks so as to create the appearance that there were no differences of opinion. There were obvious differences – and it is probable that these differences continued to exist. Rather he provides the prescription on how believers, who may hold different opinions, may still enjoy the ‘communion of the saints’.

### 1. Avoid (if possible) Debates over Doubtful Things (1)

***‘As for the one who is weak, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions’ (v.1).***

Don’t go looking for differences. If you do, you will always find them! Don’t go looking for arguments. Don’t major on the minors. Don’t be a nit-picker. Don’t be a fault finder. Don’t be looking for opportunities to debate doubtful things. Such ‘debate’ only becomes a great distraction from the proclamation of the gospel; stifles the growth of the church, becomes an excuse for inactivity, and turns many people off from joining the church. Unfortunately the view that many outsiders have of the church is that we are a bunch of silly little people arguing over petty and irrelevant rules and regulations.

Paul instructs us to welcome with open arms fellow believers who don’t see things the way you do. Your brother or sister may not dot all your ‘i’s’ or cross all your ‘t’s’; nonetheless, you must accept them (see also 15: 7). Jesus said (in another context), ***‘what God has joined together let no man put asunder.’*** We belong to the same family. (It’s often remarked, ‘You can choose your friends – but you can’t choose your family’.) We have the same Saviour. We have the same hope. We will spend eternity together (when we will agree on everything) – so we should get used to it now!

### 2. Don’t Despise Others (3)

***‘Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and***

***let not the one who abstains pass judgement on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him’ (v.3).***

We are not to despise those whose views differ from us. This prohibition applies to both the strong and the weak. Neither side is to despise the other. Usually both sides think they are right and despise the other. For example, when the strong see the scruples of the weak they might think, ‘Don’t be silly, don’t be so childish, don’t be so petty, don’t be so narrow-minded, etc.’ The temptation for the strong is to feel proud and to pour sarcasm upon the weak. The weaker brother must be careful not to shoot his brother down. When the weak see the strong doing those things that they themselves consider wrong, they might think, ‘Don’t be so worldly!’ ‘What kind of a witness is that?’ ‘See how lax and liberal they are!’ This should not happen in the church. Remember God has welcomed each one of us into His family and His church. If the Lord has received a brother, how dare we reject him or refuse to have full fellowship with him. It’s not our business to cross people off God’s guest list.

### 3. Each Should be Clear in His Own Mind (5)

***‘Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind’ (v. 5b).***

Each of us has a responsibility to be fully convinced in his or her own mind. Paul was – see verse 14. What should we be convinced of? Convinced we are right? No. We should be convinced that the view that we hold is based on a thorough and accurate understanding of God’s Word. There is no excuse for ignorance or laziness or prejudice. If we haven’t bothered to search the Scriptures to support our view, nor sought help and advice from trusted counsellors, then we are just plain arrogant. We should be able to explain scripturally the reason for our actions. We should always seek to respect the conscience of

another. We should remember that the one who eats and the one who doesn’t, do so for the same reason – to honour the Lord (8). We might say that though their actions might be misguided, ‘their heart is in the right place.’

### 4. Who are you to Judge? (10)

***‘Why do you pass judgement on your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God’ (vs. 10b-12).***

He says to the weak, ‘Why do you judge your brother?’ He says to the strong, ‘Why do you despise your brother?’ You are not responsible for the words or actions of your brother – you are only responsible for how you respond. God is Judge. Leave the judgement to Him. We dare not presume to take God’s place. Each of us will have to front up before Him. Each one of us is accountable and responsible to God. He will have the final audit. If we remember this it will prevent us going though life trying to put everyone else right, while neglecting to examine our own attitudes and actions.

### 5. Watch Out for Others (13)

***‘Never put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother’ (v 13b).***

In the exercise of your conviction you must have regard for your brothers and sisters. You must not be responsible for causing another to fall. This warning is delivered particularly to the strong who understand their spiritual freedom. But that freedom need not always be exercised. They were free to eat meat – even (as Paul implies) the ‘bargain’ meat offered to idols! ‘But if your brother is grieved by what you eat; you are no longer walking in love’ (15). Exercising your freedom may not be in the interests of your brother or sister. Paul’s own

policy was, 'if food is a cause of my brother's falling I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall' (1 Cor. 8: 13) – and this despite his persuasion that no food was per se off limits. In food and social customs generally, he adapted himself to the company he was in (1 Cor. 9: 19-23). Luther got it right, I believe, when he said of Christian liberty, 'a Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none.' Then in typical Luther boldness said of Christian charity, 'a Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.' If the exercise of my liberty hinders another – then I should refrain. On what principle? The principle of love (15). While we have the freedom in Christ – we are not free to selfishly flaunt it. Does this mean that another's conscience should dictate my actions? Stott states, 'Love never disregards weak consciences. Love limits its own liberty out of respect for them.'

**6. Get Your Priorities Right (17)**  
*'For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (v. 17).*

We must get our priorities right. We must see things in perspective. What is the big issue? The 'eternals' of righteousness, peace and joy are more important than the externals of eating and drinking. We are to hunger and thirst for righteousness. That's the vision we are to capture. That's the message we are to communicate.

**7. Pursue Peace (19)**  
*'Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up building' (v 19).*

Unity, peace and edification are things we must actively pursue, for to do so is pleasing to the Lord.

**8. Keep it Private (22)**  
*'The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God' (22).*  
'Faith in this sense is a firm and intelligent conviction before God that one is doing what is right' (Bruce). This assumes that we are to hold our convictions (and scruples) on these grey areas privately and discreetly. We are not to make them the benchmark of fellowship or membership. We are not to broadcast our opinions or ram our views down other people's throats. If and when that happens, then the leadership of

the church need to do something!

