

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church

Ballymena, NI

29 August 2019

Dear saints in the
Protestant Reformed Churches,

New CPRC Website

Our website has always been a vital means of spreading the truth and, with its extensive content, it has benefitted many and gotten us contacts throughout the world. However, as technology and the internet changed, some weaknesses with our older website became evident. Because the website was created when we were the Covenant Protestant Reformed *Fellowship*, we still used the url with the “f” (www.cprf.co.uk). The site was not properly smart phone compatible, which also resulted in a drop down external search engine listings. The software that Mary used to set up and maintain the website was obsolete, for the company that produced it had stopped making it and was no longer going to upgrade it. The ability to download audios from the website was difficult for some to understand and was not easy to do on smart phones and tablets. The internal search engine on the old website was not working properly and gave only one result. Clearly, a change was needed.

Since outside companies charge a lot to design and convert even small websites, Mary volunteered to do the work, ably assisted by Carol Nienhuis of Hope PRC. Because the website is large (5,000 pages, plus PDFs and about 2,000 audio files), we needed the new program to be able to import our old web pages and audios easily, and without losing all the formatting. After checking out five or six platforms, Mary decided that WordPress was the best fit. According to Wikipedia, WordPress is the world’s most popular website management system, being used by more than 60 million websites, including over a third of the top 10 million websites (as of April 2019). Even with the ability to import much of our old website, it has taken about two years to get the new site up and running.

Besides solving the problems (mentioned above), our new style website (www.cprc.co.uk), which has all the content of the earlier one, has a number of helpful features: it has a Bible reference tagger (placing the cursor over the Scripture cited will automatically bring up the text), related webpages and books pop up on the right side of the page, it is printer friendly, etc. The new website is so easy to work that I can add and modify its content too on my computer.

However, more has to be done with our new website. Some glitches must be fixed. The books and box sets of CDs and DVDs need to be displayed better. We also want to set things up so that people can order and pay for books and box sets on-line. At least until these things are sorted, we intend to keep our old website up as well.

Our new look website was first uploaded on 12 June, so that people could see it at our congregation’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) that night. Other reports covered our audio-visual witness (Stephen Murray does a lot of fine work), our finances (the CPRC has had a very good year), and the Limerick Reformed Fellowship or LRF (covering its families, individuals and potential). As is our custom, the AGM comes after Family Visitation, which, this year, focused on I Peter 2.

US Trip

During our biennial holiday in America (17 June-15 July), Mary and I had a week of camping with many of her family in Telluride, SW Colorado, and another week of camping in the Black Hills of South Dakota, etc. I preached 7 sermons in 5 different churches in 4 states (Colorado, Minnesota, Iowa, and Michigan), and gave 3 Power-Point presentations on the British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) and its conferences (especially the upcoming one in Castlewellan Castle, Northern Ireland, on 11-18 July,

2020) in Loveland, Edgerton, and Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Churches.

In Loveland PRC, I officiated at the wedding of our nephew, Eric Hanko, who married Molly Moore (21 June) and gave a lecture with slides on “Are Unbelievers in God’s Image?” (29 June). In Hull PRC, I baptized little Aubrey Westra, our great-niece (7 July).

Making it on a Lord’s day to Edgerton PRC—leaving the best to last!—meant that, finally, after over 18 years, I have preached in all of the 33 Protestant Reformed Churches in the US and Canada. That Sunday (7 July) also marked the first services of the group seeking to become Unity Protestant Reformed Church, a daughter church of Byron Center PRC. So it looks like I should visit number 34 when next in Michigan, Lord willing!

Our thanks to family and friends in the PRC for their hospitality and fellowship during our time in America. While we were away, Rev. and Nancy Key stayed in our house. This was their first visit to Northern Ireland, and Rev. Key was the obvious choice for pulpit supply in the CPRC, since my schedule meant that I would be spending 2 Lord’s days in Loveland.

