

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

---

12 September, 2014



Dear saints in the  
Protestant Reformed Churches,

## **BRF Conference**

By God's rich grace, the 2014 British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) Family Conference was a great success. Some 116 people stayed at Gartmore House in Scotland for all or part of the week (26 July – 2 August). There were 46 from the US and 2 from Canada (representing 16 Protestant Reformed Churches), plus 28 from Northern Ireland, 16 from England, 9 from the Republic of Ireland, 9 from Wales, and 2 from Scotland, as well as 3 from Singapore and 1 from Hungary.

A.N. Ireland coach brought CPRC members, some from the PRC and other Ulster conferees to and from Gartmore via the Belfast-Cairnryan ferry. This coach also conveyed about fifty people on the three half-day trips to Loch Katrine, Stirling, and Loch Lomond. Along with a Scottish coach, it brought about a hundred people to Edinburgh and St. Andrews on the two day-trips, where local guides showed us around the Magdalen Chapel and the martyrdom sites, respectively, relating important Reformation history. The night before the first day-trip, I gave a PowerPoint presentation on "John Knox: Scotland's Reformer," emphasizing his link with these two Scottish cities.

Profs. Hanks and Engelsma very ably developed the conference theme: "Be Ye Holy: The Reformed

Doctrine of Sanctification" in their six main addresses. Their two Sunday sermons explained other aspects of the believer's holy life. Rev. Martyn McGeown of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship (LRF) delivered the conference's introductory lecture: "Zealous of Good Works" (Titus 2:14), highlighting this crucial element in our sanctification (cf. *Belgic Confession* 24). I gave the conference's historical lecture: "A Scottish Classic on Sanctification: James Fraser of Alness' 'Explication' of Romans 6:1-8:4."

How does one do justice in a brief letter like this to the many elements, besides the speeches and the trips, that made up the conference? One thinks of the rich communion of the saints (i.e., sanctified ones), the fellowship over the meals, the lovely venue, the badminton and the football, the beautiful Scottish scenery, the evening Psalm-singing, the young people's bonfire on the last night, the making and renewing of friendships in the Lord, etc. We certainly hope to return to Gartmore House for conferences in the future.

Thanks to Stephen Murray, eighteen videos of all the speeches, sermons, and lectures, including the question and answer sessions, plus nine videos of author interviews with Profs. Engelsma and Hanks concerning ten of their RFP books, can be watched free on-line, ([www.youtube.com/cprcni](http://www.youtube.com/cprcni)). Box sets of 12 CDs or DVDs are available, containing all eleven speeches and a disk with a few of the author interviews. The CPRC Bookstore has sold so many of these so far that it looks like this will become our

best-selling box set! Contact us if you would like the set of CDs or DVDs.



BRF Conference 2014 boxset cover

At its Biennial General Meeting (BGM) during the conference, the members decided upon Castlewellan Castle in south Co. Down, Northern Ireland as the venue for the next BRF Conference (16-23 July, 2016). With Prof. Hanko's emotional farewell, after deciding that his eleventh conference over twenty-two years would be his last, a new speaker was required. Along with Prof. Engelsma, the BGM voted for Rev. Andrew Lanning of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) in Singapore, given a request from the CPRC that he be invited so as to facilitate Reformed ecumenicity between the CPRC and the CERC, with whom we are pursuing a sister-church relationship. The BGM also decided upon eschatology as the subject of the next conference. All are cordially invited to "Behold, I Come Quickly": The Reformed, Biblical Truth of the End," with Prof. Engelsma and Rev. Andy Lanning at Castlewellan Castle, Northern Ireland (16-23 July, 2016)!

## CPRC

Not only was the conference an edifying, encouraging, and enjoyable time for the CPRC members who attended, but over half of the saints from North America and Singapore were in the CPRC or LRF or both, either before or after the week at Gartmore. About twenty Americans, plus several visiting families from Northern Ireland, joined the congregation for both Sunday services on 3 August when Prof. Hanko preached for the CPRC.

The conference was an additional encouragement for Chris Hutchings from South Wales to move to join the CPRC. He flew over to Northern Ireland a week later (9 August). He is currently staying with Julian and Marie Kennedy and applying for a job. It is great to have Chris with us!

Mary, her parents (Fred and Ruth Hanko of Faith PRC), and I had an enjoyable and interesting holiday in the Scottish Highlands after the conference, coming back to Northern Ireland on 13 August. On our return, we entered into our computer records all the

CPRC Bookstore sales at the BRF Conference (over \$1,300) and took care of the Bookstore mail and the posting out of new orders, as well as sorting out the books that had been kindly brought over by PRC members from the RFPA. Eventually, we got caught up with our e-mails, website additions, conference audios, box sets, etc. On our journey to Dublin airport to drop off Mary's parents (18 August), the four of us called in at Castlewellan Castle, the venue for the 2016 conference. The view from the castle over its lake to the mountains is gorgeous, and there are miles of hiking trails through the castle's forest. Since many of the castle's rooms are dormitories, this conference will especially suit single people and couples wishing to have their children in a room with them.

Mary and I also had the privilege of hosting at our house our first Singaporeans, Daniel and Eunice Ong with their daughter Lisa (23-28 August), who is now with the LRF during a semester of studies at the University of Limerick. We had a congregational barbecue at the manse on their last night with us. Such visits are of great help in our fellowship with the CERC!

The two main CPRC classes have also started. On Tuesday mornings, we are looking at the great subject of the kingdom of God from Christ's teachings in the four gospels. On Wednesday evenings, we have begun *Belgic Confession* 24 on sanctification, the very topic of our recent BRF Conference! The article I wrote about the start of the new church year at the CPRC was published in both the *Ballymena Guardian* and the *Ballymena Times*.

The new catechism season has also just begun (1 September). This year, we have 14 students, the most we have ever had in my 13 years here. Of the 14 catechumens, 13 are boys and only 1 is a girl—just 7%. Is this some sort of record?

Recently, we received our first translation (in Spanish) through a brother originally from Mexico. The Christian Literature Ministry of the CERC sent us four Chinese pieces, which consist of 13 *Covenant Reformed News* articles. The other new translations added to our website in the last two months are: 6 Italian, 3 Hungarian, 1 Afrikaans, and 1 Tagalog ([www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm](http://www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm)).

May "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

By grace,  
**Rev. and Mary Stewart**