

Computers and Entertainment

The computer as tool

Are computers good or bad? When the radio came many Christians called it an instrument of the devil that would ruin Christian families and destroy a God-fearing life. The radio, they said, would bring the world into our homes. When the television came, the same thing was said for the same reason. The TV brings the world into our Christian homes and families and will secularize them. If we are willing to face reality, and if we still know from God's Word what a God-fearing family is and how such a family lives, we must acknowledge that these warning voices predicted what has happened and is still happening in the life of many Christian families and individuals. The cause of this secularizing power of radio and TV is to a large extent their use for (easy) entertainment.

When the computer came such warnings were not heard. The reason seems to be that the computer entered our homes via the office and the factory. The beginning of the computer's popularity was its use as a tool. In the office it took the place of both the typewriter and the calculator. In the factory it was received as a tool useful for making better products and making them quicker. And in science it was used for increasing helpful knowledge. An example is here the medical science. Nobody saw anything wrong with all this. The computer was received as a product of modern technology that can and will help man in building up life. As Reformed people we see in the computer a tool for the fulfillment of our cultural mandate. This view is correct. The computer belongs to that which is created by God and is therefore good, and can be received with thanksgiving. For Christians will consecrate it by the Word of God and by prayer (1 Tim. 4:4-5).

However, this tool in science and for factory and office is becoming an intense danger for a Christian life. For it is more and more becoming an instrument for entertainment.

Certainly, there are also dangers in the use of the computer as a tool in the office, in the factory and in science. Man is sinful. These negative aspects, together with the positive ones, were brought forward in a meeting organized by the Burlington Study Center on Thursday evening, November 11. There J.G. VanDooren, principal of the Guido de Brès High School in Hamilton, assisted in the discussion by a panel, spoke on the effects of modern technical means of information, in particular the computer, on our mind. Negative aspects are, for instance, that the information accessible through the computer is no longer controlled or is often immoral. Sometimes the computer is trusted as making no mistakes. It can make medical service impersonal: the physi-

cians find and treat symptoms with the help of computerized instruments but forget to pay attention to the suffering human person. (I understand that it is the intention of the Study Center that the speech and the discussion will be published and made available for a wider public.) I can only refer here to this meeting. It is my intention to concentrate on the increasing use of the computer as means for entertainment.

The computer for entertainment

Recently an article appeared in *Nederlands Dagblad* (Oct. 28) under the heading "**Computer game becomes the addiction of the nineties.**" Information was taken from a magazine of the Evangelical Center for Addiction. It started with the line: "The LSD of the nineties is coming. This happens in the form of computer games." Then we read:

With the help of the newest computer technology these games create a three-dimensional simulated reality that involves the player physically. This "virtual reality," a form of electronic-digital entertainment, becomes the new addiction of the youth who, hooked on the computer and turned into themselves, try to entertain themselves. Many young people are already addicted to computer games with a passion. Games as Nintendo and Sega have conquered thousands during the past years. But this addiction was literally and figuratively child's play in comparison with what can be expected: the entertainment applications of the so-called "virtual reality" will conquer their ten-thousands. Even more young people will come in the grip of these modern computer games. Often and for long times they will escape from reality.

The article informs us further that "virtual reality" (VR) is first of all used in the airplane and space industry. This is a technical educational use. With VR a "reality" can be created and entered that simulates what really can happen, like a motor failure and crash situation. In this way VR helps pilots to learn to react quicker in sudden situations that threaten to be catastrophic. And we may say that VR can be useful as an educational tool just as it is used in the training of pilots.

What happens in such a VR program? How is such a virtually real different reality created? And how does one become part of it? It is done with a computer program and the use of a special helmet and "data gloves." The helmet covers also the eyes and places two little monitor screens in front of the eyes. By means of these screens the computer brings pictures before the eyes that simulate the virtual reality. Besides the helmet the student or player wears a pair

of data gloves. Helmet and gloves contain movement sensors. These sensors make the student "really" feel the things of VR. The student's active movements, his reactions, are also picked up by the gloves and helmet. All this is integrated in the VR computer program. The student "really feels" that he belongs to this new "reality." He is the pilot who reacts to what is happening and his new "environment" is reacting to what he does. In this way he is part of this so-called cyberspace that he is learning to govern with the computer.

A dangerous aspect of this educational VR used for training pilots was discovered. It appeared to be hard for a trainee to distinguish between the virtual reality and the real reality. In the real reality he sometimes was strongly inclined to act as if he still lived in the VR. His mind was still set as if in the VR. For this reason pilots who were trained with VR were not allowed for a whole week to fly an airplane. It was feared that he could act as if still in a situation in which his plane was in danger of crashing.

In other words, the human mind becomes so intensively occupied by this virtual or simulated reality, that this VR continues to occupy and rule the mind, even when one is back in the real world. This shows where one of the dangers lies for all VR use.

However, there is more. Games have a social aspect. Games are mostly intended to be played together. Computer games are played on an individual basis. You enter and live entirely in your own world. Indeed, with a computer game a person can escape from the real reality and "live" all by himself in the simulated reality of his choice, not bothered by anyone else. He can exist for himself only. Our Creator did not make us for that purpose. As Christians we learn from our God that we are made and redeemed to live with and for Him and with and for our neighbour.

Then, there is the addiction aspect. With regard to the first generation computer games, as Nintendo and Sega, we read about addiction. This is no wonder. Many games can be addicting at certain times. How many young people have spent hour after hour to play, for instance, the Monopoly game? It was good that there was a father or mother who said: "This is enough." Yes, one can also be absorbed in a book. This is not the place to discuss the difference between reading a good book and being absorbed in a computer game.

Fact is, these Nintendo and Sega computer games can be very addictive. They are fascinating. The player is actively involved in his own world. You have to go on. For you become totally absorbed in the game's world. There is no time anymore for other things, for doing homework or dinner or fulfilling other duties. Only one thing is important: the computer game.

On this point the article in *Nederlands Dagblad* gives a quotation from a producer of VR games, Fohn Ruane. When young, he was absorbed by Nintendo and Sega games. He admits that VR can enslave a person, just as the first generation games. He himself started with "an hour behind his Nintendo game and ended up with sitting entire days in front of the screen. 'I put everything aside in order to be able to play on. I hardly took any time to eat or to shower or to do other normal things. Once I went on for eighteen hours without stopping. I rather talked only with people who played too, because they understood me. Your computer world increases. Your own world becomes increasingly smaller.'" The second generation games seem to be even more fascinating and,

therefore, more addictive than the first generation because it involves a person even more intensively.

The article tells also how Jaron Lanier, an American computer fanatic who invented the term 'virtual reality', looks at these things. For him, the computer is not only a tool to increase the possibilities of getting information. It means rather progress in the possibilities for enriching our lives by increasing our experiences. He finds this the nicest aspect that a person can disguise and play the role of practically everything. You can enter the virtual reality of an insect or of a building and play the role of that insect or building, or whatever the computer program gives you. This, he says, gives a person enormous possibilities of experiencing many things and "live" many different, new "lives." It is good to remark here that the VR player is not really free. When he wants to experience a new VR world, he remains bound to what VR producers offer him. Knowing man's depravity and sin, here already a red warning light has to shine.

Entertainment through radio and TV is attractive not in the least through bringing in the matters of money and sex. Money and sex fascinate most people. These two matters are also going to be used in VR computer games. The article says that soon the porno-industry will make use of VR. "It appears to be just a matter of time for the 'O6-VR-computers' to make electronic-digital fornication possible. With gloves and suits containing sensors sex experiences can be simulated.

We read also about VR as means for New Age propagation. Through VR the player enters a different world. Timothy Leary, the man who used LSD to have ESP experiences, now praises VR as means to experience things from other "worlds." New Agers are busy with the possibilities of VR and try to create trips through their simulated "cosmic universe" in order to "help" people to believe in those "realities."

When one reads such things, it becomes clear that the computer, too, is being grasped by the world of sin in order to make money through sin at the cost of the lives of many. The computer is in progress to conquer the world of entertainment and add to the destruction of tens or hundreds of thousands of minds and lives.

How thankful should we be that in this world with its almost unlimited possibilities we have God's Word. In it we have the message of Christ Jesus, God's Son, who conquered sin and death and who gave us His Word and Spirit. The Spirit of God will go on to sanctify those who believe in Christ with a true, biblical knowledge of, and a firm confidence in Him as their Saviour. This faith in Him will make them live in the real real world, that is, in God's fellowship, with and for Him in holiness, and so with and for the neighbour, too, in Christian love. Not their own entertainment, living in their own world for themselves, means true life for those who follow Christ. Their life is gratitude for true salvation in a responsible way, guided by God's Word.

Thank God, also the computer will not be able to separate from God and from Christ those who love Him.