**9. Be Forbearing (15: 1-7)**  
'Forbearance' isn't a word we hear much today, but if we learn to practice it, it can become a great weapon in staving off contention and friction. To forbear means to show restraint; to be patient in face of provocation; to be long-suffering; willing to put up with people's actions – to let things go. Many offences (perhaps most?) just need to be overlooked. Many tensions and misunderstandings would vanish if we were more forbearing with one another. Love covers a multitude of sins. The Lord Himself set us an example to follow (3), and that example has been recorded for us that we can learn forbearance and so learn to persevere with hope (4). God is glorified when we live in harmony and welcome one another (7).  
*'Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity' (Psalm 133: 1).*

## The Past for Today

### PCEA History: God's Hymnbook

Rowland Ward

#### Scottish background

From the time of the Reformation of 1560 the Scottish Church confined the praise portion of the worship to the 150 compositions of the Psalter in metrical form led by a precentor. The first complete Scottish Psalter was issued in 1564 each psalm having the melody of the tune printed. There were 30 different metres in all. But the decline of the 'song schools' and the literary defects of this Psalter meant it had fallen on hard times by the 1630s, particularly in the towns.

The Scottish Church produced a new and more accurate Psalter which was appointed for use in

1650. It was all in common metre (86.86) although second versions of 13 psalms in other metres were included. It was easy to sing but unfortunately was published without music. In 1666 a book of 12 tunes was published which became the fixed number in many areas for a century. In the 1750s the teaching of music revived in Scotland. In 1781 the Assembly gave permissive use for one year to a collection of 67 metrical renderings of Scripture passages commonly called the Scottish Paraphrases, and these gained some currency in Lowland congregations, although without formal approval.

Interest in music led to many new tune books, but not all published settings of the same tune were consistent. From the 1850s the sol-fah method of John Curwen gained popularity for teaching music. Split-leaf books appeared by means of which any tune in the appropriate metre could be matched to a psalm. The common law of the Scottish church previous to the formation of the PCEA was that instrumental music was excluded from the public worship of God, a position usual among the early Reformed churches although broken down in the wealthier Dutch churches in the 17th century through the

influence of the magistrates. It was also common in other Protestant churches. For example, singing in the church of the great Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon (1834-92), was without instrumental accompaniment. 'We might as well pray to God by machinery as praise by it' was his comment (on Psalm 42). In Scotland a capella psalmody was given up progressively from 1865, and similarly in Australia, but was retained in the PCEA and until 2010 in the FCS.



*Split leaf edition of the Irish Psalter, 1880.*

### Australia

Rev Dudley Trotter had a rather definite disposition to controversy even before he was ordained at Maclean in 1938. In 1941 he raised the propriety of using one of the Scottish Paraphrases at a regular united intercessory prayer meeting at Maclean. He said he believed he was entitled to use such a paraphrase by virtue of his licensure by the Free Church of Scotland. He seems to have regarded the very occasional use of the paraphrases in several Lowland FCS congregations as truly authorized. His argument was that as the Australian church held the same principles as the FCS, he should be able to use the Paraphrases, but he did not wish to use his right and liberty without seeking the advice of his brethren. Although the Paraphrases had been used in the FPCSA and occasionally at various times in the

PCEA, the terms of the 1913 Union, which referred to 'psalms' (no capital P), could be held to exclude other than the compositions of the Book of Psalms. The general view was clearly for limitation to the Psalter, but Mr Trotter's claims led to some debate on song in worship.

In 1946 Rev Neil Macleod, who had resigned St George's in 1943 to become an Army Chaplain, resigned from the PCEA and joined the PCA, ostensibly because he had come to regard the singing of

uninspired hymns as lawful in public worship (although it appears other reasons were more fundamental).

Rev J. C. Robinson's Moderator's address in 1946 was entitled 'The Exclusive Use of the Psalms in the Public Worship of God'. While it did not deal specifically with the Paraphrases the implication was very much for the Psalter only. In 1947 the opinion of Mr Bradshaw,

the Church's legal advisor, was that the 1913 Union restricted one to the Book of Psalms, (although there must be a degree of doubt given Mr Buttrose of South Australia had agreed the Union basis). Mr Trotter resigned his charge in 1948, and took up farming. In 1952 the PCEA declared as part of the union negotiations with the FPCV that one was obliged to exclude from the praise portion of public worship all compositions other than the Psalms of the Word of God. Upon the consummation of the union in 1953 all Synod members renewed their vows by re-signing the formula of subscription.

That was not the end of the matter. Mr Trotter held that we had changed from the position of the FCS, and that therefore the PCEA had departed from the constitution. In effect, as noted by Mr Bradshaw in 1954, he was not recognizing that the origin of the

use of the Paraphrases was an interim act of the Church of Scotland in 1781 which was never made permanent; that the church has the right to disallow practices that may have obtained standing by use and custom; and that the vows of office-bearers do not require them to preserve every past enactment of the church since a distinction must be drawn between the unalterable constitution of the church and those decisions which take place within the framework of that constitution. The exclusion of the Paraphrases was in the latter category, and therefore was a decision reasonably open to the church in the light of its constitutional powers.

Similarly, the notion that the version of the Psalter used is unalterably fixed to the 1650 Psalter, a view occasionally heard, mainly in the late 1970s, is without basis in church law. The intent of the commitment to 'own the purity of worship presently authorized and practised' refers to the worship authorized by the Confession of Faith, illustrated in the Directory for Public Worship, and applied in lawful Acts of Synod from time to time.

However, the Confession of Faith as adopted by the Church of Scotland on 27 August 1647 was not then understood as confining the limits of sung praise in public worship to the Psalter, since the very next day the Assembly asked Zachary Boyd, who was working on the Psalter, to render other songs in Scripture into metrical form for the consideration of the wider church. The position of the Scottish Church appears to be very much in line with other reformed churches of the time, ie. an 'inspired songs' position rather than an 'exclusive psalmody' position (1). On this view, the Psalter, other songs embedded in Scripture and singing versions of prose Scripture (ie. paraphrases) are within the power of

the church to authorize from time to time for use in public worship following due process. In practice the church has virtually confined itself to the Psalter as it is clear it was intended for use of the church in praise, but it is not so clear that other material should be so used. Of course the PCEA Synod of 1952 did not suppose that office-bearers were required to regard singing the Paraphrases as wrong in the abstract, for the Australian church had at the same time established the closest relationship with the Free Church of Scotland so that its ministers were regarded as automatically eligible for call by the PCEA even though in Scotland they could use the Paraphrases.

