



“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles”
ISAIAH 40:31a |

The Presbyterian Review



GAA Opening Sederunt

The Moderator’s procession entered to the *St Antony Chorale*, adapted from F.J.Haydn. The assembly sang *Come Sing Praises*, “Rejoice!” N^o 8, to the tune *Calypso Carol*. The words are an adaptation of Psalm 95. Rev. Dr Greg Goswell gave the prayer of adoration, confession and supplication. This was followed by the Indonesian Choir who sang “Holy is He”. Rev. John Webster gave the reading which was Romans 1:1–17, and Rt Rev. Bob Thomas, the retiring Moderator General, preached the Sermon entitled “What a Difference the Gospel Makes”.



The sermon began by noting the difference that the Gospel had made to the ancient world: that the solution to the evils portrayed in the second half of Romans 1 was the Gospel.

Rt Rev. Bob Thomas illustrated the difference in the present world by describing the effect of the Gospel in Zambia, contrasting this again with David Livingstone whose steps they were following and who knew the country as “Darkest Africa”, which today is in the light of the Gospel. Further illustrations involved Lake Malawi and the five graves of the Free Kirkers there who succumbed in the 1850s to tropical diseases but whose Gospel work has continued. The next illustration moved from national difference to individual difference, describing John Wesley’s experience of the difference of the Gospel on 24th May 1738, and then the Moderator’s own experience, aged 15, from the 1959 Billy Graham crusade.
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Professor Andrew M^cGowan

Professor M^cGowan’s first speaking engagement after getting off the plane was at the PTC. He spoke on the contributions of Scottish Theology to Reformed Christianity. The lecture was divided into two parts, the first covering seven historical areas: Presbyterian Church Government, Church-State relations, A Warm-hearted Calvinism, the Free Offer of the Gospel, Calvinism as a World and Life View, a Reformed view of Scripture and the Development of Federal Theology. The second part of the lecture covered four themes for the future: the need for *semper reformanda* (always ought to be reforming), the Balance between Scripture and confession, the willingness to be open to new Confessions and Books of Order and the necessity of listening, learning and dialogue.



Professor M^cGowan is Principal of the Highland Theological College and will be giving the week intensive study on theology next year as part of the Masters study programme.

Professor M^cGowan gave brief details of the origin of Presbyterian government, starting with Zwingli, followed by Calvin and then Knox’s comprehensive development in 1560. The system suffered various vicissitudes, being reestablished in 1638 and reinstated in 1688. Professor M^cGowan commented on the four basic types of Church State relationship: (1) the state controls the church, citing the British government’s legal but nominal control over Anglicanism,
(continued page 14)

Presbyterian Review

**Magazine of the Presbyterian Fellowship (N.S.W.)
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EDITORIAL



Logic has been given to us by a wise Redeemer as a tool to understand both his creation and his revelation. One of the difficulties of using

logic, however, is caused by the fact that we do not always have all the data.

Indeed, we do not always know that we do not have all the data. This impinges on all our activities from debates in the general assembly to voting in the elections. Logic is a little bit like G. K. Chesterton's description of Christianity: not that it has *been tried and found wanting*, but that it has been *found difficult and left untried*.

This lack of logic has been noticeable in the presentation of the overturists. They have failed to make the logical connections between a letter written to a Middle Eastern first century bishop, as opposed to a twenty-first century church which eschews the notion of bishops and is even on the other side of the globe.

There are at least six points of logical disconnection which have not been addressed by the overturists. The *Presbyterian Review* will publish over the course of the next issues, articles which address these disconnections. They are 1) the principles of historical exegesis, 2) transferring the message from Timothy to the PCA, 3) the context of behaviour at worship versus the eldership, 4) Paul's personal practice versus universal practice, 5) Application to Ephesus versus universal practice and 6) a generic comment versus a universal one.

The Overturists are not alone in failing to apply logic. Two common misapplications exist: the confusion of intention with capacity or competence and the confusion effort with result. In both of these circumstances there are assumed premises, such as, "everything else being equal" which are not usually stated and can easily be overlooked. It is part of our fallen nature which, although redeemed, is still susceptible to unfortunate difficulties. Part of our prayer life should be prayers of supplication so that our Lord will alert each of us to occasions when we have fallen into these errors and to avoid them.

Ted Grantham

DEVOTION

A Hymne to God the Father

by Rev. Dr John Donne, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral

1572 – 1631

Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne
Which was my sin, though it were done before ?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne ; through which I runne,
And do run still : though still I do deplore ?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I have wonne
Others to sinne ? and, made my sinne their doore ?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
A year, or two : but wallowed in, a score ?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore ;
But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore ;
And having done that, Thou hast done,
I feare no more.

Dr. Donne makes a play on the words *sun* and *son*, and on *done* and *Donne*. Readers may well be able to relate Dr Donne's wrestling with sin and their own prayer life. The original spelling, etc. indicates rhythm and emphasis.

The Communion Service

Conducted by the Moderator General

the Right Rev. Robert Benn

assisted by his chaplains, Rev. John M^cClean and Rev. Jim Elliot

The service began with a call to worship from Psalm 143, followed by the hymn, *Praise to the Lord the Almighty*, (the organist was Mrs Patricia Christian) and an opening prayer by Right Rev. Robert Benn.

