

# Covenant Protestant Reformed Church Ballymena, NI

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13 November, 2008

Dear saints  
in the Protestant Reformed Churches,

The “Evangelical Christianity vs. Roman Catholicism” debate on Revelation TV in London is a debate that never was. Spokesman for Rome Dr. Stephen Wang pulled out with about two weeks to go. He had wanted to emphasize similarities and common ground but, after viewing our website, he realized that we hold the antithetical Reformed position. Many Roman Catholic priests are trained and active in ecumenism, but not in polemics, with Protestants. So Dr. Wang thought it better to pull out. However, since we had our flights to London and hotel already booked, another debate was organized for the same night (2 October) with a different man (Pastor Timothy L. Ramsey) on a different subject (“Calvinism vs. Arminianism”).

We give thanks to God for how the debate went, and we are relieved it is over because these things are stressful. On the downside, it lasted only 1½ hours (as opposed to the 2 hours of our last Revelation TV debate), the CPRC website url and my e-mail number were not featured on the screen, and the e-mails that the show received that were for me to answer were not forwarded to my computer. These three things limited somewhat the contact that we received from people after the debate. But we still had a good number of phone calls and e-mails from folk in various parts of the world, some of whom signed up to receive the *Covenant Reformed News* from us each month. A Vineyard pastor even e-mailed me to say how much he appreciated the defense of sovereign grace! We were especially pleased with the response when we advertised the DVDs of the debate through the *News*. So far we have sold about 200 DVDs, with many people buying additional copies to give to friends as a witnessing tool. We also used the DVDs in a special offer with the British Reformed Fellowship book *The Five Points of*

*Calvinism*. We are delighted at how quickly this new book is selling and how well it is being received. CPRC bookstore sales for October were perhaps the best for any month we have ever had.

In connection with the “Calvinism vs. Arminianism” debate, Mary has created a new web page of “Calvinism Resources” containing audio and written materials, including information on a correspondence course by Rev. J. Laning on the Five Points of Calvinism ([www.cprf.co.uk/calvinismresources.htm](http://www.cprf.co.uk/calvinismresources.htm)). The video of the debate can also be watched from this web page, or you can order the DVD from Trinity PRC Evangelism Committee or Rev. R. Kleyn.

Here are the number of materials we have in various languages on the CPRC website: 370 Portuguese, 314 Italian, 70 German, 44 Russian, 42 Spanish, 38 Afrikaans, 32 Dutch, 20 French, 18 Filipino, 16 Ukrainian, 13 Korean, 10 Croatian, 9 Slovenian, 9 Chinese, 7 Polish, 6 Slovakian, and 6 Romanian. The way Francesco De Lucia, our main Italian translator, is going, we expect Italian to overtake Portuguese as the language in which we have most articles. Highlights in the last couple of months include Hugo Bos’ Dutch translation of Prof. Engelsma’s book *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers*; Goran Bosanac’s Croatian translation of the three chapters of Prof. Homer Hoeksema’s pamphlet “The Faith of Our Fathers”; Nic Grobler’s translation of a number of short articles into Afrikaans; and several Korean pieces, including reviews of our books. Also, we now have one or more pieces in 110 languages other than English.

The three young people who attended recent meetings in Limerick brought seven of their university friends to our last lecture there on “Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church” (17 October). The storeroom in which

the (adult) chairs are kept was locked, so we had to make do with chairs designed for 10-year-olds or benches, but none seemed to mind. This was our best-attended Limerick lecture yet (except for the one on “The Blessed Virgin Mary”) and the one at which we sold the most books. We had a fine time of discussion with the saints after the meeting and drove the four hours home encouraged in the Lord’s work. Some of these students are attending the Limerick Reformed Fellowship’s Sunday meeting ([www.limerickreformed.com](http://www.limerickreformed.com)). Five of them are hoping to join us in Ballymena for fellowship and services on the weekend of 23 November.

The South Wales lecture on “Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and the Church” (10 October) went well, though the last few times in Wales (for various reasons) the attendance has been down. Since Mary and I were able to book a flight across the Irish Sea to Bristol only very early in the morning, we took a break, spending several hours enjoying some coastal walks in the sunshine in SW England before heading to South Wales for the lecture.

We also held a couple of Reformation Day lectures in Northern Ireland in late October. “The Reformation’s Teaching on the Church” was the title for meetings in Portadown, 45 minutes drive south of us (30 October), and Ballymena (31 October). The Ballymena meeting went especially well, and the Portadown Reformation lecture led to an invitation to deliver a speech on John Calvin there early in 2009, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great Reformer’s birth. We hope to commemorate this significant year with other Calvin lectures and articles.

With September came the start of the catechism season (four classes this year), the Ladies Bible Study (on the Sermon on the Mount), and the Midweek Bible Study (on I Peter). I am especially enjoying I Peter, a very rich epistle, dealing with Christians living as hopeful strangers. Each year attendance at this Bible study has increased, and this enriches the discussion and fellowship.

The Lord’s Day preaching is now on the Lord’s Prayer, and we have completed sermon

series on “God’s Uncursable Church” (Num. 22-24) and “Dead Faith” (James 2:14-26). I preached on the latter in part because it is a key passage abused in the Roman Catholic attack on justification by alone. Though the Roman Catholic debate was cancelled, as a congregation we benefited from James’ denunciation of a dead and fruitless “faith.”

Sadly (for us), one of our members, Jennifer Hanco, left the CPRC and Northern Ireland (1 October) to return to her family and take up a post at a hospital in Vancouver. She is transferring membership to Lynden PRC. It was great to have her here, and we are sure she will be a blessing to the saints in Washington.

Little Leia Halliday was baptized (12 October) to become the only third-generation member of the CPRC. We are a young church and hope to see more of God’s covenant faithfulness shown to us in this way in the years ahead. The new CPRC address and telephone list now includes 60 people who attend our services, though not all of them are members. This is a big increase for us. Just five years ago, there were times when there were only about 15 people in our Sunday worship meetings. The Lord Jesus builds His church (Matt. 16:16). We thank you for all your support and covet your prayers to God for us.

In Christ,  
*Rev. & Mary Stewart*