

Cefn Lea, Wales 2000

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

BRF CONFERENCE REPORT

by
Miss Jessica Hanco
of Kells, Ballymena, Northern Ireland

Jessica is a member of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland located at Ballymena in County Antrim. She is currently studying Physiotherapy at the University of Ulster. With a number of other young people she attended the BRF Conference at Cefn Lea in Mid-Wales this year, and we are specially grateful to her for providing us with this report giving us a youthful viewpoint on the proceedings. (*Ed.*)

This conference would not have been possible without the efforts of the BRF Committee. We need to say a special thanks to Messrs. Brian Harris, Lindsay Williams, Paul Hayden, John Clarke, Philip Rainey, Jonathan McAuley, Rev. Ron Hanco, Allen Baird, Michael Kimmitt and Rev. Allen Spencer. Also, we express our appreciation to those who were re-elected to the committee as well as to all new members. Our prayers are with you all in this difficult work.

Prof. Engelsma and Prof. Hanco deserve a special thanks. It takes much time and hard work to prepare and present three speeches and a sermon, all within one week. I marvel at their courage to stand up in front of the audience and answer the questions posed to them. Also, it was a pleasure to fellowship with the Professors and their wives. The work of the Professors would not be possible without their wives. We thank God for such staunch defenders of the truth. We give special thanks too, to Prof. Euros Jones of the University of Wales, whose lecture about Griffith Jones was really fascinating.

There are numerous others that deserve our thanks, but there is no space in this article. We appreciated how Messrs. Ivan Reid and Ryan Hanco ably precented the Psalms for our meetings. Also, we were much blessed by the devotions, led by our young men. What a privilege to come before God each morning and evening in the communion of the saints.

The conference began on Saturday, July 22. Throughout the afternoon and evening people arrived at Cefn Lea Park, Newtown, North Wales. People arrived there from all over the world - as far afield as Canada, America, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the British Isles. It was great to renew old acquaintances and meet

so many new people.

On Saturday evening, Mr. Brian Harris commenced the conference by a welcome address. The evening was concluded by devotions. A majority went to their chalets early on Saturday night to prepare for the Sabbath, and recover from travelling.

It was an early start for some on Sunday. Prayer meeting and devotions commenced at 7:45 am. The morning worship service was conducted by Prof. Hanko. He preached on Psalm 73: "Guided by God's Counsel". It was a joy to hear so many singing the Psalms!

In the afternoon, Sunday school and catechism classes were conducted (prepared on very short notice). The classes were divided according to age (although some were slightly confused about which class they belonged to). I attended Angus Stewart's class on Psalm 145 - an excellent discussion of the meaning of the Psalm. Mr. Lammert Lubbers' class (age 17+) was on Acts 1. Ryan Hanko's class (age 12-17) reviewed the morning sermon. Mrs. L. Lubbers lead the youngest group.

The afternoon also provided time to fellowship, discuss and sing. Prof. Engelsma led the evening worship on Romans 8:35-39: "More Than Conquerors". After the evening meal we listened to Mr. Jonathan Moore speak on his thesis concerning the origins and development of the so-called "well-meant" offer of the Gospel. This was a pleasant surprise! We learned that this idea came from Bishops Davenant and Ussher. The day concluded with devotions.

For a few of us, Monday morning was also an early start. At 6:00 am ten of us gathered to climb the 'mountain' just outside the conference centre. Then, after devotion and breakfast, Prof. Engelsma introduced us to the theme of this, the sixth BRF conference; namely, the Kingdom of God. He explained the nature of the kingdom, with Colossians 1:13 as his text, showing how entrance into the Kingdom was by the spiritual regeneration of a person by God's power. All true Christians, therefore, and them alone, are "in" the "Kingdom of God". This, like all other following conference speeches, was followed by a question time.

A trip to Powys Castle was organised for the afternoon, but was subsequently cancelled as the castle was not open on Mondays. Thus the afternoon was free to do as one wished. The Brits challenged the Americans to a soccer match, but the Americans were unable to produce a full team. The challenge still stands for 2002.