Rev. Jim Elliot read the first lesson from Isaiah 2: 1- 5 and 55; 1 – 3a. This was followed by the hymn *Meekness and Majesty*.

Then came the Apostles' Creed and the second reading, from Luke 22 read by Rev. Dr. Bruce Winter who would also deliver the sermon.

Dr Winter began by relating an incident on a trip to Nicæa where his Moslem Tour guide was more interested in the council of 787 which allowed the use of icons than the great fourth century council which established the eponymous creed which emphasises the divinity

of Jesus. Dr Winter commented on the action of Jesus in changing the meaning of the Passover by converting the cup of blessing into the cup of the new covenant and the bread of affliction into his memorial. This action was within the context of the disciples arguing over who would be the greatest and Jesus' reply calling on his followers to a life of service, exemplified by his own action in washing the disciples' feet. Dr Winter noted the change of attitude after the resurrection.

The other hymns were *In Christ Alone*, *Before the throne of God Above*, *Come Risen Lord* and *How Great Thou Art*.

The Prayer of Intercession, following the distribution of the elements, was delivered by Rev. John M^cClean.

GAA Opening Sederunt

(from page 1)

The question was then posed: "Why does it make a difference?" Four reasons were proposed: (1) by definition, being good news, (2) because the focus is on man's eternal welfare, (3) it is not just for this life but for eternity, (4) it can be appropriated by simple faith.

How is the Gospel different? Contrast was made between doing religions that concentrated on what men can do and the done religion which concentrated on what Christ had done.

After a few concluding remarks, the Assembly sang the hymn *What a wonderful change*, in "Rejoice!" N^o. 587.

The business of the Assembly continued with the election of the incoming Moderator, Rt Rev Robert Benn who addressed the Assembly on Philippians 2: 14 – 16a.

After the address, the motion of loyalty to H.M. the Queen was passed together with an assurance of prayer for the Members of the Australian Parliament.

The assurance of prayer was followed by the hymn, *Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise*, following which the representatives of the other churches present were welcomed.

The Indonesian Orchestra performing on Anklungs played reflective and devotional music, arrangements of the hymns *How Great Thou Art* and *What a Friend we Have in Jesus*.

After a few items of business, which needed immediate attention, the Assembly adjourned. The final hymn was *Rise up, you Saints of God* and after the benediction, the Indonesian Choir sang *I'll Walk with God*.

The Editor of the *Presbyterian Review* and the committee of the Presbyterian Fellowship (NSW) Incorporated would like to wish everyone a happy and holy Christmas, and a prosperous New Year.

Pensées

From time to time the *Presbyterian Review* will publish articles which are the thoughts of some of our readers.

The *Presbyterian Review*, not being an official organ of the church, but the magazine of the Presbyterian Fellowship encourages readers to make comments and write letters without fearing any official retribution. The article on Augustine and Pelagius anticipated for this issue is held over till the next.

For Travellers

Service times for when you are visiting

Annandale

Hunter Baillie Church,
Johnson St, Annandale
Minister, Rev. Peter Dunstan
Sunday 10 a.m.,
2nd and 4th Sundays 6.30 p.m. preceded by an organ recital at 6 p.m.

Balmain

Campbell St, Balmain
Minister, Rev Ivan Ransom
Sunday 10 a.m.

Concord

182, Concord Rd, North Strathfield
Preacher, Mr Ted Grantham
Sunday 9.45 a.m.
Wednesday 6.15 p.m. (Classical) Music Service

North Sydney St Peters

232 Blues Point Road, North Sydney
Minister, Rev. Dr Paul Logan
Sunday 10 a.m. 6.45 p.m.
Wednesday 1.15 p.m.

Scots Church Sydney

44 Margaret St, Wynyard.
Minister, Rev. Adrian Van Ash
Sunday: 10.30 a.m.
Wednesday 1.15 p.m.

Deprecating Love and Mission



Rev. Adrian Van Ash
Minister
Scots Church,
Sydney

We have just finalised the General Assembly of Australia. However, with this Assembly while one is left with the warmth of fellowship with old friends, there is very great concern over some of the decisions upheld. These Assemblies are held every three years and this was the first one held in the restored Scots Church. Overall there was a good atmosphere in the Assembly and many of the decisions were commendable but then we come to those which will alarm a great many people in our Church.

In many respects the highlight of this Assembly was the Bible Exposition by the Rev. Andrew McGowan from the Highland Theological Centre, Dingwell just outside of Inverness in Scotland. I had the opportunity to also hear him at the Theological Centre speaking on the Scottish contribution to Reformed Theology and the lecture he gave prior to the Assembly on the importance of Ruling and Teaching Elders. He is a scholar with many insights. He made the point on several occasions that so much of reformed evangelical thinking present in our community was being influenced by American schools rather than British or European ones. He noted that this is a huge problem for us because it brought to the fore English Puritanism, rather than the Reformed thinking on which our church is based. These comments are very pertinent and therefore extremely important because the decisions on women and social issues do reflect Puritanism and not a desire to address our community of the present day.