But, at the same time, let us watch and pray. Satan is busy to make also the computer his tool to defeat and conquer not only the world but also the children of the church. He is still going around as a roaring lion seeking to devour us and draw us away from our God and Saviour. Let us watch and pray, as parents and children together, that when Christ comes, He finds the faith in us. C

True and false church³

By C. Trimp

Dr. C. Trimp is Professor of Diacology, emeritus, at the Theological University in Kampen. This article originally appeared in De Reformatie, 13 November 1993 and has been translated by Dr. H. Boersma.

The practical meaning of Belgic Confession Article 29

We have seen that in their dogmatic considerations H. Bavinck and A. Kuyper remove the sharp edge from BC article 28 at the point where they start to speak in terms of "pluriformity." In line with such ideas of pluriformity, BC article 29 is deprived of its practical meaning. Bavinck makes "true church" and "false church" into terms that represent the theoretical extremes of a continuum demonstrating, from right to left, a decline in the purity of the church. All churches are more or less pure, or impure. The terms "true" and "false" (which as extreme positions holding together the system) can, in fact, nowhere be found as actual, realized possibilities. They are only functioning in the thought patterns of the theologian due to a certain urge to systematize.¹ A person who thinks that he is able to use these notions in the practice of daily church life, is immediately marked as a "simplistic person" or as someone who can only think in "black and white" terms.²

This all boils down to the fact that since Bavinck the two notions of article 29 ("true" and "false") served as ornaments or as a notional tool to hold together a system of "less pure" and "more pure" churches. For daily practise this meant that BC article 29 was replaced by a system of thought which was determined by notions like "less pure" and "more pure" churches.³

Thus, courage was definitely needed to come with a plea for the original text of BC article 29 and to argue for

the practical reintroduction of the distinction *true-false* in the twentieth century! K. Schilder did not hesitate to plead this case. His confessional integrity encouraged him to confront the Reformed churches (and no less the Dutch Reformed Church [NHK] and the Christian Reformed ["Christelijk Gereformeerd"] Churches) with their own confession.

It is perfectly clear that the renewed appreciation of the old text determined the thinking of many, especially in the Reformed churches that liberated themselves in 1944/45. Sometimes one even gets the impression, from personal and public discussions, that the Reformed confession concerning the church is limited to the reference to the "true" and "false" church, along with the accompanying characteristics. Without a doubt, this is a morbid symptom, indicating a disease, a case of hypertrophy (i.e., an enlargement due to excessive nutrition).

Let us start off by taking note of the fact that article 29 is a confession which wants to support article 28. Recently, we called article 28 a confession that is characteristic for a period of transition. It must give God's children support for their decisions which were inescapable due to the break-through of the Reformation of the church. They had the calling "to separate from those who do not belong to the Church" and to join the assembly of Christ's church "wherever God has established it." This is the arduous, risky journey which article 28 urges us to undertake.

This is the framework of article 29: it sharpens one's vision and puts down some road signs. It does not want to give a theoretical account, but wants to give concrete assistance. In the midst of all sorts of confusion, it wants to serve as our pilot. It is our conviction *that BC article 29 is an aid in realizing*

the calling of article 28 and in this way wants to bring (or perhaps keep or return) us to the catholic church of BC article 27.

After all, article 29 addresses believers who must, time and again choose in their lives. They must make this choice in the midst of the struggles and tumults of their own times. The Roman Catholic Church came with threats and murder, and the radical slogans of the Anabaptist groups called for battle throughout the nations of Europe. In this situation, article 29 wants to offer assistance from the Bible ("to discern . . . from the Word of God what is the true Church"). That is the practical meaning of this article, no less and no more.

"Characteristics" and "Marks" of the church

In order to help someone else find the right way in the midst of confusion and many risks it is necessary to put up a number of directions and danger signals. BC article 29 does that by placing some clear points of recognition. We call these "marks" (of the true church and of those belonging to the church). It seems useful to give a clear account of the words used in this connection.

We will begin with the expression "true church." The word "true," as such, does not add anything to the notion of "church." The word "true" places a clear accent and is as such a significant element of the argument. People use a magnifying glass in order to sharpen their vision and to make their observations more precise. But this does not change the object under the magnifying glass. In the same way, the expression "true" church wants to make our observation more precise. What if we should make a mistake and go off on the wrong track!

The word "true" does not add anything to the notion of "church," but it does add an element to the argument in the service of the observer/scout: there is no appearance, cheating, forgery, deception, fraud, or pseudo-church. In a case where people look for "the pure Word of God" and regard "Jesus Christ as the only Head," there the claim of being "church of Christ" can rightly be maintained! Just as a "true dollar" has no more value than a dollar, so it is also with the church and the "true" church (and the true brother, the true prophet, the true faith, etc.): it does not increase in value, but this is how the purpose of our searching and the joy of our finding is expressed. We only make use of the word "true" in situations where a choice must be made and it is critical to distinguish between "true" and "false." Fortunately, there are not money forgers around every day. Therefore, we also don't always have to speak about "true" church when we mean church of Christ. Once someone has found or rediscovered the church (BC art. 28), he lives from that time on in the community which has the characteristics of the church.

What do we understand by the "characteristics" of the church? These are the qualities of the church which Christ, its Head, has given it: its apostolicity, its catholicity, its unity, and its holiness. The believers do not give the church these characteristics, but the church receives them because of the communion with Christ. We may also say: these characteristics give a description of the mystery of the church. At first sight, one cannot discern these qualities of the church; they are only unwrapped by him who lets himself be initiated by the Spirit of Christ into the mystery of the church.

We find these four characteristics of the church in the *Nicene Creed*. The *Apostles' Creed* speaks of the "holy catholic church." The *Belgic Confession*, in article 27, speaks of unity, catholicity, and holiness. In our view, C article 7 speaks of the apostolicity of the church (cf. also the way in which this is made concrete in the conclusion of BC article 9). These characteristics show us Christ's gifts and, at the same time, Christ's mandates to his congregation.

Finally, we look at the notion of "marks" of the church. Marks are dis-

tinguished from characteristics in that they aim at *public identification*. The heart of the life of the church is communion with Christ. The church is Christ's property and lives in subjection to the testimony delivered by his apostles. The Holy Spirit makes the church understand and experience that communion. We may also call this the mystery of the church.


The heart of the church's life is not immediately visible to everyone. The church *appears* in its marks: its inner existence begins to unwrap and becomes noticeable before the eyes of the people. In *this* way, one is able to find the way to church and to make a distinction between true and false. The confession speaks of three marks. We can briefly summarize these marks in the words: pure preaching, scriptural administration of the sacraments, and real discipline. With the aid of these identifying moments one finds the entrance to the church of Christ.⁴

In short, we want to warn against a discussion about "the (three) marks" which does not *start from* and is not *aimed at* "the (four) characteristics." To illustrate the importance of this seemingly minute matter we want to draw attention to an important moment in the

great debates about the church. In May 1935, K. Schilder called the "ecumenical will" a "primary mark" of the church (II.248) – a first requirement for every ecclesiastical fellowship. Recently, it has been commented that in this way Schilder expanded the list of marks of BC article 29, and that he really added a fourth mark.⁵

It will be clear that at this point the discussion is derailing. When speaking of a "primary mark" Schilder did not refer to "the first mark" of the three that are mentioned in the confession. Schilder spoke about the characteristic of the catholicity of the church, as it is phrased in the conclusion of article 27 ("is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit") (see I.206, n. 4). While referring to "mark," Schilder apparently meant "characteristic quality."

The misunderstanding surrounding the cited expression has two causes: Schilder did not do much with the distinction between characteristics and marks. He hated a "list of marks," for that was far too static for him.⁶ Smit and Van Genderen are isolating the "primary mark" from the characteristics of the church. The result is that Van Genderen states with regard to the BC that



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION
41 Amberly Boulevard
Ancaster, ON, Canada L9G 3R9

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one "cannot appeal to this confession in defense of the idea that it is also a mark of the church that by its actions it must demonstrate the will to gather all true believing Christians."⁷ We deplore this sentence and do not consider it in accordance with the beginning and the conclusion of article 27 and with the message of BC article 28.