**Vows**

So what do the vows taken by office-bearers require? The vows require a person to acknowledge that the worship is within the regulative principle and to assert, maintain and defend it. This could be done on such grounds as it being a practice that honours the Word of God – and indeed what

throughout church history. Another argument is that the use of God’s hymnbook protects the conscience from defective human compositions; after all, the psalms are the songs of Jesus and in that sense as different as chalk and cheese from our own compositions. Jesus used the Psalms in his life and teaching, sang from them at the Last Supper, quoted them from the cross, died with their words on his lips and illumined the Psalter’s meaning following his resurrection (Luke 24:44). More than 100 of the Psalter’s 150 compositions are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament. Even when we do not fully understand the Psalms we know they are God’s Word. We might also note that the church in administering the mind of Christ as revealed in his Word has to decide what songs are to be used in public worship. Surely we would want the best, so what better than the compositions of the Psalter, the uniquely inspired songs of God’s covenant people.

The approach just outlined was the view taken by the PCEA Synod 1984 in regard to a student who was ready for licence but could not defend exclusive psalmody on the further ground that it, and only it, was the unambiguous and legitimate application of Scripture teaching (with the logical corollary that singing of hymns in public worship is sinful). To require this is needlessly divisive and uncharitable towards

those who might personally think some other songs are permissible but are happy to confine themselves in public worship to the Psalter for such reasons as stated earlier. To require it is entirely against the attitude of the Reformed church historically, and particularly the consensus approach on matters of some conscientious difference well illustrated in the Westminster Assembly. It is

a position that largely arose in smaller psalm-singing bodies facing the 19th century onslaught of uninspired hymns in public worship. But it is a view that was an over-reaction which mistook a personal view as a requirement of the vows.



Most PCEA congregations now use modern Psalters as the 1650 Scottish Psalter, a very fine Psalter in its day, is largely outdated. The Complete Book of Psalms for Singing with Study Notes produced in 1991 by the Melbourne congregation in staff notation (now dominant in our culture), or Sing Psalms, the new split-leaf Scottish Version of 2003 in staff or sol-fah notation, are the usual alternatives.

**Footnote:**

1. For review of the Biblical arguments see especially the Minority Report by Prof. John Murray and William Young to the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1947) accessible at [www.opc.org/GA/song.html](http://www.opc.org/GA/song.html)



Huguenot (French) Psalter, 1562

other collection of songs for communal worship has God given us? Why would we want to substitute our efforts for God’s provision in the praise portion of public worship? Surely no more than we would substitute an extract from Calvin’s Institutes for the Scripture reading. A further argument is that the Psalter is truly ecumenical and unifying, used by the larger number of Christians of all kinds

# Life under the Banner

## *Divine Institutions In Society — Proverbs 2:6*

S.N. Ramsay

*"For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."*

We live in days when the whole subject of our society is undergoing a critical examination. Days when our customs, traditions, institutions, moral standards, and ethical concepts are being tried and shaken and cast aside by so many intellectuals of the day who in the main are unable to offer anything whatever to put in the place of the things that they would discard. They find themselves in an awesome vacuum and I suspect that they find it frightening. It is perfectly natural then to lay the blame at the door of those very customs, traditions and standards, now rejected, because they do not seem to produce the kind of security, the kind of world, the kind of stability to which people feel they are entitled. Surely it is unsound policy indeed to turn out a lame horse, simply because he is lame, and leave it at that! But we must confess with shame and confusion of face that our established institutions, traditions, customs, and erstwhile standards are not producing very admirable results. They are lame. But is this because of something inherent in them? Is this because there is something wrong with them or because there is something wrong with the way we ourselves see them - and are using or misusing them? There is the rub! You see, I submit that the root cause of the dismal failure that confronts us is simply that we have come to disregard the basic foundations on which they must stand if they are going to fulfil the purpose of their Divine institution. That is the situation in which we find ourselves today!

What do we do about it?

I suggest that the real cause of our problems, the ultimate reason why our cherished institutions have failed so dismally is that we have grown to look on them - and endeavour to operate them - as HUMAN INVENTIONS. There is our problem - we have largely ceased to acknowledge the responsibility to GOD which is inseparable from any true and satisfying enjoyment of the institutions

that we operate and should enjoy. "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

What are these institutions we are talking about?

They are -the Family  
-the Church  
-the State

As we see each one in its scriptural context we recognise, in each and in all of them, the factors of authority, responsibility and privilege. Let us look at them in this light.

### **1. The Family—that Divine Institution**

To those of us who have been brought up in Christian homes it is becoming distressingly evident that there is a wider gulf between the thinking of the old school and the new than many of us have come to realise. If TV serves no other purpose it shows, those of us who know better, something of how the other half lives. In fact, sometimes I say to myself "are there no normal people left in the world today?" Judging by the programmes that we see - who can fail to ask that question? It is becoming increasingly evident that there is a great gulf. I once happened on to a programme where a group of young people were engaged in a discussion with a panel of psychiatrists and at one stage the discussion revolved around the family as an institution (that was quite a while ago) and I came into contact with the term "the counter-culture". That phrase or term "counter-culture" seemed to be nothing more than a euphemism for revolt against the established order of society and in the minds of those young people manifestly revolt against the whole concept of the family unit as we know it. There seemed to be a vague addled thought of a culture where fathers beget children, mothers bear the children and all sounds so delightful for the fathers as they beget them and for the mothers as they conceive them but what of the mothers as they await the time for them to be born -- and subsequently?

What of the family as a unit into which children are born? You see -

there comes a vacuum which the counter-culture seems to have nothing whatever to fill.