Sadly, the Assembly decided to sustain the Overture from South Sydney Presbytery to limit eldership to males. This is not a final decision. Our procedures do not allow us to change our laws at just one sitting of the Assembly. The Overture has now been sent to Presbyteries and Assemblies for their approval. As a result the final decision will be made in three years. It is

hoped that the real motive of this decision was to give the wider Church an opportunity to express its opinion on this matter. The case was well debated, alternative strategies suggested and the reaffirming this is a State responsibility and therefore must refer in broader terms to the States for consideration was rejected. It is a great sadness to me that so many of the Commissioner's minds were already closed and that they prefer a couple of verses of Paul to the total witness of the whole of Scripture. I fear for these people when they face their Maker for they epitomized the close minds that Christ confronted from the religious leaders of His day.

When the Overturist was asked to estimate the impact of this change, he dismissed it as being irrelevant for it was only their version of the truth that matters. Well it is an enormous presumption that their position is true, both from a Biblical and historical position. After all if this position is valid then God neither used nor blessed the work of women in the Bible nor throughout the history of the Church which is an unsustainable argument. It is most concerning to think that this is what is being argued by a Lecturer in Church History in our college. When in 1991 the GAA withdrew the right of Women to be ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament the very negative impact was felt by the General Mission Programme of NSW. In fact, contributions dropped by more than \$100,000. I suspect this time the financial drop will be catastrophic. Even as I write this, when only days have elapsed since the decision, there are already serious rumbling as to a possible split within the Church. We all will need to pray for guidance as to where we go from here.

It is however, clear that this decision will neither help our Church in its Mission, nor be an example of the love that God has for all people regardless of gender. One can ask how this can possibly help the Mission of the Church when it says to more than half the church worshippers that you are second class citizens and cannot fully participate in living God's love to this fallen world. What sort of an invitation is this to women to come to Him because God thinks they are special and that Christ has died for them?

(continued page 10)

A Message from Vera

This e-mail was received from Deaconess Vera Ryan

My thoughts and prayers are with you all at this time.

I remember the depths of the pain I felt following the State Assembly as I dwelt on all that I felt had been taken from me. How the disregard and/or derision regarding the Saints of our Church had somehow spoilt what was precious to me.

While writing to Tony Lang I realised that they had taken nothing of the past from me. All the Saints of the past walk just as inspiringly and compassionately with me as they ever did. Their influence on my life journey is as cogent as it has ever been. I am so very, very glad that the Presbyterian Fellowship enabled "Hearts and Hands and Voices" (and "More") to be produced, as the memories of these people have been protected.

They have not shut me out of the Presbyterian Church: they have excluded me from the church they have created.

The grief is more for the future we had envisaged, and that has been altered irrevocably. Our future is probably going to involve many different paths as we individually seek the way in which we can most effectively walk with God.

In the Old Testament the inspirational songs and passages are often placed within the testing times. It was often from the depths of peoples' experience that they grasped and celebrated confidence for the future:

- Jonah praised God for his deliverance whilst still in the belly of the whale
- Moses' songs of praise were intermingled with less than ideal challenges from his touring companions
- The spiritual rebirth of the Jewish religion actually took place during the Exile

I am sure that we all have inspirational passages from the Scriptures that are relevant to this.

Perhaps for all of us Paul's words to his Christian companions are appropriate:

"I thank my God whenever I think of you, and when I pray for you I pray with joy."

Vera



We're still Here

A poem by Jill Stevenson an Elder at St. Ives.

We're still here

When sanctimonious men call

"Fathers and Brothers" to prayer

We're still here.

Sometimes we might wonder why

But we're still here.

We're still here because we know

That God has called us,

Given us talents He expects us to use

We're still here

Not because the church we love doesn't want us

We're still here because the Church we love

Is also still here.

Those that do not want us

Have taken a new direction

Theirs is not the church we know and love

We're still here because we are assured

That our God is loving and all embracing

He's not judgmental

We are all equal in His sight

Happy are those who do what God requires

That's why we're still here



Where to from Here?

David Crawford
President of the Presbyterian Fellowship, Inc.



By the time that this issue of the “Review” has gone to print, the word will have spread among Presbyterians throughout the nation

that the General Assembly of Australia has taken the momentous decision to ban women from becoming elders of the Church. It is an act of madness that will leave people who have persisted in hope with their membership of the Presbyterian Church wondering whether they should leave and join another branch of the universal church, one that is more in tune with the 21st Century.

If finalised it will leave women in the position of having no voice at all in the strategic affairs of the church and of denying it the expertise of a large body of talent within its own ranks. New members and young couples now face the prospect of their children being raised with a theology of “complementary genders” in a climate of inequality where females occupy what in effect is a lower position than males. Why would anyone seek the fellowship of a church that promoted such ideas?

But there is more to it than this. The decision has surreptitiously changed the doctrine of the church although it has left intact the subordinate standard of the church, the Westminster Confession of Faith read in the light of the Declaratory Statement. From enactment on, all ministers and elders, new and old, will be committed to defending, as part of their vows on the “Presbyterian form of government”, the doctrinal view that women exist in a *complementary* relationship to men rather than in an *egalitarian* one. How many can do that in good conscience will determine what those dissenting from this position will do if the General Assembly confirms this new set of rules in 2010. Others will question whether we now have become an irrelevant voice in the modern age.

The decision was an extraordinary one, totally against all reason and largely unexpected. There was no attempt on the part of the overture’s supporters to debate the matter at the Assembly. Question time was treated with contempt and few of the probing questions were answered with any degree of depth. All this suggested that the decision was a foregone conclusion and known to be so, one that had been pre-determined by skilled lobbying and caucusing. And so it proved.

But what happens now?

The first thing to understand is that the decision is not final and will not have a chance of becoming so until the General Assembly of Australia meets again in 2010. In the meantime the overture must be passed down progressively to state assemblies and presbyteries for their approval under what is called the *Barrier Act*. A majority of the six state assemblies and thirty-eight presbyteries (fifteen in NSW) must approve the changes, a fact that is by no means a foregone conclusion, or the proposal will automatically fail. Even if the required majority is arrived at, there is no automatic adoption of the new rules. The 2010 Assembly will probably have a substantially different composition to this one and the matter must be debated again.

The Barrier Act was a decision of the Church of Scotland passed in 1697 and inherited by the Australian church when it was formed in 1901. The text of the Act is printed in the Code of the church. It aimed at slowing down significant decisions of the church to allow time for consideration and requires that these decisions go down as far as presbyteries for approval. Unfortunately there is no provision in the Act for Sessions and church members to be consulted.

It is unlikely that the new proposed changes will be voted on by presbyteries until the second half of next year after it is sent down to presbyteries by the respective state assemblies. In the intervening period there is expected to be a flurry of activity from both supporters and opponents of the new proposals in an attempt to influence the vote.

(continued next page)

What can members do?

The short answer to that is ... **lots of things**.

Firstly, remain in the church but don't remain silent. Seek to share your views with fellow church members, your ministers, sessions and your individual elders. Ensure that they know what you intend to do if this proposal comes into effect. If you are an elder, seek to become a commissioner to presbytery and the higher courts. Oppose those who will support this proposal. Yes, it will make the church a political battleground but that's what it is now and, while made up of humans, will always be so to one degree or another.

Remember that this is Jesus' Church and he can overrule with a word even when the human mind perceives hopelessness. Perhaps this is his way of helping us understand that the church does not operate on its own strength but on the power of the Holy Spirit

Secondly, keep informed of developments. Read the "Review". Log onto our website (www.presfellowship.org.au). We intend to make both into a resource of information available to all Presbyterians, Australia-wide. The Presbyterian Fellowship will be seeking to explore all the legal ramifications of this decision in order to find out answers to such key questions as:

- Can the change of doctrine mentioned earlier be an excuse to withdraw from a renegade church with property intact?
- Can the civil courts be used to overturn this decision on the grounds that the Church is not acting in accordance with its own rules?
- What will the NSW Assembly do in reaction to this decision? Will it seek its own legal opinion? Can the current law officers be the law officers of the General Assembly of Australia and the NSW General Assembly simultaneously.
- Can members of the church who eventually choose to separate from the new Presbyterian Church register a "claim of right" over future property redundancies, which no doubt will occur?

- What are the views of the Law Officers of the Church and what advice would they give to members and church courts? They have also been requested to have an opinion for the GAA in 2010, although this will be seen only after lower courts have approved or disapproved of the new rules. Could there be a special meeting of the assembly to hear the Procurator's report before then?
- What will the Trustees of the church see as their duty in fairness to all members, both proponents and opponents of the new rules?

Thirdly, keep contributing. There may be a gut reaction in congregations that we should cut off funding via the General Mission Programme for much of the wider work of the church. This may even have the good intention of cutting off funding for people and bodies that are perceived as being power-bases used for promoting these quaint proposals, such as theological colleges, administrators, unsympathetic assemblies and some standing committees. Members should remember, however, that there is much good work being done by people throughout and beyond the church that should not be hindered.

A compromise solution might be for churches to make direct contributions to specific causes but not as a general donation to the GMP. This is a decision for individuals and congregations.

Fourthly, demand to be kept informed and to be consulted. Sadly, sessions or ministers have been known to withhold information from congregations on the argument that they have the moral obligation to prevent dissent in the congregation or to prevent "wrong information" from reaching the ears of members. This only produces ignorance and reflects a contempt for the intelligence of committed Christians.

Consider taking out a congregational subscription for a number of copies of the "Review" (or, for that matter, a personal one) and share them among members.

Fifthly, talk to others. Let them know what's happening and what they too can do about it. Don't neglect the power of the pen and the computer keyboard. (*continued page 11*)

Rally
Rally, Rally, Rally
at Scots Church
44 Margaret St
Sydney
2nd February.
2008

(no longer 17th Nov A.D. 2007)

10 for 10.30 am Morning Tea Provided. Bring your own lunch.

**All concerned Presbyterians,
ex Presbyterians,
members of the general public**

Come and give your support for women elders

Letters to the Editor

The Editor,

The Presbyterian Review.

It is unfortunate that in discussing a communication "generation gap" at the 2007 State Assembly your editorial claimed one of two "glaring examples (to be) the mutual failure of the Canberra Presbytery and the Cooma Session Clerk to understand the concerns of the other" (Sic). (Presbyterian Review, September 2007, page 2)

This assertion completely fails to take into account either the facts or the process that led the Presbytery to take a decision, and one of its members to Dissent and Complain. Indeed it was as a member of the Court he exercised his right to take the matter to the Assembly for determination. No "communication gap" ever existed; each clearly understood the other and always acted with all due concern, helpfulness and courtesy to the other.

It is also unfortunate that this "glaring example" is reported at all. The whole process in Presbytery and Assembly was conducted in private and therefore details (even those scant ones you claim) ought not to be discussed in print. For the same reason I am prevented from correcting the totally erroneous interpretation your editorial offered.

Though I am a member of the Presbytery - indeed an office-bearer of it - this is a personal letter and does not purport to speak for the Presbytery.

Yours faithfully
Rev Peter Davidson

The Editor,
The Presbyterian Review.

May I add to the editor's "Six basic reasons to oppose the overture" in September's "Review"?

Early in Biblical history, men were allowed more than one wife and even concubines. There was good reason for this in the high infant mortality rate and the need for warriors and workers in the field.

By Jesus time, it was one man, one wife, again with good reason: overpopulation.

Did God change His mind? Of course not, it was man and his circumstances that changed.

In the same way woman's place has changed: in ancient times they were the childbearers, the homemakers. In the later Biblical era, when some men were becoming educated, women were the last to become so. Little wonder then, that they were not considered for church leadership. Today, things have changed again; women in western societies are equal in education and almost every other endeavour.

They can lead nations.

Does God change His mind - no, mankind changes and he, himself, has to adapt to these changes.

One of them must be that women should have equal right to lead in God's affairs, His Church.

Beside all this, I am sure it must be plain to God that men have made a fine old mess of things so far and it is time women had a go!

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Orr
Blakehurst,

Deprecating Love and Mission

(from page 5)

How can we say we are the **hands and feet of God** and demonstrate his love to all fallen people when we also say women do not count. How can we honestly maintain such attitudes when those outside this Church can see throughout history examples of the love and blessing of God brought by great women of a true and tested Faith.

One thing is certain that in the next three years all options will be examined and whether our Church again **SPLITS** will depend on how wise, caring and loving all its members prove to be. The Presbyterian Fellowship will now regroup and look at all options. We at Scots will also carefully review our position and I invite you all to consider this prayerfully as we endeavour to move forward together seeking the Holy Spirit in the Honour and Glory of our God.

This article first appeared in the Scots Church News.

Advice from the Committee

Many of the members in our congregations are distressed by the ideas conveyed in the Overture from the Presbytery of Sydney South. The first thing to realise is:

Don't Panic

Because of the revulsion that many feel some have resigned from positions of leadership and some have even resigned from the Presbyterian Church. The committee's advice is:

Don't Leave the Church

The Committee needs as many committed members to assist in bringing about a change of heart within the Assemblies and Presbyteries.

Stay with It

Votes count. Only members of congregations can vote. Your participation is important.

More information will come in later Issues of *The Presbyterian Review*

There is much to be done. The Committee had hoped to have a Rally before Christmas, but there was no suitable date and place available. The committee will be publishing more information about what individuals and congregations can do to oppose the overture in *The Review*. Numerous ideas and strategies have been suggested to the Committee. They are establishing a

Fighting Fund

To pay for advertising, legal advice, campaign expenses subsidising congregations adversely affected and many other expenses. Any residue that remains at the end will either be used to support congregations or be transferred to the general funds of the **Presbyterian Fellowship (N.S.W.) Incorporated**.

Donations should be sent to

The Treasurer,

Miss Fiona Perry,

Box 518 Roseville 2069

Together with establishing liaisons with various groups and individuals throughout the country, the Committee is intending to hold a

Residential Conference

for further planning. People attending who are travelling from interstate and others with serious expenses may receive a subsidy.

Where to from here ?

(from page 8)

Writing to Christian journals, clerks of courts and friends can be very powerful. When the GAA meets again in 2010 it should assemble knowing that if it endorses these new rules it will have consequences for the Church.

Finally, pray. God is sovereign and wants His Church to be effective in spreading the Good News. We need to be part of His plan and this can only truly happen if we are in communion with Him.

In conclusion, this decision has thrown the Presbyterian Church into consternation, something that will hinder its ministry for the next three years and, depending on the ultimate outcome, a long way beyond. The ministers and elders who were party to this overture, together with the people who have denigrated, harassed and isolated women elders in local congregations for many years will have to account to God for their actions at some time in the future.

We wonder what they will say.

Us and Them

Owing to a similarity of name, **The Committee of the Presbyterian Fellowship, Incorporated**, the publishers of the *Presbyterian Review*, wish to make it known that there is no connection between our organisation, "us" and the organisation in Victoria known as "The Fellowship" of recent notoriety at Camberwell and the special GAA, "them".