The continuing force of BC Article 29

Without too much difficulty, we may recognize the contours of the Roman Catholic Church in the picture of the false church in article 29. This makes it particularly remarkable that the confession does not leave it at a description of the Roman Catholic Church. The word "pope" is not mentioned, let alone the word "antichrist." De Brès has put forward some general aspects that apply to more than just the situation at the end of the sixteenth century. Therefore, one cannot rightly insist that article 29 is dated to such a degree that we can no longer put it to real, timely use in the year 1900 (Kuyper and Bavinck) or 1994.⁸ There are certainly Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century that are more time-bound than the practical and sober formulations of the Belgic Confession.⁹

The Limited Extent of BC Article 29

We plead for the practical and timely significance of article 29. This does not mean that article 29 is sufficient to map the actual ecclesiastical situation in our country. Article 29 gives sign posts and wants to keep us on, or bring us back to the road of the church. But the article is not intended to qualify all possible and impossible ecclesiastical situations beforehand. It is my conviction that sometimes there is a wrong use of the distinction "true church"-"false church." We have received that distinction to find the road *ourselves* in days of crisis, that is to say, days in which we must choose in personal or communal decisive situations. Moreover, with the help of article 29 we can warn ourselves and each other against taking wrong decisions. The article supports us when a course must be set with great precision.

But then it *is* of utmost importance to judge spiritually "the gifts of the Spirit of God" (2 Cor 2:14). For preaching, sacraments, and discipline are instruments of the Spirit. This spiritual way

of judging is something different from formally managing and checking off a static "list of marks" (which Schilder mentioned), or talking about the three marks for such a long time that we no longer get around to the characteristics of the church which, at the same time, are also mandates of the church. In such a case we run the risk that, with all our zeal, we spend all our time talking. Discussing church matters left, right, and center, one might not even "strive to enter" (Luke 13:23-24).

There is also a different way in which one might get stuck while citing the well-known sentences of BC article 29. Certain people are confident of their own right choice: the choice of the small path of the true church. Next, they use article 29 to disqualify other believers or groups. Apparently, they are of the opinion that De Brès has given us a supply of tags which from now on we can use in every situation, – just to keep matters clear. Let us hastily repent from such simplistic dealings. For we take the distinction "true-false" out of its religious context and ultimately make it subject to our own comfort, the comfort of self-confirmation and self-confidence.

It can hardly be denied that the situation of 1561 was a tumultuous one: much confusion, persecution, and flight. Articles 27-29 reflects that.¹⁰ Still, that situation was clear when compared to our own time. Our country teems with churches, fellowships, congrega-

tions, groups, movements, and brotherhoods. It is enough to make one dizzy. It can hardly be asserted that De Brès could foresee such an unimaginable situation. An enormous shift in political and social relations has taken place between his time and ours. Just think of the "separation between church and state," the "democratization" and "individualization" of society! No one in the sixteenth century could, even in his worst nightmare, have dreamt that a large number of churches or ecclesiastical fellowships would accept the Reformed confessions as their basis, while at the same time live as separated institutions, year in year out. All of this means that article 29 can really not simply be used to make up an inventory of our deplorable ecclesiastical patchwork.

There are movements and groups in this country who do not in the least desire to be called "church." They consciously want to be societies in which like minded Christians may experience or express their religion. Their liturgy is a sort of happening, and their doctrine is an assortment of truths (or what looks like it) grouped around certain themes of preference. There are also churches that are not eager to proclaim the good Word of God purely. Sometimes they don't even know anymore what "Word of God" means or where it is to be found. The word "church of Christ" is also not applicable to such gatherings.

But there are also congregations in our country that want to be "church" according to the Reformed confession. They proclaim the Name of Christ over their meetings. When they are really "church of Christ" they will show their catholic character, and they will not hide their longing for unity with those who have received an equally precious faith. After all, there are fellow believers who certainly belong together, but who have ended up in a different place because of all kinds of circumstances that are often historical in nature. Should these churches not desire that unity, then they degenerate because they do not take seriously their own mystery (the characteristic of unity in Christ) and ultimately prefer being a cozy sect over being the catholic church. Whoever accepts article 27 as his confession is able to come to this judgement. We don't even need article 29 for this.

OUR COVER



Winter Scene

It cannot be maintained in all seriousness that a church which is not ashamed of its catholicity only becomes “church of Christ” at the moment that it unites with us. When it calls for unity, and we do the same, *then* there is a spiritual unity, which urges both groups of churches to come to institutional unity. At such a moment, therefore, there are two churches beside each other at one place, in one country. By definition, that is not *allowed*. But it is nevertheless a fact. And precisely because it is, by definition, not *allowed*, while it still *is* the case, – precisely *therefore* these two churches must persist to look for one another, if they are concerned for the glory of Christ’s Name.

Help from Westminster?

In what preceded, we already came across the Westminster Confession. This confession speaks of less pure and more pure churches. Many have in the past used this distinction to soften their problems with BC article 29. This detour via Westminster still appears to be a popular one.¹¹

At the decisive moment, however, the moment of each other’s recognition, this distinction offers us no help. When the Westminster Confession, in article 25, speaks of the catholic church, it states in paragraphs 4 and 5:

4. This catholic Church has been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.
5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to his will.

The distinction “more or less pure” is used with respect to “particular churches.” Here the local churches are meant that are members of the catholic church. This is confirmed by the reference to Revelation 2 and 3 (the letters of Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor). In these letters, he who knows our works and searches our hearts (“who searches mind and heart,” Rev 2:23) is speaking. The Lord is able to measure our smaller or greater purity.

When he locates impurity he does not say “less pure true church.” He says: “Repent, and if not, I will remove your lampstand” (Rev 2:4-5, 14-16, 20ff.; 3:1ff., 16).

That is what the Westminster Confession speaks about, precisely over against those who perhaps might like to think that they were the most pure churches. After all, in 1647 there was a federation (somewhat united) which had been talking about the “pure church” for almost three quarters of a century (*Puritanism* with sometimes sectarian tendencies).¹²

There is nothing new here in the Westminster Confession for people from the Dutch tradition who know their three forms of unity. Just read up on it in the HC (answers 62, 114, 115) and in the BC (arts. 24 and 29 on churches with hypocrites and church members with weaknesses). Also we are aware that preaching and discipline differ from place to place with regard to the manner in which and the extent to which they are “maintained.” Neither is it unknown to us that perfectionism, Donatism, and Labadism could (in past and present) have mastered us just as much as Puritan pietism and its conventicles have threatened the English (and Dutch) churches. Moreover, the danger of becoming false due to schism or heresy is never absent, – also not if people may call themselves “true church.”

Therefore, it is not realistic to offer this pronouncement from Westminster as a *replacement* of or an *addition* to the Belgic Confession. For with which instrument shall we measure the “purity” of our local or national partner? And who would think that his purity is more abundant than that of his discussion partner? Therefore, it is unfounded optimism when people expect help from the Westminster Confession to reach “a clear solution to the never ending discussions about the church.”¹³

¹¹H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, 4th ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1930), IV, 300, 303.

¹²Cf. e.g. J.T. Bakker, in J. Firet, ed., *Pluraliteit in de kerk* (Kampen, 1977), p. 60.

¹³People thought they could appeal to the Westminster Confession (1647) in support of this system. This detour via the Westminster Confession became a popular interpretive route in this century, particularly under the influence of H.H. Kuyper (P.G. Schrottenboer, ed., *Op. cit.*, passim; on H.H. Kuyper, cf. *De Reformatie*, 16 [1935-36] 433, and

A.D.R. Polman, *Op. cit.*, III, 232-34). We hope to come back to this point later.

“It will be clear that we place some emphasis on the distinction between *characteristics* and *marks* of the church. Although we also realize that there is a clear connection between characteristics and marks (and we will come back to that) we still want to first ask attention for the distinction between the two. Briefly put, the distinction means that the characteristics tell us *what* the church is, and the marks answer the question *where* the church is (J. van Genderen, in W. van ‘t Spijker, et al., eds, *Op. cit.*, p. 283). This means that we must slightly criticize those who regard the description of the marks as a formulation of the *norms* of the church (cf. J. Kamphuis, “Onderscheiden de kenmerken nog?” *De Reformatie*, 46 [1970-71] 86 [review of G.C. Berkouwer, *De kerk*, I (1970)]). After all, article 29 is concerned with “discerning,” with “recognizing” and “distinguishing” (cf. the beginning and the conclusion of this article). We must discern the “true church,” the “Christians,” and the “false church.” Doubtless, we have to do this in accordance with God’s revealed norms. But article 29 of the confession is not concerned with our awareness of the norms, but appeals to these norms in order to urge us to seriously search for and identify *faithfulness* to the norm. We must retain article 29 as an aid in this identification. Otherwise, we take away the concrete, practical meaning of this article.

The BC has already clearly expressed itself about “normativity” in article 7, in particular over against a Roman Catholic understanding of norms (“apostolic succession,” etc.). Most certainly, both the “characteristics” and the “marks” also speak of the mandates of the church, and they can therefore both also function as means for testing. But we go in the wrong direction when we see the characteristics describe the *nature* of the church, and do not see the *normativity* of the church until we discuss the marks. A “mark” may be defined as a visible condition by which something or someone can be known. The faithfulness to the norm (or the lack thereof) may be judged from such a mark.