We observed that each of these three Divine institutions, the Family, the Church, the State - that each of them involves authority, and responsibility and privilege. Now the Divine institution of the family provides that the privilege of begetting and bearing children carries with it the responsibility of providing and caring for those children and of bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and the Divine institution further confers on those parents the authority over their children without which they cannot discharge their responsibilities. The same Divine institution lays upon those children the responsibility to honour their father and mother, to be obedient to all their parents' lawful commands.

Parental responsibility could scarcely be put more clearly and plainly and positively than in the psalm we sang, Psalm 78. But it does not end with teaching only. It extends to control and discipline, so that we find very clear and definite instruction with regard to the measures that are to be employed to ensure obedience. Take Proverbs chapter 23 for example "withhold not correction from the child. If thou beatest him with the rod he will not die" (I love the way that is put, - but let's finish it) "thou shalt beat him with the rod and deliver his soul from hell". (Verses 13, 14) There it is, but of course we cannot expect much notice to be taken of that by men who do not trust in God and do not believe in hell either. Again we read "he that spares his rod hates his son, but he that loves him chastens him betimes" Now we don't need to multiply references but I recall a conversation I had the other day with a policeman who had been lecturing children at school particularly on the matter of safety on the roads and so on. We were conversing in a more general way and it seems that many of the children he spoke to were fully and firmly



persuaded that their parents had no authority over them - which they were entitled as individuals to do as they pleased without regard to parental authority or to parental correction. He was able to clear their minds of some of those misapprehensions, to the great astonishment of some who found that their parents did have legal right to exercise discipline. It is parental responsibility to provide for, to teach, and to correct their children, and due attention to these duties will bring its own reward. "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice, and he that begot a wise child shall have joy of him. His mother shall be glad and she that bear thee shall rejoice." (Proverbs 23:24, 25.)

## 2. The Institution of the Church

The picture of the church that is being increasingly projected today is that of an ancient entrenched institution which is slowly losing its grip but still bent on acting as a pressure group to try to impose its irksome restrictions on unwilling people, yet still looked on by the community as an institution which owes something to society - at least by way of baptising its children, burying its dead and offering a prayer for the repose of the soul. Now that is the view that is so widely held of the church of today. How far the church itself is responsible for that image is difficult to say, but this much is clear, she herself has made her own contribution toward it. She has grown increasingly ready to dispense her privileges without at the same time insisting on responsibilities, insisting that those who would receive privileges should face up to their responsibilities. People who are utter strangers come to the door of the manse and perhaps say "I've got a couple of kids in the car and we're going on holidays and I would like to get them 'done' before we go". Now that is the kind of thing that a minister can face in a manse today. It reflects the attitude to which I refer. Others have taken marriage vows and set little store by them. If the church at large were constant in making it clear that privileges are to be dispensed only in the framework of a scriptural mandate, and not otherwise, I believe that this kind of thing would not happen. It is to be feared too that in much of this kind of approach to the church there is more than a little element of superstition. It

is to be regretted that the church, intentionally or otherwise is prone to encourage this and particularly, does that seem to be the case, in the matter of prayers for the dead.

Why is this so?

I will tell you why it is so. It comes about because the church is leaning more toward the side of human wisdom, forgetting, as our Word says today, that "the Lord giveth wisdom, out of His mouth cometh wisdom and understanding." The Word teaches as clearly as words can say it "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life". That same Word teaches that "as the tree falls, so shall it lie."

## 3. The Institution of the State

Again it is abundantly clear that the state has fallen on the very same rock as has the church. You say "What is that?" She has "---forsaken ME the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for herself cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). She too, leans heavily toward the side of human wisdom, forgetting that "out of His mouth comes wisdom." A leading member of parliament in Canberra some time ago, in a speech proposing certain legislation covering members of the "gay liberation", so called, said (and I quote) that "legislation has one ultimate justification, namely the welfare of the individual." I am persuaded that in saying this, he expressed the opinion of the vast majority. He maintained that it is necessary to distinguish between what ecclesiastical authorities consider to be sin and what parliamentary authority considers to be a crime. The same issue has raised its ugly head again today and our Confession sums up the scriptural position in this way: "God, the supreme Lord and King of all the earth has ordained civil magistrates to be under Him over the people for His own glory and the public good, and to this end He has armed them with the power of the sword for the defence and encouragement of them that are good and for the punishment of evil doers". So many members would make the ultimate justification of legislative measures "the welfare of the individ-

ual". The bible clearly makes it the glory of God.

They have left out of consideration the fact that, that which promotes the glory of God alone can promote the welfare of the individual. This human attitude is the very essence of proposals presently being canvassed in our halls of government, proposals designed to meet the demands of the "gay/lesbian lobby", and to clothe what God Himself has called an abomination in the guise of respectability. Having said these things let us hasten to add that when the glory of God is made the supreme, the ultimate rule, the welfare and the well being of the individual is going to follow as the night follows the day.

What kind of double talk is it that pretends to draw a distinction between what Scripture considers to be sin, and what parliamentary authorities consider to be crime? Crime is defined among other things as "an act contrary to law, human or Divine". When parliament assumes the power to determine whether conduct that is contrary to God's law may be regarded as acceptable and not to be regarded as a crime, then parliament has arrogated to itself the authority to depose the law of God, and to put in its place the laws of man. We know of course, that certain actions and activities, perfectly good and right and acceptable in themselves provided that they are carried out in privacy, would be unthinkable in public, but when parliaments begin to legislate as though abominations are acceptable, provided that they are carried out in privacy, then I say (and I say it reverently) may God help us. Our parliament must rely, for the privileges it enjoys, on God. Practically every page of Old Testament history testifies that these things are so.