The two organisations have different aims, different personnel and are entirely separate.

Speech at the GAA



by Rev David Campbell of
Hunter Presbytery
Minister St. Andrews
Newcastle

Moderator, I am against the sustaining of this overture. It is not my intention to enter into the biblical argument for or against the ordination of women to the eldership. All I want to do is make a few practical comments.

Moderator, ever since I came into the PCA almost seven years ago I have been acutely aware of the tension that exists within our denomination between those who are in favour of ordaining women elders and those who are opposed to it. The issue of the ordination of women to the eldership has in recent years consumed so much of our time and energy. Presbyterians talk about it over coffee and meals, at session meetings, rallies and on other occasions including this Assembly. Everywhere I go within Presbyterian circles inevitably the subject comes up for discussion. All this has a detrimental effect on the life and witness of our Church. We get sidetracked from the issues that ought to concern us most which is how we as a Church can effectively share the gospel of Good News with people in modern day Australia.

Moderator, it is absolutely clear that there are two strongly held opposing points of view on this issue of ordaining women elders. Nothing that is said or decided here today will change these points of view. I have no doubt that my colleagues who stated this Overture are sincere and well meaning in what they are seeking to do. They are convinced of the rightness of their understanding of biblical leadership within the Church and I respect their views. However, it is equally true to say that there are others who are just as passionate in holding to a different biblical understanding.

Moderator, the question facing us today is how can we within our Church co-exist by holding on to both points of view? Unless we can somehow find a compromise position then we will

continue to tear our Church apart. The State Assembly of NSW has already made its position clear at the Assembly in 2005. It is happy to live with the current position which is that those churches that wish to ordain women to the eldership can do so and those churches that do not wish to ordain women to the eldership are not compelled to do so. It is a position that the vast majority of us in the NSW Church can accept and live with.

Moderator, in my congregation at St Andrew's in Newcastle 50% of my elders are women. In my Presbytery of the Hunter we have a female clerk who is also session clerk in her local church. My congregation and the Presbytery of the Hunter would be greatly impoverished without the spiritual gifts and insights of our female elders. Practically it would be difficult for us to survive without them.

If we sustain this Overture today it will cause deep hurt to many women and men within my congregation and in the wider Church. It will have a serious negative effect on my ministry in a congregation that openly supports the ordination of women elders.

Moderator, there has to be a way forward that enables us to respect our differences and maintain our unity in diversity. I have often been challenged by the words of the apostle Paul which he wrote to the church members at Ephesus; **“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”**. Nothing will be gained today by sustaining this Overture. By doing so we will merely perpetuate the divisions within our Church that have existed for far too long.

Moderator, for the sake of the unity of our great Church, I appeal to this Assembly to not sustain this Overture.

Please consider sending to us articles or letters about items of current interest, items of historical or social interest.

DESPERATE MEN

COLIN STEWART: GAELIC SPEAKING SCOTTISH PIONEER

(Part 2)

by Rev'd Robert Willson

The ship *Boyne*, with 295 Government assisted Highlanders, and the Reverend Colin Stewart of the Church of Scotland as Chaplain, arrived in Sydney on January 2, 1839. Stewart and many of the passengers set out over the Blue Mountains to the western districts.

Governor Macquarie had founded the township of Bathurst in 1815. The first Presbyterian Minister to visit the area was John Dunmore Lang and in 1832 a Presbyterian Church was founded in Bathurst with many of the leading citizens who were Scots, giving support to it.

In the Eastern Tablelands area around Bowenfels and what is now Lithgow there were two notable early Scottish settlers, Andrew Brown of "Coerwull" and James Walker of "Wallerowong". Both were devoted to the Scottish Kirk and made Colin Stewart welcome.

When Stewart arrived he obtained permission from the Government to use the Hartley Court House for services of worship. The area was formerly known as the Vale of Clwydd. Andrew Brown's diary records the following: "17th February, 1839, Sunday. Mr Stewart a Presbyterian Minister intending to settle in this district preached here today. There were about twenty-one or twenty-two hearers present." (Quoted in *The Parish of Bowenfels* by Stuart Clements)

Within three years of his arrival in the district Colin Stewart's ministry began to show results. In 1842 the Bowenfels Church was completed and Stewart was formally called to be the minister of the second Presbyterian Parish west of the Blue Mountains.

Stewart must have found his life in New South Wales to be an abrupt contrast to that of his Scottish homeland. In the Scottish Highlands he would have met few Irish Catholics but many thousands of them were being transported to the Colony. In the mountains he would have seen desperate men in chain-gangs working to build the roads, guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets and disciplined by the lash. Those who managed to escape were known as "bolters" and they lived as bushrangers in the scrub and "robbery under arms" was their way of life.

Thomas Icely, the magistrate in the Carcoar district, gave evidence before a government enquiry in 1839, that two thirds of the population of his district were convicts and the forces of law and order to control them were stretched thin, with two magistrates, no lock-up-house and no Scourger available to enforce any punishment. In 1840 the newspapers reported the brutal murder of a Station Owner named Cunningham in the Bathurst district.