⁵Cf. H.J.D. Smit, in *Aspecten*, p. 89; J. van Genderen, in W. van ‘t Spijker, et al., eds., *Op. cit.*, p. 295; J. van Genderen, in *Beknopte gereformeerde dogmatiek*, p. 628.

⁶l.205ff. (1932).

⁷W. van ‘t Spijker, et al., eds., *Op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁸Cf. A.D.R. Polman, *Op. cit.*, III, 322, 334; J. Kamphuis, *Verkenningen* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1964), I, chs. 1-2; J. Kamphuis, in *De Reformatie*, 32 (1956-57) 150ff.

⁹B. Gassmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁰Article 27 speaks of the “fury of the whole world.” Article 28 says, “even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow.” Article 29 speaks of “all sects which are in the world today,” and of the false

church which "persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuke the false church for its sins, greed, and idolatries."

¹¹Cf. P.G. Schrotenboer, *Op. cit.*, p. 188. In the report from 1939 (presented to the synod of Sneek), which we cited earlier, this matter is discussed in detail on pp. 5-6 and it is said that the Westminster Confession "nicely supplements" our confession. "It does not indicate where the dividing line lies between the most impure church and the synagogue of satan. Thus, it leaves room for


many churches which are really churches, with a climax in purity."

These lines of thinking form the basis for the following statement of the deputies: "The opinions which at this point deviate from the standard teachings also militate against the Reformed confession, against the interpretation of the confession, and against the principles that have officially been put into practice by our synods." Cf. further literature mentioned above, n. 3.

¹²For this section, cf. the Irish Articles of 1615, par. 69; J.B. Rogers, *Scripture in the Westminster Confession* (Grand Rapids,

1967), p. 211; G. van Rongen, in *De Reformatie*, 65 (1989-90) 830-32.

The Leiden *Synopsis* (XL, 37ff.) would deserve separate attention (see also J. van Genderen, in *Beknopte gereformeerde dogmatiek*, p. 658). The idea of pluriformity was read into the Westminster Confession in the days of Kuyper and Bavinck. V. Hepp did the same with regard to the *Synopsis* and Calvin (see K. Schilder's analysis in I, 306-33, 337ff.).

¹³*Openheid tot dienstbetoon* (GSEV brochure) II (1993), p. 18. 

Meditation

By G.Ph. van Popta

Read Acts 2:22-39

"... Brethren, what shall we do?"

YOU CRUCIFIED JESUS!

The theme of Peter's Pentecost sermon is clear: You crucified Jesus of Nazareth, the man whom God sent, whom God raised from the dead, who ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, who poured out the Holy Spirit.

Peter made that accusation in verse 22. He said: "Men of Israel, hear these words . . . You crucified and killed [Jesus of Nazareth] by the hands of lawless men." He ended his sermon with the same accusation: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (verse 36).

That is a frightening accusation. It is especially frightening when we come to understand that the Word of God accuses us of that crime as well.

Most of Peter's audience were no where near Jerusalem when the awful deed had been done. Jesus of Nazareth was murdered fifty days earlier, at Passover. The pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost had observed Passover in their own homes, throughout the Roman empire, as the law demanded. Yet Peter said that they too were responsible for the death of Jesus of Nazareth. The entire house of Israel was responsible.

This accusation comes down through the centuries and confronts us as well. Does not Paul call us Gentiles "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16)? We belong to the Twelve Tribes of Israel of Revelation 7, do we not?

There's no escaping it. When Peter says that all the house of Israel must know something assuredly, our ears had better perk up as well.

Our sins killed Jesus Christ. Our sins drove Him to the cross. That is the accusation which comes to us. Frightening! The one whom we killed is now alive. God raised Him up. It was impossible for death to hold the sinless One. He sits at the right hand of God as King and Lord over all. Are we going to end up under His feet, as His footstool?

It cuts us to the heart. It leads us to cry out with all the house of Israel: "Brethren, what shall we do?" When we realize that our sins drove an innocent man to the cross, we are horrified. When we realize that this innocent man was also the eternal Son of God, we are terrified. What shall we do? That is the heartbroken question brought out of us by the terrible accusation.

But there is also a comforting answer: Repent, be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We crucified the Lord. But He was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (verse 23). Jesus of Nazareth was not the victim of a terrible tragedy. The Son of man went as it was written of Him.

The Word calls us to repent. Turn away from sin. Turn to the Lord. Receive from Him the free remission of all your sins. Receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will work in your life. He, the purifying fire of God, will burn sin out of your life and present you as a spotless bride to Christ on the great day.

Theonomy and Christian Reconstruction

An Informed Reply to R. Aasman*

By Richard Brown

As a Canadian Reformed reconstructionist, reading brother Aasman's critiques was both refreshing and disappointing, refreshing because discussion of God's law and culture was being broached, disappointing because the treatment did not truly reflect the position of those of us who unashamedly call ourselves reconstructionist and theonomic. To be reconstructionist is much like saying one is reformed, does this mean one follows Luther more than Calvin or Barth or Schilder, etc? This response is an attempt to clarify the position of a reconstructionist in the Canadian Reformed Church.

Bahnsen repeatedly makes the point that he has yet to hear a criticism that he has not already dealt with extensively in writing and otherwise. Brother Aasman writes,

Reconstructionism also is postmillennial in that it optimistically believes in a world-wide dominion of Christ where the kingdom of Christ penetrates every section of life. This will happen as every aspect of life bows in obedience before the law of God. (Art. 1 p.107).

There is not a single reconstructionist who in writing or otherwise has written or said that the kingdom of God will come "as every aspect of life bows in obedience before the law of God." The only source and power, the only way God's kingdom will come and his will done on earth as it is in heaven, is through the fervent and sincere proclamation of the gospel. (cf. Rushdoony. *Institutes* Vol. 1 p.113; *Roots* p.64)

Bahnsen makes the above point abundantly clear in the preface to his *Theonomy And Christian Ethics*. Theonomists do not advocate "making the civil use of God's law as the way of bringing in His Kingdom." (p.xxi) Reconstructionists share with other reformed people a postmillennial eschatology that is firmly gospel orientated.

There are as many understandings of reconstructionism as there are to what it means to be reformed. Reconstructionists like Bahnsen who hold to the traditional division of the law into moral, civil, and ceremonial, argue that the ceremonial laws have been fulfilled in the once and for all sacrifice of Christ. The other divisions of moral (usually meaning the ten commandments) and the civil (case, judicial, or common law) are both equally still in effect. Others, such as Jordan and the present writer, do not believe that the law was ever so compartmentalized. All of God's law is moral and to varying degrees all God's law had and still has ceremonial, civil, or judicial application, including the New Testament.

This is not an issue unique in modern day Reconstructionism. It is well known that Calvin separated the sabbath commandment from the rest, holding that it was a covenantal sign for Israel and therefore Calvin took it to be ceremonial and therefore no longer binding, including the civil punishment for it. Yet, we all surely are aware of the difference of opinion on the understanding of the sabbath law. A large number of reformed people (and even those who are not reformed) believe in keeping this law in a personal or church applied way as moral law if not with the civil enforcement. Still others believe in civil enforcement such as not opening businesses on Sunday. To the present writer this law clearly shows that God's law is often moral with ceremonial and civil application and use.

In any case, whether one adopts Bahnsen's position or that of Jordan both positions are united in the defense for the continuing application of the civil legislation as well holding that Jesus Christ fulfilled the ceremonies of the Older Covenant in His once and for all sacrifice of Himself. Either position is reflected in the Belgic Confession Article

25. The Belgic states very clearly that it is "the ceremonies and symbols" that have "ceased."

In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken from the law and the prophets both to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel and to order our life in all honour according to God's will and to His glory.

The fathers, in adopting this article, clearly distinguished between "the ceremonies and symbols" that "ceased" and "the testimonies taken from the law and the prophets" which continue, in "gospel" and "order."

In brother Aasman's second article he writes,

Someone who has embraced Jesus Christ as Saviour will not externalize the law. (p.137)

In such a categorical predication it logically follows by the law of non-contradiction that A cannot be non-A. In other words, A – (someone who has embraced Jesus Christ as Saviour) – will not externalize the law. Instead, A is to internalize the law. Yet, we are informed that to internalize the law means that for A

it is daily his delight and he applies it concretely from the heart in thought, word and deed.

The word: "from" is an ablative preposition of separation. The law that was in the heart is separated or drawn out to be applied concretely, not just in internal thought, but also in word and deed. The above is a logical contradiction. Either the law is not to be externalized or it is, and if it is we must ask in what way is it applied concretely?