You and I personally, as individuals, perhaps do not have very much voice in the matters of state - only at election time. But we are very much a part of and very closely involved in the family and in the church, and if we are going to enjoy God's blessing in this life as well as in the life to come then we must submit to His authority. Submit to His authority, shoulder our

own responsibility and look to Him to confer on us the blessings and the privileges that He undertakes to confer on those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel. Briefly then, each of these three institutions must cease to be guided by the light of worldly wisdom. As our text says, "the Lord giveth wisdom" -- "out of His mouth proceeds wisdom and knowledge."

The family, the church and the state must come to recognise that the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

The church must declare the way of salvation through repentance toward God, faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord, and hand in hand with her mission in the work of pure evangelism she must exhort all people to the exercise of obedient and godly living.

The Master says "without Me ye can do nothing" but when we come in true repentance to receive and rest on Him for salvation then we can be sure that, as we earnestly seek to know and to do His will, we can rely on Him to make known to us what that will involves and to give us ready hands and willing hearts to do those things which are well-pleasing in His sight.

May the Lord bless to us this meditation. Let us conclude, singing together from Psalm 73:23  
"Nevertheless continually O Lord I am with Thee, Thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me."

*(This is the text of a sermon preached by the Rev. S.N. Ramsay at Wauchope on 16 October 1994 - taken from an audiotape recording and submitted by a member of that congregation.)*

## The World in the Banner

### **Egypt – A Time To Weep, Mourn & Pray**

The crisis in Egypt arises from the arrival of 'democracy' after decades of Saudi-sponsored Islamic radicalisation in a State hurtling towards collapse. Egypt is kept afloat by Saudi money and Saudi Arabia wants the crushing of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which advocates republicanism.

In this, the interests of the Saudis, the Egyptian military and the Salafis converge. Fighting back, MB leaders have called for violent intifada against the military, which will create MB victims and 'martyrs' for propaganda purposes. But as the guardians of the Suez Canal and the Sinai, the Egyptian military – definitely no friend of Christians – will doubtless be able to do whatever it wants. There are no good options.

Christian security is tenuous.

These are days to weep and mourn, but above all, to pray!

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin* | RLPB 224 | Wed 21 Aug 2013

### **Christian Reformed Church Magazine "Banner" Publishes Articles Promoting Evolution and Premarital Cohabitation, Causing Uproar**

A 5 October 2013 Michigan Live article by Matt Vande Bunte titled "Judgment Error? Two Articles Put Christian Reformed Church Magazine Editor on Hot Seat" reports that

the Christian Reformed Church in North America official magazine **Banner** published in two consecutive issues in the summer of 2013 articles promoting evolution ("Tomorrow's Theology" by Edwin Walhout) and premarital cohabitation ("Sex, Intimacy, and the Single Person" by Chelsey Harmon and Harry Van Belle). The denomination subsequently received more than 100 complaints about the articles, some of them urging the termination of **Banner** editor the Rev Bob De Moor.

De Moor wrote a 26 June 2013 apology ("Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ"), which was accepted by the magazine's board saying that the articles "caused concern because they argue for a modification of present Christian Reformed doctrinal and ethical understandings: notably of doctrinal formulations related to human origins and of our ethical position regarding sexuality and marriage...[and that the magazine staff was] "convinced that, whether we agreed or disagreed with them, the authors genuinely seek to apply their Reformed understanding to difficult issues."

+ *Michigan Live LLC, feedback@mllive.com*

+ *Christian Reformed Church in North America, crcna@crcna.org*

### **Sweden: Assaults on children rise following smacking ban**

New research has revealed a dra-

matic rise in cases of criminal assaults on minors in Sweden since smacking was outlawed in 1979. Based on official Swedish figures, the study, published in the peer reviewed International Journal of Criminology and Sociology, shows that, compared with 1981, criminal statistics in 2010 included: 22 times as many cases of physical child abuse; 24 times as many assaults by minors against minors; and 73 times as many rapes of minors under the age of 15. Although the researchers, from three American universities, recognise that changes in reporting practices may account for the increase to some extent, the magnitude and consistency of the figures suggest that there has been a real increase in criminal assaults on minors in Sweden over the course of the past three decades. The authors suggest that, despite the best of intentions, the prohibition of all forms of physical correction may inadvertently undermine appropriate parental discipline, with the result that a small, but increasing percentage of boys may grow up with a dangerous combination of disrespect for their mothers and a lack of self-control. (Well blow me down, who would have thought that!)

Source: Robert E. Larzelere, Taren Swindle, Byron R. Johnson, 'Swedish Trends in Criminal Assaults against Minors since Ban-

*ning Spanking, 1981-2010', International Journal of Criminology and Sociology 2013, 2, pp129- 137 (From Family First's Mid-Week Update, 26/9/13)*

### Syria, Iran & The Shi'ites

The war in Syria is complex and multi-faceted and a key element is Syria's strategic alliance with Iran, the arch-nemesis of Israel, the US and the Sunni Arabs. Iran is a

highly strategic nation, historically, geographically, linguistically and culturally. The Islamic Revolution there has created widespread despair. Whilst drug addiction and childlessness are soaring, so too is the number of Iranian converts to Christianity. God is at work. Meanwhile, in Syria the rebels are fracturing, with some defecting to al-Qaeda and others to the government, horrified at the prospect of

Syria being over-run by foreign jihadis. The Syrian Army has broken through the rebel siege of Aleppo and opened the main road into Hama. May God deliver Syria and Iran from evil and build his Church.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*  
| RLPB 231 | Wed 09 Oct 2013