For the traveller there was constant danger, not only from bushrangers but also from sickness and accidents in the bush. Men became lost and were never seen alive again. Some drowned attempting to swim flooded rivers and creeks. But Colin Stewart never allowed the dangers to deter him and his ministry of ceaseless travelling through the frontier districts became a legend.

(This article is continued in the next Issue)

REFERENCES

"The 1843 Scottish Disruption and the Parish of Carcoar" by Robert Willson, in *Church Heritage*, the historical Journal of the Uniting Church, vol 14, no 4, Sept 2006.

The Parish of Bowenfels to the year 1865 by Revd S J Clements.

The McKay Family by Revd Robert Willson.

Professor Andrew M^cGowan

(from page 1)

2) where the church controls the state, citing the mediæval papacy, 3) where the two are completely separate, e.g., the Anabaptists, and where the two have mutual duties and responsibilities. This began with Martin Luther's idea of two kingdoms, both ordained by God and was further developed by Calvin.



With the idea of a warm-hearted Calvinism, an overly rationalistic approach was rejected since many people see reformed theology as

anti almost everything.

The free offer of the gospel was emphasised after the first secession in 1733, reacting against those who felt it improper to offer the gospel to someone for whom Christ perhaps did not die.

Calvinism as a world and life view was developed in response to classic liberal theology and pioneered by James Orr in 1893, an approach which was copied and developed further by a number of more famous names. Calvinism sets itself as distinct from English Puritanism. James Orr also advocated the plenary inspiration of Scripture and its high authority. He disagreed with Warfield, thinking of Scripture in organic terms rather than mechanistic terms.

Other interesting ideas included the suggestion of developing a reformed doctrine of tradition and the renewed interest in liturgy, which has so far more or less confined itself to music rather than liturgy *per se*.

Professor M^cGowan was able to answer a number of questions including one from Rev. Dr. John Davies about the place of Thomas Chalmers in the theological history.

The *Presbyterian Review* is eagerly looking forward to Professor M^cGowan's course next August and the Eliza Ferrie Lecture. Professor M^cGowan's Assembly Bible Expositions are available on the Church's web site.

FROM A WOMAN ELDER AT GAA

Mrs. M. McEwan, Elder Scots Church Sydney and commissioner for Sydney Presbytery.

1 Eldership

AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF AUSTRALIA held from 10th to 13th September, 2007, in Scots Church, Sydney, there were only 8 women elders in a total of between 190 and 200 commissioners. NSW is at present the only state remaining to be allowed to elect new women elders. NSW is also the state with by far the greatest number of communicants. The Western Australian Assembly, on the other hand, is smaller than one of our presbyteries.

According to the present rules, the GAA controls doctrine, worship and discipline while State Assemblies deal with government. Until now eldership has come under 'government' and hence is controlled by the separate states. This year an overture from the Presbytery of Sydney South was presented to the GAA. This overture sought to amend Article 2 of the Articles of Agreement by the addition of a new paragraph to be known as Article 18, referring to the admission of persons to the eldership. Among four paragraphs, part of (c) states "the eldership shall be open to suitably qualified MEN". Various verses from I Timothy 2 are referred to in the preamble and in the proposed Article 18. Two verses quoted in the preamble were emphasized:

I Timothy 2 (New International Translation)

- 11 "A woman should learn in quietness and submission."
- 12 "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent"

We do not know whether Paul was judging a particular difficult situation or whether he was speaking generally. In any case there were many examples in both Old and New Testaments where women were commended for their leadership roles. Anyone who extends his/her Bible reading beyond the letters to Timothy in an unbiased way should understand this.

The overture was stated by Revd D R Middleton and Revd Dr P E Barnes. I did not consider their presentation well-arranged or logical. Two particular speakers against were Mr David Crawford and Revd David Campbell who were much more persuasive. Nevertheless the overture was sustained and several notices of motion followed. Finally, under the Barrier Act, the overture's proposals are to be sent to Presbyteries and Assemblies for approval before coming before the GAA again at its next meeting in 2010. If these proposals are finally accepted, NSW will no longer be able to elect women elders. It seems

to me that the majority of those who voted in favour of the Overture at the recent GAA meeting came to the Assembly with closed minds.

This is a tragedy for women in the Church and their hurt must affect the whole church. Then again, if teaching is forbidden to women, what about Sunday School teachers and female missionaries?

Again the overturists failed to realize that changes to the Articles of Agreement can also cause great changes in other matters; David Crawford made this clear. Once the GAA takes over one power of the States it may wish in the future to take over other state powers. At present we have a federal Church, which ought to be a safeguard. Personally I should not like this to be changed to a national church.

2 Ecumenical relations

I WAS ALSO CONCERNED at the recent assembly about attitudes to the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of a statement by Pope Benedict XVI on 29th June, 2007, two notices of motion were presented.

The first of these motions wanted a declaration that it is not appropriate to extend official invitations to Roman Catholic representatives to attend any activity of the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia. Fortunately this motion was lost.