Angus Stewart, the seminary student of Covenant PRC of Ballymena, also challenged Prof. Engelsma to a tennis match. Angus's advantage of age did little to help him. The Prof. beat him in three sets, although Angus reckoned he improved with



YOUNG FOLK AT THE BRF CONFERENCE: CEFN LEA MID-WALES 2000

We are not able to print all the names of those pictured here, so we leave it to the reader to pick out those who they know. They're on here from California, Colorado, Michigan, Illinois, Canada, Malaysia, Northern Ireland and other places in Britain.

Photo: Phil Harbach and Ed. Bos.

BRF CONFERENCE: CEFN LEA, MID-WALES, JULY 2000

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



Prof. Herman Hanko
PRC Seminary USA



Prof. Euros Jones
University of Wales



Prof. D.J. Engelsma
PRC Seminary USA





YOUNG CATECHUMENS RECEIVE CERTIFICATES

Ten of them, from Ballymena Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, they are, from left to right: Neil Hanko; Cherith Crossett; David Crossett; Rosanna Hanko; Joel Clarke; Jessica Hanko; Aaron McAuley; Rebecca Clarke; Mark McAuley; Ruth McAuley.



THE NURSERY

A necessary, and welcome side to BRF Conferences.

Mrs Siân Harris and Mrs Marlene Clarke keep an eye on the little ones, with the help of Edward Hanko.

Seen also in the picture are young Joshua Harris, (on his mother's lap), Heather and Sharon Clarke, (John and Marlene Clarke's identical twins), and, in the foreground is Rebecca Moore, but a few weeks old.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS in this supplement by courtesy of:

Philip Harbach

Ed Bos

The Editor gratefully acknowledges their excellent work.

each set.

We listened to our second speech on Monday night. Prof. Hanko spoke on "**The Coming of the Kingdom in History**". His text was Matthew 11:1-19. He looked at the Kingdom of God from three perspectives, it was in being in Heaven from before the Creation of man, and was "breaking through" from Heaven to earth at various times during the Old Testament times, then it came in a fuller manifestation in the ministry of the Lord, continuing in the Church. Finally, it will come in all its glory at the return of the Lord.

The last scheduled events of that evening were question time and devotions. Needless to say, the activities of the young (and not so young) extended well into the night. These included walks, volleyball, discussions and Psalm singing.

All day Tuesday was set aside for a day trip to Bala and Llangollen, OR a walk up Cader Idris (2928 feet high.) . A few opted for the walk. Many of us went on the bus tour. We stopped in the town of Bala, to where, about 200 years ago, the young Mary Jones walked to get her copy of the Bible. She walked alone, and bare-foot for most of the way, up over Cader Idris and on for about 20 miles, to get the Bible she had been working and saving up for since she was a little girl. May we be so eager for the Word!

In the evening, Prof. Engelsma spoke on "**The Kingdom and the Church**", with John 18:1-14, 33-38 as his scripture passage. He explained from these scriptures how God's Kingdom is "not of this world", and that the Kingdom is in this present age to be found in the Church, indeed, it is the Church. This he proved from Scripture, and also showed how the Reformed Confessions have the same interpretation. He said we must guard against those errors that make the Kingdom of God some kind of political set-up in this present world.

Prof. Hanko gave the fourth conference address on Wednesday morning. He spoke on "**The Kingdom, Gospel and Law**", using Psalm 19 as his text. For homework, he asked all the audience to read either I Peter or the Sermon on the Mount. He showed how God's law is one, and that the basis of it is in the command to love God with all our hearts, soul, strength, and minds, and our neighbour as our selves. No earthly government could ever enforce such a law, for only Christ ever kept it perfectly, and He kept it as His work of obedience that we might be saved.

The scheduled annual BRF meeting took place in the afternoon, and extended well past the scheduled time. I think they finally sorted out the business!