## Books in the Banner

### *Pierre Viret: The Angel of the Reformation*

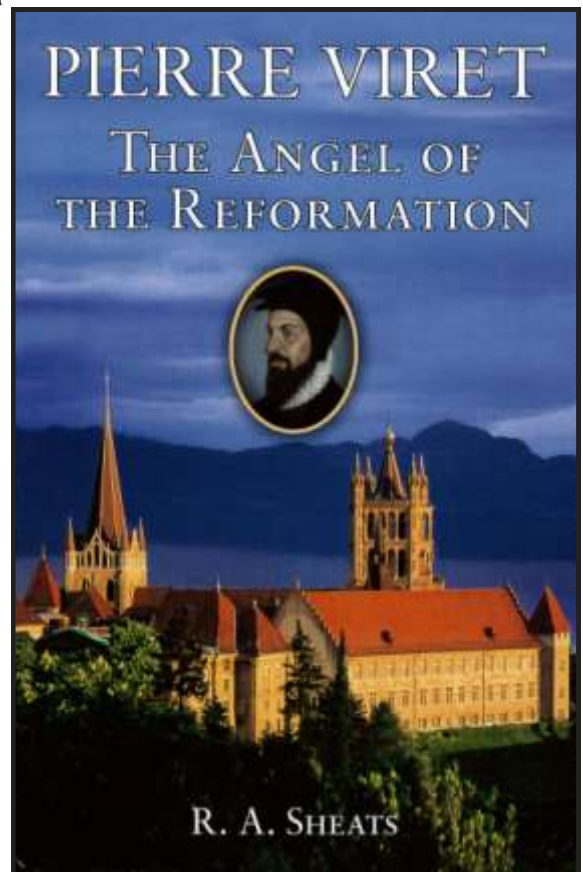
In 2009 the 500th anniversary of John Calvin (1509-64) was widely celebrated. In 2011 the 500th anniversary of the birth of Calvin's close friend and fellow Reformer, Pierre Viret (1511-71), passed relatively unnoticed.

Yet Viret is increasingly recognised as a significant figure in his own right. Most of his ministry was in Lausanne, which became largely Protestant and where he established a training school for ministers. It was relocated to Geneva in 1559 to provide most of the faculty of Calvin's new Academy. After two years Viret engaged in missionary tours in France where he was much loved as leader of the Huguenot Church. He was a man of kindly temperament, perhaps the most popular Reformed preacher of his age and author of some 50 publications. Even his enemies respected him. He knew great suffering with plague taking the life of his first

wife, and his second, and a number of children. His last years were spent in the Kingdom of Navarre, whose Protestant Queen appointed him her advisor.

R.A.Sheats has written the life of this remarkable Reformer in a form that is not technical but edifying for any Christian. It is beautifully produced on quality paper with many full colour illustrations. My copy was \$22 plus postage from the USA. Highly recommended.

*R.A.Sheats, Pierre Viret: The Angel of the Reformation (Tallahassee, Florida 2012)*  
ISBN 978-009843785-1-7  
Reviewed by Rowland S. Ward



## Camp Drewe at Lennox Head

The Brisbane congregation extend a warm welcome to everyone to attend our annual family camp at Camp Drewe at Lennox Head in northern NSW from 22-25 November. Rev Andre Scheepers from Ulverstone PCEA is the speaker. For more information and registration forms please contact Stewart Carswell, 07 3397118 or [sb\\_carswell@yahoo.com.au](mailto:sb_carswell@yahoo.com.au)

# Children under the Banner

## True Heroes

I remember the day very clearly. It was mid August and I had spent the summer holiday on a cousin's farm. Dad was coming to collect me and take me home ready for the new school term. He bought two children's books with him, one for my young cousins and one for me. I was six or

seven years old then and that book left an impression that remains to this day! My gift was ***The Girls' Book of Heroines*** by Arthur Groom and in it I discovered the stories of such legendary women as Florence Nightingale and Amy Johnson. My imagination was set on fire!

Today we live in a celebrity culture where autobiographies are written by 25-year-olds who have made their names in sport or the entertainment industry. They are the role models that the media holds up to our children and encourages them to copy. Sadly many 'celebs' are seven-day wonders and as soon as they pass their zenith their popularity fades, their books are dis-

counted and our children are encouraged to move on to the next rising star. Sadder still, many such celebrities follow lifestyles that we certainly would not want our next generation to emulate.

As a Christian writer I felt I should try to do whatever I could to provide a counter to this and my Story-a-Month Club was born. The Internet-based Club is for 7 – 13 year olds. It aims to set young imaginations on fire, to introduce

girls and boys to true heroes and heroines. All the characters I'll write about will be Christians, men and women who started life as ordinary boys and girls, just like Club members, but who grew up to be used by God in interesting, courageous and life-changing

and his wife to Burma, Adoniram was used to translate God's Word into Burmese and so spread the good news about Jesus. His wife's ingenuity and courage saved his translation papers from destruction when Ann had them wrapped up in

waterproof fabric and buried to save them from the fearful 'Spotted Faces.'

James Clerk Maxwell was a curious little boy who was always trying to find out how things worked. His curiosity about God's creation led him into a scientific career and his 19<sup>th</sup> Century research formed part of the groundwork that led to radio, television, radar and satellite communications.

I have written nearly 50 Christian books, 30 of them for children, and have translations in 15 languages as well as in braille. Most of my books are about ordinary people whom God has used in extraordinary ways.

None of those whose stories are told are perfect, but all are inspirational. None are glitzy, but all are truly great. So when it comes to glitz or greatness, my Story-a-Month Club offers chil-

dren a monthly injection of true greatness to interest, excite and inspire.

The web-based Club's annual subscription is \$21 AUD, however many children are in a family. For more information see

[www.story-a-month-club.org.uk](http://www.story-a-month-club.org.uk)



There is glitz all around our children in every form of media. The sad thing is that today's glitterati are tomorrow's cast-offs. When they've passed their peak of popularity children are encouraged to move on to the next rising star. Sadder still, many celebrities follow lifestyles that we would not want our next generation to copy.



Irene Howat's Story-a-Month Club will introduce seven to thirteen-year-olds to real heroes and heroines, men and women who started life as ordinary children like Club members, but who grew up to be used by God in interesting, courageous and life-changing ways. It aims to set their imaginations on fire.

The web-based Club's annual subscription is £12, however many children are in a family. On the first of each month members will receive their new story by email along with the same story in pictures to be coloured and an activity sheet based on that month's character. If provided with an A4 folder, they can make their own totally unique illustrated books of heroes and heroines. Members will also be sent a birthday greeting.