Iron Sharpens Iron Radio Interviews

On 4 June, I was interviewed by Chris Arnzen on Iron Sharpens Iron Radio (ISIR) in Pennsylvania via phone link on the subject of “Gottschalk: A Medieval Confessor of God’s Absolute Sovereign Grace.” This ninth-century, German monk boldly and clearly taught God’s double predestination, man’s total depravity, Christ’s particular atonement, and the Spirit’s irresistible saving and keeping work. Basing his arguments upon sacred Scripture, as well as pointing out that he had the support of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Fulgentius of Ruspe (468-533), Gottschalk unequivocally denied the notion of an inefficacious desire in God to save the reprobate. For his faithful testimony, he was tried and condemned by numerous church councils across Western Europe, beaten mercilessly, and placed under house arrest for 19 years, before dying in captivity. The audio is on-line

(www.cprc.co.uk/sermons/interview-of-rev-angus-stewart-about-gottschalk-a-medieval-confessor-of-gods-absolute-sovereign-grace).

As part of our preparation for another interview on ISIR, Mary and I developed a special webpage containing “Resources on the Image of God.” It provides a biblical, theological, and confessional defense of the truth that the Second Person of the Trinity, the incarnate Son, Adam and Eve before the fall, and the regenerate are the likeness of God—but not unbelievers. Over the last three weeks, we have added audios (interviews, lectures, doctrine classes, and sermons), videos, articles (including ones by Manuel Kuhs and Sam Watterson of the LRF), and 2 webpages of quotes, both from the Reformed creeds and from theologians. The latter, with help from Rev. Andrew Underhile and Dr. Jonathan Moore, now consists of 11 pages of quotes from worthies such as Ambrose of Milan, Martin Luther, William Perkins (the father of English Puritanism), Thomas Gataker (a Westminster divine), Herman Witsius, George Smeaton (a Scottish Presbyterian), A. W. Pink, Herman Hoeksema, and Klaas Schilder.

Given the provocative title chosen by ISIR, “Are All Humans Created in the Image of God? A *Controversial and Unique* Position Examined,” it is perhaps not surprising that much of the interview treated the support for our position in church history from confessions and theologians. Of the 127 creeds in James T. Dennison’s 4 volumes of *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation* (1523-1693), only one of them speaks of unbelievers being in the *imago dei* and none of them refer at all to the so-called broader or wider aspect of God’s image. All the other references to humans in the divine likeness speak only of Christ, pre-fall Adam and Eve, and believers, such as 1 Spanish, 2 Dutch/Belgian, 2 German, 2 Scottish, 2 Hungarian, 3 British, and 4 Alpine creeds, including confessions of Waldensian, Reformed, and Presbyterian provenance. Though our position is far from “unique,” it is “controversial,” especially in the twenty-first century. Genesis 9:6, the chief Scrip-

ture appealed to by our opponents, merely states that man was “made” in God’s image (in Genesis 1) but not that man “is” in God’s image (now).

Since the first interview (Friday, 9 August) only scratched the surface of the rich, biblical teaching on the *imago dei* and I had many more arguments to make, we decided to hold a second interview (Friday, 23 August). We covered the nature, number, and idea of the image of God; the vital connection between divine sonship and the *imago dei*; 2 verses from the Psalms (17:15; 73:20); exegesis of Romans 8, Colossians 3, and Ephesians 4; the massive incongruities and dangerous consequences of the alternative view; etc. Both of these interviews are at the top of our image of God resources page (www.cprc.co.uk/imageofgodresources).

Others

Mary and I travelled to South Wales on 6 June for a lecture on the significance of “The Burnt Offering” (Lev. 1). There was a good attendance and several books were sold.

This year’s CPRC barbecue was held on warm and sunny Friday evening at the manse (2 August). Our thanks to Tommy Duncan, who spent many hours with us over the previous few days trimming hedges and bushes, etc., to get the garden in shape.



After 18 years of dialysis and aged 84, John McAuley, a long-term member of the

CPRC, departed to be with Christ, which is far better. A fine Christian gentleman and former mayor of Ballymena, John loved the biblical and Reformed faith, and bore a good witness to God’s sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus right up to the end. He valued highly his visit to Michigan for the International Reformed Conference in 1990 and his fellowship over many years with professors, ministers, and saints of the PRC. At the funeral service on Wednesday, 21 August, I preached on II Timothy 4:7, which characterized our departed brother: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (www.cprc.co.uk/sermons/funeral-sermon-for-mr-john-mcauley).

The 3½ months since our last letter (13 May) have been relatively quiet as regards translations. Half of the 14 translations we have received are in Hungarian, with 4 in Russian, and 1 each in Chinese, Spanish, and German.

May the Lord be with you all,

Rev. & Mary Stewart