Similar confusion evidences itself in the following. As Christians we will naturally approach society and government from the perspective of what God has taught us in His word. But we will not simply hand the ten words of the covenant to them. (Art. 3 p.164)

"Thou shalt not kill." (Ex. 20:13) If you do not hand this word and the other

nine to our political and judicial leaders, what word will you hand them? The vast majority of reformed people have always believed in a civil application of the ten words if not the complete civil application as given by God in the ancillary laws. It is not a matter of doing so to usher in God's kingdom, if anything at all, it is a sign that his kingdom has come when his will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

In the April '94 issue of the *New Horizons* (the Orthodox Presbyterian Church equivalent to *Clarion*) Bahnsen explains theonomy. The entire issue is devoted to the subject and the reader is encouraged to read it. In his article Bahnsen notes well the position of John Murray on the external application of the ten commandments.

John Murray called it a fatal error "if it is thought that the Christian revelation, the Bible, does not come to the civil authority with a demand for obedience to its direction and precept as stringent and inescapable as it does to the individual, to the family and to the church. (p.5 Bahnsen quoting Murray's *Collected Writings*, vol. 1, p.364)

Murray clearly advocated the external application of the ten words of the covenant, in fact, the entire Bible.

Reconstructionists do not deny the internal aspect of keeping God's law, we simply support the full external application of God's law as well. The ten commandments are a summary of the whole of God's law just as Jesus gave a shorter summary still when he was asked which was the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:34-40). Rushdoony wrote that,

The ten commandments give us in summary form not only God's covenant law for man but a revelation of the righteousness and holiness of God. (*Roots* p.1106)

We believe also that God does not change, therefore, his moral standards also do not change nor does his desire to have them applied internally and externally by his own standard of application.

Rushdoony defended Calvin's three-fold use of the law in *The Politics of Guilt and Pity* p.108ff. (cf. Calvin's *Institutes* Book II vii-x). In summary he wrote,

Law declares the standard and penalty for offense, protects society, undercuts man's moralism, and is a guide to the godly. (Ibid. p.114)

He makes very clear that keeping the law is not a means of salvation for the

individual or society, nor does it make a man of godly character. "Character and righteousness come from a source other than law." (Ibid. p.114). That source is the gospel.

One of the basic hermeneutical principles of theonomy, that has been stated already but needs repeating, is summarized well by Rushdoony.

Every aspect of the Old Testament law still stands, except those aspects of the ceremonial and priestly law specifically fulfilled by the coming of Christ and those laws specifically re-interpreted in the New Testament. (*Roots* p.553)

One can see that the hermeneutic is to follow only what God has commanded and if there is a change that this too is to be taught us only by the word of God.

The writer to the Hebrews, who wrote what is clearly a document of new covenant renewal, states in no uncertain terms the nature of the change in covenant administration. "For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the laws" (7:14). At no point will one find reference to the moral law or its civil application. The only change in law was what pertained to the priestly administration, in other words, the ceremonial application. Christ Jesus "has appeared one and for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26) Therefore, it is not true, as brother Aasman suggests, that we find in this letter, especially the latter half of chapter ten, "that Mosaic penology is fulfilled" (Art. 3 p.163)

Concerning Deut. 4 and the surrounding nations appraisal of Israel, brother Aasman writes,

the point is not that the nations would be impressed with Israel's political economy and want to take that over, but that they would be impressed with Israel's God and want to worship Him by joining the covenant people. (p. 163)

The word of God through Moses is far different.

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, . . . Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations who will hear about all these decrees and say, "surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (vv. 5-6)

The nearness of God in v. 7 was inseparably bound up with their following

God's righteous decrees and laws, the "body of laws" (v. 8).

Even a single reading through of the prophets of any century will show that they were God's prosecuting attorneys calling not only Israel but the surrounding nations to heed God's law. The prophet Amos is a perfect example. In fact, God made very clear to Israel that her possession of the promised land was not because of some kind of cheap grace on God's part. Faith without works is dead as James made so clear. Moses made it equally clear. Covenant grace (Deut. 7:7) was to be coupled with covenant obedience to covenant law (7:12, 8:11).

There was one reason only why God drove out the nations before Israel, and it would be the very same reason for Israel's later exile.

Like the nations the Lord destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the Lord your God (Deut. 8:20). No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you (Deut. 9:4b-5:).

Clearly, if the triune thrice holy God is not Lord over every area of our lives he is not Lord over any of it, and this means applying his standard of righteousness not our own.

In the legislation for covenant renewal God through Moses made known in no uncertain terms the reason for the ministry of Moses and the prophets (cf. Deut. 13:1-5, 18:14-22) and the revelation of his word, which we now have in the Protestant biblical canon.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. (Deut. 29:29)

Forever is forever and all the words are just that! The point is we are to follow God and his standard not our own.

God made clear that the king was to govern according to the law given through Moses (Deut. 17:18-20). The offices of priest and king were both ordained of God as separate and distinct and kings were strictly forbidden from performing priestly functions.

How do we know that these offices were both commanded and yet separate? From the law! Saul is a classic case

in point (1 Sam. 13:9f.) of a king who assumed the prerogative of the church. Nevertheless, he, his office, and the state or political economy, were to be governed equally by God's law just as much as was the church as we have seen. The New Testament position reiterates the political leaders ministerial role. (Rom. 13). That is, they are to serve him, they are his servants. No servant of the Lord can serve by his own standard. Church and State both are under the sovereign rule, that is, the kingdom of God includes both. Kingdom means sovereign rule.

To teach that God's Kingdom is synonymous with the church is to suggest that God does not rule in the other spheres of life. Not only so, but it is a truncated spirituality suggesting that Christ can be Lord in the private sphere of self, family, or church, but not in anything else. Yet, even at the point of the church such a position is inconsistent. For, if the law is to simply be internalized then how does brother Aasman justify externalizing it in church government and discipline? The bottom line is, a silent law is one that is not as uncomfortable especially as its demands increase in societal accountability.

Another puzzling point in brother Aasman's critique is his position on the fall of Jerusalem and redemptive historical fulfillment. The fall of Jerusalem signaled the end of the old covenant sacrificial system in fulfillment of Daniel 7:14, 9:27. This was the sine qua non of Jesus' once and for all finished work on the cross. Yet, brother Aasman writes "the fall of Jerusalem is no big deal" (Art. 3, p.164). For one who claims to believe in redemptive-historical fulfillment as the be all and end all of the whole law, the above assessment is quite astonishing. Perhaps the reason for such an assessment is that this event signified that portion of the law, the ceremonial, which finds its redemptive-historical fulfillment.

Brother Aasman is correct in understanding that the Reconstructionist hermeneutic involves a definite understanding of the attributes of God. One of these is the all-encompassing nature of God's sovereign rule. Another crucial attribute which was already briefly mentioned is God's unchangeableness or his immutability. Brother Aasman mentions that this is a point which Bahnsen makes, but without a reply. It is a very significant point. Does God change and his standard(s) with it? "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-

day and forever!" (Heb. 13:8) If it is one thing Jesus said in Matt. 5:17-20 it was that "He and the Father are one" (John 10:30; cf. John 8:28, 49) when it comes to the law word of the covenant, "and the Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn. 10:35).

If God is one (Dt. 6:4) then his word, will, and law are also. Writing about *The Christian Church and the Old Testament* A.A. van Ruler wrote the following:

The first question is whether the Old Testament is dealing with the same God as the New Testament, or to reverse the order-whether the New Testament is dealing with the same God as the Old Testament (p.15)

In this regard van Ruler refers to Calvin on Hebrews 1:1.

I am thinking of Calvin's emphasis in his commentary on Hebrews 1:1. He seeks the unity of the O.T. and N.T. very definitely in God, not Christ: "he sets before us one God . . . because God, who is always like himself, and whose word is unchanging, and whose truth is unshakable spoke in both together. (p. 15)

This is indeed a very fundamental question.

The Reconstructionist answers with Joshua the words he spoke at the time God renewed the covenant under his leadership. "But as for me and my household we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15) There was no mistaking what this meant for he had been told to follow all God's law in no uncertain terms.

Do no let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful (Joshua 1:8)

Entrance and continued occupance of the land was clearly contingent on the keeping of the whole of the law. Obedience or the lack therefore meant blessing or cursing, possession or exile. (cf. Dt. 28; Lev. 26).

Brother Aasman began his critique by stating the following.

Who of us would not call ourselves theologian in the sense that we are under the law of God in Jesus Christ . . . our ethics are based on God's law? (Art. 1. p.107)

As one comes to the end of brother Aasman's third and final critique, however, one thing become painfully clear. In his criticism of theonomy he has come up

with some "sense" in which Jesus Christ was teaching the application of a different set of ethics other than that which he and his Father and the Spirit had already given in the Older Testament. The reconstructionist says that God's law reflect his unchanging holy character so that his law and his own direction on its application cannot change anymore than he can change.