Irene has written nearly 50 books for Christian Focus Publications, about 30 of them for children, and has translations in 15 languages as well as in braille. Most of her books are about ordinary people whom God has used in extraordinary ways. None of those whose stories are told are perfect, but all are inspirational. None are glitzy, but all are truly great. So when it comes to glitz or greatness, her Story-a-Month Club offers children a monthly injection of true greatness to interest, excite and inspire.

[www.story-a-month-club.org.uk](http://www.story-a-month-club.org.uk)

ways.

Before Mary Slessor went as a missionary to Calabar newborn twins were left out to die. Because evil spirits didn't harm her when she rescued them, people gradually began to abandon that practice and keep their twin babies. When Adoniram Judson was a boy he wanted to be a school teacher and that's what he did, even writing a grammar book for his pupils. But when God led him

# Prescribed Search / Youth Work

*Senior Section 12 years and over; Intermediate 10--11 years; Junior 9 years and under*

## **NOVEMBER 2013**

SENIOR and INTERMEDIATE (Intermediate omit questions 1 and 2)

2 CORINTHIANS chapter 7

1. How did God, who comforts the downcast, comfort Paul? (2 verses)
2. How does godly sorrow differ from the sorrow of the world?

chapter 8

3. Though he was rich, what did our Lord do for us?
4. Write out the verse in Ex. 16 about the manna which Paul quotes in 2 Cor. 8:15.
5. What commendation did Paul give Titus?

chapter 9

6. What kind of giver does the Lord love?
7. Write out the verse in Psalm 112 concerning the righteous, that Paul quotes in 2 Cor. 9:9.
8. What does Paul say about God's unspeakable [indescribable] gift?

## **JUNIOR**

LUKE chapter 24

1. What did the two men in shining garments say to the women at the sepulchre? (3 verses)
2. Who drew near and went with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus?

3. What were the first words Jesus said when he stood in the midst of the disciples at Jerusalem?

4. What happened after Jesus led the disciples out as far as Bethany? (2 verses)

Please send the answers to:  
Mrs I Steel  
PO Box 942  
Epping NSW 1710  
Or email to: [iesteel@gmail.com](mailto:iesteel@gmail.com)

# Churches in the Banner

*International Conference of Reformed Churches — 2013*

*George Ball*

The eighth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was held in Wales from 28th August to 4th September 2013 when over 100 delegates, representatives and wives gathered from various Reformed and Presbyterian Churches from every continent. The PCEA was represented by yours truly and Rowland Ward (who was accompanied by Anna). The hosts of the conference were two small congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales; Immanuel and Bethel. They did an excellent job in all the arrangements. (The EPCEW is a small church with a membership of just over 600 – similar to the PCEA). The main conference venue was in the campus of the University of South Wales, in Treforest, Pontypridd – about 18 km from Cardiff city centre.

The ICRC was first planned in 1982 and has met every four years since 1985, each time in a different country. The aim is to develop the unity and fellowship of the churches, to foster cooperation in mission and theological education and to promote a common witness to the world. The PCEA has been in membership since the beginning.

## **Preaching the Word**

The main focus this year was on the preaching of the Word of God. At the present time some are losing confidence in preaching as the way to reach the unchurched community and are tempted to try other, more novel methods. By examining the subject of preaching it was hoped to strengthen confidence in it, knowing that it has pleased God to appoint preaching as his instrument to call men and women to himself. The main speakers were Rev Ian Hamilton (Cambridge); Dr Robert

Letham (Cardiff); Dr James Visscher (Canada) and Dr Ho Jin Jun (Korea).

Ian Hamilton delivered a passionate opening message to the Conference – entitled, ‘The Context and Privilege of Gospel Ministry,’ from 2 Cor. 2: 12-17. Bob Letham delivered an address entitled, ‘The Necessity of Preaching’. He noted that preaching involves a proclamation of the Word of God and an appeal to the hearers, which requires the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about change in the hearts of the hearers. He noted that while the Spirit and the Word are distinct yet they are (mysteriously) inseparable (cf. the two natures of Christ). We can therefore be confident that the preaching of the Word of God will accomplish God’s intended purpose.

James Visscher delivered an address entitled, ‘The Nature of Preaching.’ He noted that preaching is the faithful proclamation of God’s Word, which is a Triune revelation, covenantal in character, Christocentric, progressive, relevant (the preacher should always be asking himself, ‘so what?’), comprehensive, compelling and evangelistic.

Ho Jin Jun delivered an address entitled, ‘The Practice of Preaching in Non-Literary Cultures.’ He noted that 55% of the 650 million evangelical Christians are not Caucasian – providing evidence that the centre of Christianity has shifted from the West to Africa and Asia. Dr Jun (who is 74 years old and still working in the Cambodia Presbyterian Theological Institute) recommended that preaching in non literate cultures should be clear and simple; should include apologetics designed for the culture; should be expository and applicatory; should rise from a cultural ‘point of contact’; and should address the power encounters

common in Asian culture. The Conference divided into four workshop groups as opportunity was given to discuss each paper.

## **Membership**

When the Conference opened there were 30 member churches. When the Conference ended there were 32 member churches. The Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Sudanese Reformed Churches were received into membership during the Conference. Five churches applied for membership and each gave an introduction of their church to the Conference. It is encouraging that interest in the conference is growing from churches in Africa, India and Pakistan.