The second notice of motion asked the Assembly to “declare that no office bearer or any other person, is authorized to represent the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church of Australia at any function or any other activity associated with the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Australia in 2008”. This motion was passed.

Various denominations have differences in doctrine, worship and government. In present times many of us favour an ecumenical approach with friendship to all our neighbours. We have the special case of our own Scots Church using the premises during the re-development at Margaret Street. When the Trustees sold Chalmers Church, we were grateful to be rescued by St Patrick’s Church with the use of its crypt and other facilities. A friendly relationship between the two churches began then and still continues.

3 Conclusions

In my report to the congregation I have discussed only two topics but these were the matters that worried me most.

The main concern is the position of women elders. With this is the possible threat to state powers. Some other future results from the acceptance of the Overture many not have been foreseen by the overturists.

I came away from the Assembly deeply concerned about attitudes. What we need are increases in understanding and compassion.

Organ Centenary

Rev. Doug Murray at Scots Kiama



Photo courtesy -
G. Harmer Kiama

On Sunday afternoon of the 9th September, a special service was held within Scots Church Kiama when the pipe organ was re-dedicated. This celebrated the 100th anniversary of placing the organ in the church.

For the occasion, Mr Graham Harmer produced a book entitled *Music for a Century*. Mr Harmer has had a great interest in organs and has produced a most worthy account of the organ which was built by Mr. Charles Richardson, an Australian builder some of whose organs are found at Balmain, Mosman East Maitland, etc.

The occasion for the Centenary celebrations was a bright Kiama day when many people attended. Two previous ministers of Kiama, Very Rev. James Mullan and Rev David Hawkins were present together with relatives of the early organists, as well as Sir John Fuller, a descendant of Mr G.L. Fuller, the donor of the organ one hundred years ago.

Mr Harmer’s book details the “workings” of a pipe organ and also the decision making of the local congregation, people who played a prominent part within the Church through the years, including the ministers, organists and local people who made contributions to the church’s worship.

Three hymns were sung during the service.

It is interesting to note that one of the early ministers, (1906-8), Dr. E.N. Merrington wrote the wonderful hymn, *God of Eternity, Lord of the Ages*, which is N^o 642 in R.C.H.

It is hoped that the organ will continue to be used in the coming years to enhance and strengthen the worship of God.



Rev. E. N. Merrington.

Photo Rev. Dr. Merrington from “Challenge of the Years” by C.A. White 1951

P.W.A.

G. A. OF A. REPORT

By the Past Federal President Mrs Joan Thuaux.

Moderator General, members of Assembly and visitors, thank you for the opportunity to share with you



some of my experiences during my term of office as Federal President of the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia.

When I look back over the three years, what is the first thing that comes to my mind? It is the reinforcement of my belief and knowledge that

God is the Sovereign Lord; His faithfulness, His constancy and His promises are true. Never has He left me nor forsaken me.

The second thing is the faithfulness of the Presbyterian Women of Australia, to their Lord and Saviour. The thing that has shone through, is the love of their Lord and their willingness to serve Him. This, in many cases, is not easy. There is a growing feeling, rightly or wrongly, that because they are women the work they do to extend the Kingdom of God is not worthy or important. To their credit they are continuing to use their God given talents; they serve a living loving God, not man. Our theme for the past three years has been Fix your eyes on Jesus, Hebrews 12: 2a, and this what they are doing. God is supreme in their lives.

I have been very privileged to have visited all the State P.W.A 's. The number of members and branches varies from State to State. I have been enriched and encouraged and spiritually blessed. I remember with love and thanks to God the weekend camp at Bicheno, the P.W.A. State Conferences at Mt Barker, Brisbane and Sydney, the Prayer weekend, the Moderator's morning tea, a tour of Fremantle by the Moderator, no less, in W.A. In each State I was welcomed and embraced into members hearts and homes. It is

truly wonderful to be part of God's P.W.A. family.

Members of the Assembly, the women of the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia seek to serve their Lord and Saviour to be His hands in a hurting and lost world. Through the reading and studying of God's word and prayer to seek to know God's leading They take to heart God's command as found in Matthew 28 19 - 20 to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age They work to support the various committees of the church by going out to feed the poor and homeless caring for the aged and infirm the sick and shut ins to supply funds to help the student ministers their wives and families, missionaries at home and abroad, the chaplains in hospitals, prisons and aged care, the P.I.M. Padre teams and the folk beyond the furthest fences, teach scripture in schools run kids clubs.. The harvest is ripe and the workers are few. Can we as a denomination afford to disregard the talents given by God to women just because they are women?

Might I encourage all ministers to bring the work of the P.W.A. to the attention of the women of their congregations who may be unaware of the avenues of services available to them through the P.W.A. I pray that all women might be encouraged and enriched by their participation in the building up of God's Kingdom here on earth. To God be all thanks and praise, world without end, Amen.

Subscriptions

Due to increasing costs the Committee have reluctantly found it necessary to raise the subscriptions for the coming year from 1st January 2008.

The new subscriptions are:

Membership: **\$25**

Review only: **\$15**

Review, bulk copies: **\$2**

This includes GST.

A number of articles and letters have been held over till the next issue, due March 1st. 2008