Neutrality is a myth. It is God's law or man's. None of us can wake up one morning and not need to be, or are going to be under someone's law. If it is not God's law then whose standard will it be?

Because God is Lord and Creator of all things, there is no sphere of life and thought outside his jurisdiction, government, and law. (Rushdoony. *Roots*, p.1113)

Affirming God's law in every area of life is a confession of the sovereign rule of the triune thrice holy God! How exactly are the "obedient citizens of the kingdom . . . redeemed and renewed in Christ" supposed to "cultivate the earth to the glory of their King" if the King's constitution is thrown out? (Art. 3 p. 163) If God's word is not the standard then what is?

In summary, reconstructionists apply the reformed hermeneutic called the "regulative principle" not only to the church and its government but to all of life. This means that we should only do that which God specifically commands and not simply avoid what he forbids. This principle we insist, must apply in the relation between the O.T. and N.T. as well as the law-word of the covenant in its entirety to all of life.

This is what it all boils down to. Neutrality in matters of law and government, whether for self, family church, or state, is a myth. If it is not God's law it will be man's law. Culture is a people's religious expression. Law means sovereign rule and authority. Will you advocate for government under God's law? Further, will you advocate and practice the government of God's law in every sphere or not? "To have none other gods, means to have no other law than God's law, and no activity or thought apart from His law-word." (Rushdoony *Institutes* Vol. 1 p.47) To God be the glory, now and forevermore, Amen!

Theonomy and Christian Renewal articles in Clarion* Vol. 43, Nos. 5,6,7. **C

Reply to Richard Brown

Re Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism

By R. Aasman

Since brother Richard Brown makes some serious critical remarks about an article of mine on Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism, I feel it is necessary to clarify certain points.

In brother Brown's opening remarks, he criticizes my introductory comments about reconstructionism: *the kingdom of Christ penetrates every section of life. This will happen as every aspect of life bows in obedience before the law of God.* He responds to this by saying, *the only way God's kingdom will come and his will done on earth as it is in heaven, is through the fervent and sincere proclamation of the gospel.* I neither used the expression God's kingdom will come in this context, nor denied that theonomists see the coming of the kingdom *through the fervent and sincere proclamation of the gospel.* As I have clarified in my article, I was speaking of the theonomic program for reconstructing every aspect of society. I had in mind especially a book by Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender*, where he writes among other things: *The kingdom is more than the institutional church. It is every nook and cranny of Satan's present and past reign. It is all of Satan's earthly strongholds. It is every sphere of life. The institutional church isn't co-extensive with every area of man's dominion assignment. It is, however, a training centre for dominion, for it is the source of God's ordained sacraments . . . Christians are responsible for exercising universal dominion, whereas the institutional church is responsible for preaching, the sacraments, and institutional discipline. . . .*¹ Here it is clear that the church is the training ground for the kingdom, while the kingdom in turn is to have dominion in every sphere of life.

I made clear in my article that theonomists do indeed teach the basic need for preaching the gospel and evangelization. I have no reason to believe that this is not seriously meant by theonomists. Having said this, however, I have two concerns. In the first place, theonomy places a great deal of emphasis on political and social action. Because of its legitimate concerns about the immorality of our society, it also places great emphasis on the government's role in changing this. As brother Brown himself makes clear, the government is to do this by the use of God's law. The danger is, and this was the point in my article, that too much focus and hope can be placed in the government to quell the lawlessness of men, including false worship. The government can be regarded as the instrument to dominate non-Christians by political and economic means. Meanwhile, the emphasis on the preaching of the gospel and evangelization can recede into the background. This concern is articulated by Dr. Vern Poythress, a man who has much appreciation for some of the teachings and efforts of theonomists: *All the leading theonomists stress that this triumph comes not through the force of arms, or even primarily through strident social and political action, but through the power of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people. . . . But many theonomists appear to be far too impatient about the intervening time before the millennium. Theonomists too often do not invest enough energy in promoting evangelism and church vitality through love.*²

In the second place, too great a distinction between church and kingdom as we find it in Gary North and which brother Brown seems to follow, has the tendency to minimize the importance

of church which preaches the gospel and overemphasize the significance of kingdom work where Christians are involved in politics, education, etc. I find that some of my older colleagues who have seen this tendency to distinguish church and kingdom in the Netherlands and again in this country are particularly concerned about this same tendency in theonomy. As I did in my article, I refer to Mt. 28:18-20 where Jesus Christ as King and Lord makes clear the coming of the kingdom is through the preaching of the gospel. This should not quickly turn into a discussion about the implications for social and political action, but remain first and foremost an emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel wherever citizens of the kingdom gather together. When we, in accordance with Mt. 28, place the emphasis on the preaching of the gospel to the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, then there will also be a proper focus on how the citizens of the kingdom are to apply God's Word and law to their everyday lives. Again I would suggest reading the article of Dr. J. Faber in *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* for clarification of relation between church and kingdom.

I agree with brother Brown that dividing the OT laws into moral, civil and ceremonial laws is somewhat artificial. It is striking that he refers to Calvin and the view of the sabbath command as ceremonial law. Can it not be said about the ten words as a whole that it has a ceremonial aspect to it, insofar as it foreshadows and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ? I think in particular of the opening words where the Lord speaks of delivering His people from the bondage in Egypt. This redemption from Egypt foreshadows the redemption from sin through the blood of Christ. In connection with this, I

quote from Dr. Poythress: *Thus it seems wisest to me not to draw a sharp distinction between ceremonial and moral law, but to study all of the law most carefully in the endeavour to appreciate its depth, the richness of its connections, and the unity of its purposes in foreshadowing Christ.*³ In my exegesis of Mt. 5:17-20, with which brother Brown does not interact, I showed how the whole OT points to Christ, is fulfilled in him, and cannot be read or understood apart from its fulfilment in him. Thus the entire OT must be read Christologically, and when this is done, then the testimonies of the law and prophets as article 25 of our Belgic Confession states are applicable to our lives today.

Brother Brown's reaction to my comments regarding the externalizing/internalizing of the law puzzles me. He reads something into these words that I did not say or intend to say. My only point was to show that a criticism of theonomy does not and should not lead to antinomianism. This was also Christ's concern in Mt. 5 where he anticipated the charge of antinomianism, as if he might be charged with presenting a different law than Moses. Christ pointed out that the Pharisees demonstrated externality and legalism in their use of God's law. Christ went on to show that it is not enough to refrain from murder and adultery in an external sense, but from the heart a Christian may not even have feelings of hatred and lust. To embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour is to love his law, not superficially or externally, but from the heart.

When brother Brown quotes from my reference to the civil government, *we will not simply hand the ten words of the covenant to them*, he goes on to say, *what word will you hand them?* This is a blatant misrepresentation of what I said. This quote comes from a paragraph where I refer to Belgic Confession article 36, John Calvin, Rom. 13 and 1 Tim. 2. I go on to point out that the state is to preserve true religion and create conditions in which the church can flourish; moreover the state is to use the substance and truth of the Mosaic law for today. The question is not what word will you hand the government, but how you will do it! I realize that this is a complicated point, with diverse opinions even among reformed people, and I am certainly willing to be

taught on this matter. My concern, however, is on the line drawn by theonomists from the state of OT Israel to the state today, and that the same laws for OT Israel apply to the state today. I would ask: is it the task of the government today to enforce the first, second, third and fourth words of the covenant, to enforce on society the worship of the one true God, and to give appropriate punishments when this is transgressed? I do not believe so – these are laws for God's covenant people, regulated by the keys of the kingdom entrusted to the church. This is not to say that we should not encourage the government to see the wisdom of respecting the Name of God or in giving society a day of rest, and drawing up laws accordingly, but it is another thing to say the civil government must use and enforce the ten words as Israel did in the OT. I believe that the danger here is in having the state do what the church should be doing. At the same time, I appreciate brother Brown's point that the state has its authority from God, is answerable to God, and should use God's law. Our difference is not "what standards" but how they are to be applied by the state today.

Closely connected to this is the discussion surrounding Dt. 4. I appreciate brother Brown's point that God drove out the nations before Israel because of their wickedness. But this does not change my exegesis of Dt. 4, where the point is not that surrounding nations are impressed by the law as something for them, but they are impressed by Israel's God whose holiness and mercy is reflected in the law, and that by worshipping Him the nations too may enjoy a fellowship with God that embraces the law. When I compare this to Gen. 12:3 where the Lord said to Abram, *by you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*, as well as Mic. 4:1,2, then it is clear that the blessing for the nations surrounding Israel is to hear the gospel of salvation. In other words, surrounding nations do not take the law without first believing in the Lord. That law only can be taken over when there is faith in the Lord.