Of particular interest to us was the application for membership from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), which was represented by the Rev Geoff Van Schie (WA). The two sponsoring churches were the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and the Reformed Churches of South Africa. As it turned out, it proved to be a sensitive matter for the conference – and a somewhat awkward matter for the two PCEA delegates. We had not been aware that the CRCA had been intending to make application for membership until late May 2013 (indeed I was somewhat surprised given the negative informal comments made by one of the CRCA observers at the end of the 2009 Christchurch Conference). The Conference has a rule that applications for membership should be in the hands of the secretary at least one year in advance of the approaching conference. The CRCA application and supporting references were all late. (I understand the CRCA were

not aware of this deadline). The Conference however voted in favour of considering the application despite its lateness – and your delegates also voted in favour. We had no desire for the application to fail on a mere technicality. Nonetheless if the correspondence had been in at the proper time it may have saved us the embarrassment of not knowing about it. We had not had opportunity, therefore, to discuss beforehand (and privately) with the CRCA some of the concerns (or at least perceptions) that we have with the CRCA – such as charismatic influences in some of its churches; some ecumenical connections such as with the CRCNA (Christian Reformed Churches of North America); and the decision made at their 2012 Synod to rescind membership of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (into which the Reformed Ecumenical Council had been merged in 2010) and seek instead membership in the ICRC. Your delegates were in the uncomfortable position of wanting to encourage the CRCA and yet unable to conscientiously support their application for membership at this time without opportunity to clear our conscience. The committee appointed to assess the application produced a thorough report with the recommendation that the application of the CRCA be deferred until the next meeting of conference; that they be granted observer status in the interim; and that meantime the CRCA and PCEA discuss their areas of concern. The report produced some vigorous and passionate discussion. A part of the committee's report was rejected together with its recommendation. The committee agreed to go 'back to the drawing board' and produced a second report which was presented on the last morning of conference. This time their report was accepted; but the recommendation to admit the CRCA narrowly failed to meet the required number of votes (i.e. 65%). A

fresh recommendation from the floor was adopted which basically restated the original recommendation of the committee and was accepted. The matter was difficult and delicate for everyone concerned. Our actions undoubtedly were not appreciated by some delegates, especially from the RCNZ, the RCSA and the CRCA! We therefore have a responsibility to meet with the ecumenical committee of the CRCA as soon as possible to seek a solution to this impasse as well as having regard for our other brethren. It would give us great pleasure to be able to support with a clear conscience the application of the CRCA for membership at the ICRC 2017, DV. On a personal note I want to express appreciation for the clear and comprehensive (and courageous) contribution which Rowland made to the debate in outlining our position. Such a situation confirms the wisdom of having more than one delegate present at ICRC. 'Two are better than one.'

### Committees

A special committee to review the constitution, regulation and structures of the ICRC presented its report at this meeting of Conference. It recommended several changes to the structure of the conference together with appropriate changes to the regulations in order to encourage more regional interaction between member churches and to give a higher priority to their theological education and diaconal ministries. To enable this, a Coordinating Committee, A Theological Education Committee, A Diaconal Committee and a Regional Conferences Committee (the latter convened by Rowland Ward) have been appointed in addition to the already existing Missions Committee. (Tentative plans are in hand for a regional Asia/Pacific Conference to be held in Korea during October 2015.) In order to give greater visibility to the ICRC and to improve communication among

member churches and make information about the various ministries of the member churches more easily accessible, a website committee was appointed. The conference appoints various committees to expedite the work of conference. I was the convener of the Finance committee and Rowland was the Reporter of the committee appointed to review the work of the review committee.

### Meetings

The Conference provides opportunity to meet informally and formally with delegates from other churches. We made arrangements to meet (formally) with the delegates from the OPC; EPCI; RPCNA; RPCI and FCSC.

### Officers

The chairman of the Conference was Rev Richard Holst (Cardiff). Apart from chairing the meetings he led us each morning in devotions with meditations on aspects of Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians.

Two retiring officers of the Conference were publicly thanked and recognised when they were presented with suitably inscribed Bibles. Mr Henk Berends (Canada) has been the honorary treasurer of the ICRC for more than 25 years; and Rev Cornelius Van Spronsen (Canada) has been the secretary to the Conference for most of its existence.

### Missionary Emphasis

The closing evening of the Conference was a highlight with a strong missionary emphasis. We heard the moving testimony of an Eritrean believer where there is much torture and oppression against Christians. Rev Malcolm Ball (RPCI) who has been serving as a missionary pastor in Nantes (France) for 25 years challenged us to consider Europe as a mission field and provided up to date information on France (especially the need for a reformed theology



On the Lord's Day delegates were divided into two groups. One group attended the Bethel Church and the other Immanuel Church. I attended the Bethel Church where Dr Iain

We thank you for the privilege (and responsibility) of representing our church once more at the ICRC. It provided opportunity to strengthen relationships with some; as well as sadly proving a strain upon others. The work of inter church relations continues! The next meeting of the Conference is scheduled for 2017 in the Hamilton area of Ontario, Canada, with the Jordan United Reformed Church (URCNA) as the host.

professor in the seminary at Aix-en-Provence), and the mission work in Nantes. Rev Bruce Martin (RPCNA) delighted us with a report of the growing church in China and the of opportunities to teach there. Dr James Visscher also spoke of his work in China and again spoke of the need for teachers and workers. The Lord is building His church! The Conference was a full and busy programme. There was however time to relax and enjoy fellow-



ship over the weekend. It is traditional to have one day off for something of a recreational nature.

*Photos:  
Upper—ICRC Committee: Richard Holst, Dick Moes, Peter Naylor, Henk Berends, Cornelius Van Spronsen, James Visscher  
Middle—Delegates and visitors from Asia and Pacific Countries  
Lower—Meeting in session*

On the Saturday there was a choice of tours organised. There was a trip to the centre of Cardiff including a visit to Cardiff Castle. I chose to go to the 'Big Pit National Coal Museum', where we had a guided tour down the mine. This was followed by a visit to Wales' largest Castle in Caerphilly (and birthplace of comedian Tommy Cooper) which was concluded with a sumptuous carvery meal.

D. Campbell (FCS) preached a challenging sermon on how Satan sought to have Peter but was disappointed (Luke 22: 31-32). In the evening Rev Tony Curto (OPC) preached on the vision Isaiah had in the Temple (Isaiah 6). Both men exemplified all the elements of what constitutes good preaching.



'That they all may be one; even as you Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me' (John 17: 21).