In the evening, our guest speaker, Prof. Euros Jones, of the University of Wales,

introduced us to Griffith Jones and the Welsh Christian schools. It was an interesting lecture on a subject many of us knew little about. We learned how Griffith Jones emphasised catechising, and how successful it was. Griffith Jones said “without catechising, so much preaching is wasted.” What an amazing effect this man’s work had all through Wales! Nearly half of the population learned to read and write using the Bible and the Catechism as their text-books!

After the meeting, Prof. Engelsma presented certificates to ten children and young people from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, N. Ireland. Their photograph is included in the Conference photo pages in this journal. These certificates are given to those who memorise the Westminster shorter catechism. This is a tradition at the conferences. It was started in 1994 by Timothy Cross. We thank Mr. McAuley for examining them all.

The evening ended with the usual activities - devotions followed by discussions, walks and singing. Discussions touched on almost all subjects - the kingdom, head covering, fasting, the new creation, angels, ...

Thursday was set aside for activities. Some went to Aberystwyth by car or in the two minibuses we had hired. At Aberystwyth, a narrow-gauge steam train took a lot of us up the Rheidol Valley to a place called “Devil's Bridge”. I went with some of the Americans to Aberystwyth to shop, see the castle and walk along the shore. We drove to Devil's Bridge and then walked to the waterfalls. We experienced our first rain of the week; we were soaked!

Others went southwards, to shop at Hay-on-Wye, a little town crammed with second-hand bookshops, where of course, they have the inevitable theological sections!

In the evening Prof. Engelsma gave the fifth speech of the week: **"The Kingdom and Civil Government"**. He spoke on Romans 13, explaining especially the role of the Civil Magistrate. He pointed out that such rulers do not have unlimited authority, particularly with regard to religion. They are not capable of enforcing the Ten Commandments, but are only capable of keeping the peace, so that the Church can survive and prosper. An interesting question time followed.

Directly after this meeting Wayne Courtney had to go into casualty for an injured hand. There were a few other minor injuries at the conference - three sprained ankles!

The last day of the conference was Friday. A few left to begin their long travelling on this day. The rest enjoyed Prof. Hanko's last speech. He spoke from Colossians 3 on **"The Life of the Kingdom"**. He showed how on this earth Christians must be “in the world” but “not of the world”, and that our goal is to set our hearts on heavenly things, not earthly things. We must live out the “antithesis”

and not be corrupted by worldly things. In setting our affections on the "things that are above" (Col. 3:2) we must be prepared to suffer if necessary, and we must not set our hearts on things of this world.

In the afternoon the trip to Powys Castle was rescheduled. Report came back from those who went that the castle and gardens were gorgeous.

There was an extra question time on Friday evening. The Professors answered eight questions that had been written out during the week by various people and handed in for this final session. One questioner wanted to know if the Church could take up arms to protect itself, or should it just surrender? Prof. Engelsma answered that when a church is persecuted and does not retaliate, this is not surrender. It is the same kind of victory that Christ won on the cross. We are encouraged to suffer for Christ he said, by the Scriptures. (Phil. 1:29 for instance.) Someone else asked what law the Civil magistrate should enforce if he couldn't enforce the Ten Commandments? Again, Prof. Engelsma answered that he should enforce the natural law mentioned in Romans 2:14-15. This was to do with keeping order in society. If the civil ruler tried to enforce the Law of God, he would have to put everyone to death, because that was the penalty for all breaking of God's law. For who never breaks God's law?

The conference ended on Saturday morning. After devotions and breakfast, everyone parted their separate ways. Some stayed in the British Isles to travel, while others started on their long flight home. Overall, the conference was enjoyable, the speeches excellent and the fellowship a blessing.

Join us in Northern Ireland, at Castlewellan in 2002, as planned, D.V.

**BRF CONFERENCE 2000
TAPE RECORDINGS OF LECTURES
THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Six tape recordings of lectures

1 tape recording of Question/answer period

£10 incl. p.& p.

Write and send cheque made out to "British Reformed Fellowship"
to:

**Mr. John McAuley
2 Larne Road, BALLYMENA, Co. Antrim, BT42 3AS
Northern Ireland.**