When brother Brown speaks about the hermeneutical principles of theonomy, and later on about the unchangeableness of God, I find it a real pity that he does not interact with the exegesis of Mt. 5. I dealt extensively with the con-

tinuity between the OT and NT which theonomists rightly emphasize, but also the discontinuity insofar as the OT finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. The latter is not so much emphasized among theonomists, and I think it is a real weak point. Brother Brown quotes Rushdoony, but he does not refer to my quote of Greg Bahnsen who is the focus of my article, who states his basic methodology in this way: *we presume our obligation to obey any Old Testament commandment unless the New Testament indicates otherwise. We must assume continuity with the Old Testament rather than discontinuity.*⁴ What I miss here in this basic methodology is any reference to Jesus Christ and what significance he has in the relationship of the OT and NT. Brother Brown refers to Hebrews. Note that the opening of Hebrew states: *In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets: but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.* By not emphasizing this point, theonomists can overlook that our faithful and immutable God designed the OT to be fulfilled and realized in Jesus Christ and so also the OT is to be read and understood Christologically. Therefore the hermeneutical principles to which brother Brown refers are simplistic and wrong by placing the burden of proof on others to show a scripture passage which specifically changes an OT law. The matter is more complex than that. Dr. Poythress also points out in his discussion on these matters, that such a hermeneutic will invariably lead to problems, because there are OT laws and punishments which theonomists know are not to be kept today, but there is no Scriptural passage which explicitly rescinds or modifies them. He thinks in this connection of a passage such as Lev. 19:19.⁵

As for my critique on the fall of Jerusalem, brother Brown finds this puzzling. I think that the discerning reader will understand what I mean and not read all kinds of things into it. My concern is the postmillennial overemphasis of the fall of Jerusalem as the fulfilment of Mt. 24, 2 Thess. 2, and parts of Revelation. Of course the fall of Jerusalem has relevance, but how much emphasis does Scripture place on it? I see Mt. 24, for instance, as having an initial fulfilment in the fall of Jerusalem, but also in all of history, leading up to the final day of Christ's return.

In his concluding remarks, brother Brown writes about me: *In his criticism of theonomy he has come up with some "sense" in which Jesus Christ was teaching the application of a different set of ethics other than that which he and his Father and the Spirit had already given in the Older Testament.* He then goes on to say that *neutrality is a myth.* The implication is that I suggest that Jesus Christ is teaching a different ethic, and the inference may be drawn that this leads to the idea that Christians may be neutral in different aspects of life. This is a pitiful misrepresentation of what I wrote. Again I point to brother Brown's failure to interact with the exegesis of Mt. 5. I showed that Jesus Christ did not abrogate the law and prophets, but he came to fulfil, and so he is also concerned with the minute details of law and he showed the law in glorious depth. Therefore today we read the OT Christologically and we use the law and the prophets for all areas of our lives. Neutrality is indeed a myth. See also the concluding remarks to my article where I make this clear.

If brother Brown wants to criticize my hermeneutics or exegesis or under-

standing of theonomy, that is fine. But to make a caricature of what I wrote and then tear the caricature down is improper. I am afraid that such a dealing with "opponents" of theonomy has become typical of some theonomists.⁶ Theonomists are very sincere about their teachings and their efforts to reconstruct society, and so they become intolerant of any who dare to make critical remarks. If I in any way have been unfair or misrepresentative of the theonomic viewpoint, I apologize for that. Meanwhile, we should be able to talk about these things in an open and brotherly manner. We should also appreciate that although we have differences in hermeneutical principles and eschatology, still we have the same love for God's law and its application to everyday life. I would also like to add that if theonomists placed more emphasis on the OT fulfilment in Jesus Christ and the redemptive-historical character of the Scriptures, that would clear up many of the concerns that there are about theonomy.

¹Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), p. 233.



CALLED to West Albany,
Australia

Rev. R. Aasman
of Edmonton, AB

CALLED to Rockingham,
Australia

Rev. A. van Delden
of Bedforddale, Australia

²Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, 1991), p. 360.

³Poythress, *Shadow*, p. 103.

⁴Greg L. Bahnsen. *By This Standard* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), p. 3.

⁵Poythress, *Shadow*, p. 318.

⁶Poythress, *Shadow*, p. 359f.



The Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund

At this time, we wish to remind the reader once again of the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund. This Fund was established at the time of the retirement of Dr. Jelle Faber as Professor of Dogmatology at the Theological College.

The Fund is administered by the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Committee consisting of a member of the Faculty of the Theological College, the Treasurer of the Finance and Property Committee of the College, and a representative of the Faber family. The Bursary Committee is accountable to the Finance and Property Committee of the Theological College.

The intent of the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund is to provide some financial assistance to students at the Theological College. Reasons for applying for assistance may include expenses due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., travel expenses incurred due to illness of a family member) as well as other needs (e.g., to assist in the purchase of books.)

Allotment of the annual disbursement of funds is limited to eighty percent of the interest earned on the capital. The remaining twenty percent of the interest is added to the principal amount in order to allow for an inflation factor as well as ensuring a modest increase of the capital.

We thankfully report that the Faber-Holwerda Fund has received several donations since its inception, and currently stands at a principal capital of \$36,000.00 We are pleased that by means of this Fund some limited financial assistance can be provided to students with special needs.

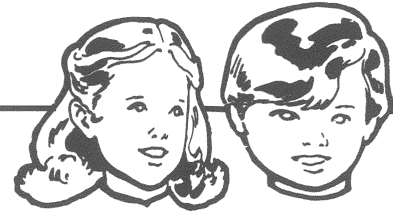
Now that the time of annual income tax preparation is upon us once again, we encourage YOU to make a tax-receiptable donation to the Faber-Holwerda Fund.

Donations or requests for additional information may be forwarded to:

Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches
c/o Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund
110 West 27th Street,
Hamilton, Ontario
L9C 5A1

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers,

I was very happy to get lots of letters from you asking if you could join the Busy Beaver Club. Let me tell you a few things about the Club. First of all, you don't have to do anything to join, except ask! If you want to, of course you may send in a puzzle, poem, or story.

I would also like to know your birthday and how old you are, so I can put you on our Birthday List!

And, your address so I can send you a membership card, and maybe sometime if you win a contest, your prize.

If you would like to send in a picture for the Clarion, make sure that it is in pencil or pencil crayon in bright colours.

Do you like doing puzzles? Super! What about making them? Maybe you can think up a new kind of puzzle to share with the other Busy Beavers.

Some Busy Beavers ask to have their address in Clarion so that other Busy Beavers can write to them.

And of course, I, Aunt Betty, would love to get letters from you every once in a while, telling me what's happening in your family and how school's going, and whatever else you want to share.

Quiz Time!

Most of all, the idea is for you to have fun being a member of this Club.

GOD CALLED

When God calls people, they are usually at work. Match each person with what he was doing when God called him.

1. Samuel, 1 Samuel 3:10.
2. David, 1 Samuel 16:11-13
3. Paul, Acts 9:2-6
4. Amos, Amos 7: 14-15
5. King Saul, 1 Samuel 9:17-20.
6. Matthew, Matthew 9:9
7. James and John, Matthew 4:21
8. Nehemiah, Nehemiah 1:1, 2:1
9. Peter and Andrew, Matthew 4:18
10. Elisha, 1 Kings 19:19

- a. Mending nets
- b. Serving the king
- c. Searching for lost animals
- d. Caring for sheep
- e. Herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit
- f. Journeying to persecute Christians
- g. Plowing with oxen
- h. Collecting taxes
- i. Being a priest's helper
- j. Fishing

NUMBER CODE

by Busy Beaver *Jacqueline Post*

A - 1	F - 6	K - 11	P - 16	U - 21
B - 2	G - 7	L - 12	Q - 17	V - 22
C - 3	H - 8	M - 13	R - 18	W - 23
D - 4	I - 9	N - 14	S - 19	X - 24
E - 5	J - 10	O - 15	T - 20	Y - 25
				Z - 26

12 15 22 5 20 8 5 12 15 18 4

25 15 21 18 7 15 4 23 9 20 8

1 12 12 25 15 21 18 8 5 1 18 20

19 15 21 12 1 14 4 13 9 14 4!

And now for your challenge! Try this word search. It's a little tougher than the regular ones! Have Fun!

POEM

by Busy Beaver *Danielle deJong*

Dogs are small and big,
The only wrong thing they do is dig,
They are curly and hairy
Some are big and scary,
Those are the dogs I love.

JOKES AND RIDDLES

by Busy Beaver *Melissa DeBoersap*

Knock, Knock
Who's there?
Boo.
Boo Who?
Don't cry, it's only a joke!

Three men were in a boat.
The boat tipped over.
None of them got wet
Why?

(They were on dry land.)

RECTANGLE WORD SEARCH

by Busy Beaver *Tim Sikkema*

This kind of word search is just like any other one except that the words from a rectangle. "Pencil" could be written in these ways:

PEN LIC PL NC
 LIC, PEN, EI or EI
 NC, PL.

Try to find all the words listed below in the word search.

A B C D T P U Z E F G M I U H I
 J K L M U E L Z N O P E T R O R
 S T U G N A V W C I H T S F T O
 X W A A E Y Z Z K R G I L E S Y
 Y D R M T R A U S B X W G A E C
 V O O U I S T N E L E C T T T O
 L C T E R A L C L A C I R S E N
 U B S I S C E N A L C E R F R C
 Q P P M C O A I R P A K O A E N
 B I L A H O M L O K R F O R M R
 D R E W K K J I C E E T S E I O
 H F L O G G C E T R T S F E R R
 A V N O B N L E R O A E D C O Y
 E E Y D O I O Y D A B L I U B S
 B R T O H H T R I B E D I N G A
 N E D O G E O A C E M A M N L O
 T H K P J R R N T N E N Q U Q I
 R D R P U S B O I G H E N I Z S
 I A G P F R K O R L A M A G A T
 B Y F U Y S E L S A N I V D W C
 X B Y A B U R E E P A N C Z G T
 S V E G E T A N C S E K A F H U
 R S E L B A E I A E V Q D J W P
 C K L I X O P I N O B L Y N A M
 Z J T T W D R E N I M M U H P Q
 C V K I X E O R G B I R D S B U
 L H Y F N S A T M G Z G D P C N

Road	Pancakes	Cake	Tree
Canoes	Birthday	School	Cement
Then	Dictionary	Concrete	Made
Tables	Mirror	Busy	Castle
Airplane	Beaver	Building	Bricks
Club	Street	Doctor	Little
Hawk	Park	Magazine	Boys
Eagles	Quiz	Lamp	Draw
Time	Forest	Clothing	Puzzle
Bird	Supper	Farmer	Dinner
Flower	Magnet	Loon	Toys
Girl	Chalkboard	Book	Lights
Nobody	Hotdog	Animal	Peanut
Artist	Electrical	Uncles	Nature
Asleep	Name	Sister	Houses
Brothers	Hummingbirds	Coke	Vegetables
Aunt	Fruits		

PICTURE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Miranda Barendregt*

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
☺	☺	X	+	-	=	*	W	Δ	□	○	△	▣
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
☺	○	☺	☺	7	6	10	6	☺	☺	☺	/	1

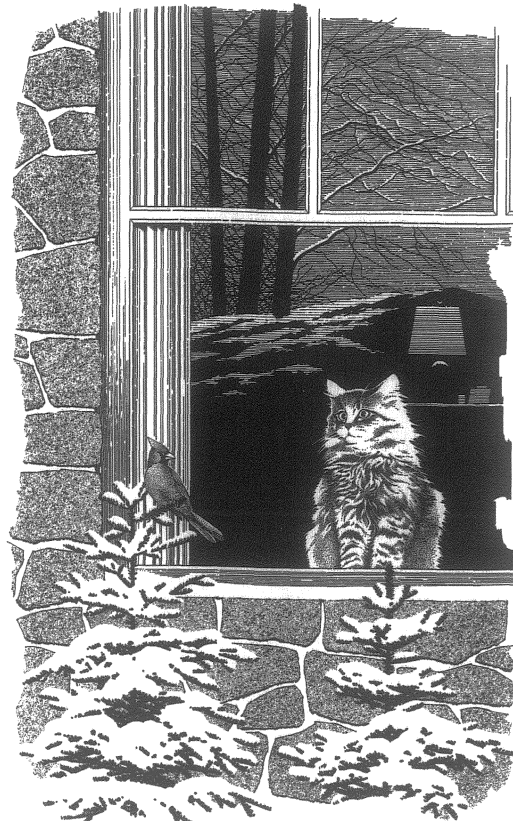
☺ 7 ☺ Δ 6 - 10 W - Δ 0 7 +

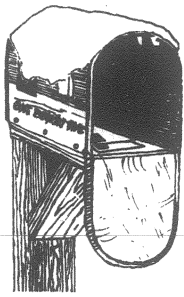
☺ Δ 10 W ☺ Δ Δ 7 0 6 7 W - ☺ 7 10

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

We wish all these Busy Beavers a wonderful day celebrating with their families and friends. May the LORD bless you in the year ahead.

Kristi Viher	1	Lisa Burger	16
Harold Sikkema	7	David DeBoer	16
Russell Werkman	7	Aileen Feenstra	20
Tarissa Koopmans	7	Hilmer Jagersma	23
Jolena DeHaas	8	Justin Broekema	24
Heather Grit	9	Charlene Veldman	27
Sarah Hovius	9	Alice VanBostelen	28
Brian Janzen	11	Daniel DeGelder	29
Sarah Bouwman	12	Tamara Dejong	29
Jolene Lootens	13	Miranda Hulst	29
Alana Bergsma	13	Nathaniel DeBoer	29





From the Mailbox

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Art Smit!* We're glad to have you join us. I hope you enjoy doing the activities and puzzles, (maybe with your friend Harold Sikkema!). Bye, Art.

Welcome to you, too, *Luanne Feenstra.* What kinds of colours are the flowers your Mom and Dad grow? Do you have to help out in the greenhouses

some times? And when is your birthday, Luanne? Bye.

Of course you can be a Busy Beaver, *Lydia Kingma.* Welcome to the Club. It's a good thing you like making puzzles and mazes. I hope to see some of them soon. Bye, Lydia.

Welcome to the Club, too, *Eritia Smit.* How many times has your rabbit had babies, Eritia? Sounds like you have good success with them! I liked your horse picture on your letter. Bye.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Heidi Kingma.* I guess you like being close enough to school to be able to go home for lunch every day! What kinds of crafts did you do with your friend on Thanksgiving? Maybe you would like to share your idea with the other Busy Beavers? Bye, Heidi.

A big welcome to you , too, *Pauline TenBrinke.* I hope you enjoy the activities and puzzles. Hope to hear from you soon, Pauline. Bye.

Hi, *Deborah van Beek.* Yes, this time there were lots of letters to answer; you were right when you said that I would be busy with all the letters! I am sorry, though, Deborah, but I couldn't figure out how your puzzle worked. Maybe you could send another. Bye, Deborah.

Hello, *Jacqueline Post.* Good to hear from you again. Which subjects do you most enjoy in school? Are you looking forward to winter? Thanks for sending in the puzzle! Bye, Jacqueline.

Hi, *Yvonne Bysterveld.* How are you doing? How's your family? Thanks for the puzzles! Bye, Yvonne.

Hello, *Francine Breukelman.* I'm glad to hear that you are penpals with Virginia. Your neighbour sure has a different pet! I'm not sure I would like to meet it! Bye, Francine.

Hi, *Dorothy Gunnink.* I guess you are looking forward to having cold weather. If you are planning to skate on your birthday, then it will have to be quite cold! How's the kitten doing? Hope to hear from you again, Dorothy. Bye.

Hello, *Danielle deJong.* I think you had a fun summer playing. Do you live in the country or the city? It's good to hear that you are having fun at school with your friends. Who's your teacher? Thanks for sending in the poem. Bye, Danielle.

Love to you all,
Aunt Betty

Aunt Betty
c/o The Busy Beaver Club
Premier Printing Ltd.
One Beghin Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5



C

With joy and thankfulness to the Lord, who has answered our prayers and those of our family and friends, we wish to announce the birth of our son whom we have named

DARRYL GERRY

Born November 1, 1994

Herman and Joanne Jans
(nee Oostdyk)

9th grandchild for both:

Gerry and Jannie Jans

Bill and Liz Oostdyk

2081 Leighland Road
Burlington, ON L7R 3S9

Thy hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments.

Psalm 119:73

Thanking the Lord for making everything well and for blessing our marriage so richly, we wish to announce the birth of our first child, a daughter. We named her:

CHRISTINA ELIZABETH

She was born on October 8, 1994

Proud parents

Gord and Gelinda
Vanwoudenberg
(nee Stieva)

3926 Fletcher Avenue
Vineland, ON L0R 2C0

*Make me to know Thy ways, O LORD
Teach me Thy paths.*

*Lead me in Thy truth and teach me,
For Thou art the God of my salvation*

Psalm 25:4-5a

With great joy in our hearts and thankfulness to our heavenly Father we announce the birth of our second daughter

RACHEL DIANNE

Born October 24, 1994

A sister for Michelle

Doug and Marg DeBoer
(nee Meerveld)

13630 Dufferin Street, RR 2
King City, ON L0G 1K0