

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE 2010 BRF CONFERENCE

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Looking back after some time since the conference's closure, I'll describe the conference in the following manner: outstanding and fulfilling—a true blessing to my family and I. This was our first British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Conference and we weren't quite sure what to expect, but any doubts we may have had disappeared shortly after things got started.

My awareness of this conference can be attributed to Rev. Angus Stewart, who informed me of it in one of our phone conversations in the second quarter of 2010. In the first part of 2010, having been a Christian for a bit less than two years, after much reading on the subject, I became biblically convinced of the correctness of the regulative principle of worship (RPW), which is the historical Reformed teaching. In searching out more material on the RPW, I downloaded and listened to a debate between Rev. Stewart and Rev. Ivan Foster, a now retired minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, Northern Ireland.¹

Rev. Stewart obviously supported exclusive psalmody, while Rev. Foster, from a denomination which does not adhere to the RPW and exclusive psalmody during worship, disagreed. Rev. Stewart's knowledge and composure during the debate impressed me, so much so that I looked him up and eventually discovered the website of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (www.cprc.co.uk) from which I downloaded and listened to more sermons by Rev. Stewart.

I was impressed with his sermons and decided to call him. He was very friendly and polite and willing to answer all my questions and speak about biblical and theological matters with me. After speaking to my wife about Rev. Stewart and his work, we decided to attend the BRF Conference.

He mentioned who the two speakers would be and I knew I had heard their names before, but I couldn't remember where or how I had heard of them.

¹ Available online (www.cprf.co.uk/audio.htm#debates).

Later I remembered that I had heard of both Professors Hanko and Engelsma in articles on the Trinity Foundation website (www.trinityfoundation.org), which I had previously considered, and still consider, to be a valuable resource.

On the arrival day, Saturday, 7 August, 2010, my family and I had the very pleasant experience of getting out of bed at 3:15 AM, getting to the airport in Madrid, Spain, where we live, and then flying to Paris. After a layover of approximately two hours, we caught our flight to Cardiff, Wales, in a smallish propeller aircraft, which was a first for our two children, who weren't aware such airplanes still existed!

The Cardiff airport was small, clean, and calm—so much more pleasant than Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris and Barajas Airport in Madrid. The taxi ride from the airport to Hebron Hall Christian Centre, Dinas Powys, close to the city of Cardiff, Wales, was approximately twenty minutes and the driver was very pleasant and told us many things about Wales which were new to us.

We were well received by Mary Stewart, the wife of Rev. Stewart, and Mr. Stephen Rushton of the BRF General Council. After getting our luggage into our family room, we went into the village of Dinas Powys for a couple of hours. The town is clean, orderly, and quiet. We went into a nice little coffee shop and enjoyed hot chocolate, coffee, and carrot cake. We also bought some Welsh cakes, pleasant tasting, small, round, sweet cakes with raisins and currants, which I recommend to anyone who visits Wales. As this was my first day of vacation, and having been extremely busy at work in preparation to go on vacation, I also got a much-needed haircut at a local hair stylist.

Upon our return to Hebron Hall Christian Centre, we met and chatted with many of the brethren who had also arrived during the day. Then was dinner and evening devotions.

The next day was Sunday and the two professors each preached. I had not previously heard such strong preaching in person in English—we attend a Spanish language Presbyterian church in Spain—and my wife and I were both very satisfied. I consider it one of my most outstanding Lord's Days to date.

The professors' six speeches during the week were all very interesting and educational.²

² These can be purchased online (www.cprf.co.uk/audio/boxsets.htm) or downloaded free

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On one of the afternoons, there was a very interesting and informative talk on baptism, chaired by Mr. Michael Kimmitt.

We also were happy to receive Dr. David Allen of the Trinitarian Bible Society in London. His speech was very insightful, part of it about the underlying manuscripts of the Authorized Version 1611 (King James) Bible—the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Received Text. We're truly privileged to have the King James Bible, the great translation of the Holy Bible for English speakers. He brought Bibles and other books for purchase and I was able to buy some attractive book markers and an extremely small KJV Bible with the 1650 Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms in the back, which was a great find for me at a good price.

After each of the speeches there was a short tea break and then a question and answer session—very beneficial to the attendees.

The professors were exceedingly pleasant and more than willing to speak with all about any issues brought up or asked about. Rev. Stewart and newly-ordained (August, 2010) Rev. Martyn McGeown were also both great at attending to theological questions and other topics, fun to be around, and very helpful in all ways.

The facility where the conference was held was comfortable and very adequate. The staff were very polite and helpful. The swimming pool was also fun for the attendees, especially the children.

There were also day trips, to Caerphilly Castle and Tintern Abbey, both in Wales, and to Bath, in England.³

In both sites visited in Wales, our tour guides were very helpful and informative. In Tintern Abbey, the tour guide was even dressed as a Dark Age Roman Catholic monk. He really looked the part and was very well versed in the history of the abbey and culture of the time when Tintern Abbey was in use.

(www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk/index.php?option=com_sermonspeaker&view=serie&id=10015&Itemid=13).

³ The websites pertaining to the two abovementioned Welsh sites may prove useful (www.castles-of-wales.com/index.php?where=caerphilly&castle=caerphilly & www.caerphillycastle.com/ & www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?id=6&PlaceID=132 & www.infobritain.co.uk/Tintern_Abbey.htm).

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The historic city of Bath, England, was also interesting. My family and I went to the Roman Baths Museum and took the guided tour. It's well worth visiting.⁴

On one of the days we had free, my family and I visited the St. Fagan's National History Museum, which was a great way to spend a whole day. I strongly recommend visiting it if you plan on travelling to Wales in the future. Be sure to wear comfortable shoes, as it's an outdoor museum and you'll have to walk a lot.⁵

The atmosphere at the conference was warm and friendly and there was much valuable Christian fellowship. There were attendees from at least the following: all over the United Kingdom, the USA, the Republic of Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and ourselves from Spain. Our children had a lot of fun with the other youngsters and we were all very disappointed that the conference had to end after just one week—we were ready to stay at least another week! Time flies when you're having so much fun.

Also—good for us and the other brethren in attendance—Rev. Stewart and other brethren from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland brought many materials to purchase. We bought six books and also picked up some pamphlets.

The conference was very well planned and run. Many thanks to Rev. Angus and Mary Stewart and all the other brethren who helped organize and run this event and make it such a smashing success in all ways. Sincere thanks to the professors, who we are eager to see at the next conference in 2012!

I certainly recommend attendance for those who aren't sure if they'd like to attend in the future. Lord willing, my family and I will be at the next BRF Conference, planned for Summer 2012 with the theme, "Ye Shall Be My Witnesses."

⁴ Information is available online (www.romanbaths.co.uk).

⁵ Information is available online (www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans).