

I Correspondence

The Christian Institute and the Church Calendar

From Michael Marzan-Esher:

Thank you for putting “DV” correctly in place on page 12 of the last *BRJ*. Julian Kennedy’s exposé of Common Grace (CG) and the Christian Institute (CI) will be unpopular, as indeed will be the *BRJ* itself, amongst most Christians who are not “wet blankets” as myself! In the past, I have been to CI local meetings and listened to their annual lectures, but no longer. They never responded. They reject the KJV, use a piano and CG often comes up in their meetings.

I wrote to a similar Christian organization, Christian Legal Concern, asking not to receive any e-mails and literature, but I still got their “christmas” begging material. I wrote a badly written letter, which will not be answered, just giving the following quote found in puritanboard.com by J. V. Fesko, I think.

The Church Calendar repeats the same endless cycle. Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Ascension, Pentecost only to start over again with Advent. The biblical view, on the other hand, recognizes that the events of Christ’s ministry are in the past and that we are moving forward to a goal—the consummation of history, the return of Christ, the final judgment and eternity with our triune Lord. A cyclical view of history is at odds with the biblical view which is linear.¹

My pet hates, *inter alia*, are calling the first day of the week “Sunday” and the church calendar with which most Christians will have no problem. If it is possible, please will you be able to deal with this in the *BRJ* in a future issue?

Editor Response:

I am glad you benefit from the *BRJ*. I admit, I am not very familiar with the Christian Institute or Christian Legal Concern. Of course, if their business is

¹ While I did indeed find a link to an article by Dr. Fesko on this subject on puritanboard.com, the link was no longer working and I was unable to track down the article. If anyone knows where this can still be accessed online, let me know—Ed.

providing legal aid to Christians, I'm not so concerned about the exact theology they espouse (that is, unless they start also publishing pamphlets promoting their theology, as the Christian Institute has done). One does not always need good theology to provide effective legal aid (though good theology helps in every area to some extent), as even unbelievers can also be useful attorneys. We can appreciate, I think, much of the work these organizations do without necessarily approving all their theology.

That is an interesting quote from Fesko and I will try to find the source, but I cannot promise that we will address this in a future *BRJ* issue, as I think we have a lot more pressing topics to cover currently. I wonder how the author would address the cyclical nature of our seven-day week. It may interest you to know that, to this day, the Irish (Gaelic) names for the days of the week are Christianized to some extent. The first day of the week is “Dé Domhnach” (lit. Day of the Lord). Other days refer to various weekly fasts (a reminder of the monastic life which was once prevalent): “Dé Céadaoin” (Day of the First Fast), “Déardaoin” (Day Between Fast), “Dé hAoine” (Day of the [main] Fast). The rest, however, retain the influence of (heathen) Roman culture, referring to the false gods of Luna or the moon (“Dé Luain”), Mars (“Dé Máirt”) and Saturn (“Dé Sathairn”).

However, I do not think that anyone today or even at the time would have considered the use of these names to be affording any kind of honour or acknowledgement to these idols, as if invoking their names in a devotional sense. Few people are even really aware of their origins, much less imagine that any kind of homage is paid to these idols by using these names. We could make similar observations about the common names of various celestial objects and I would see no need to bind anyone's conscience about such matters.

Remembering Thirty Years of the *BRJ*

From Hugh L. Williams (former BRJ editor):

It is good to see you are maintaining a high standard of production of the *BRJ*. I look forward to receiving each copy. If I have one criticism it is this, it only comes twice a year.

A few matters I would appraise you of:

1) The BRJ was 30 years old in January of 2023. The first issue in 1993 carried on its cover a photograph of Prof. Hanko and Prof. Engelsma.

2) At that time in 1993 three other new journals were competing for readers, as follows:

(i) *Calvinism Today* (which later changed its name to *Christianity and Culture*): This was a hefty intellectual production of the Kuiper Foundation, initially quarterly in A4 size. The Kuiper Foundation was set up by one Stephen Perks as a British organization with roughly the same aims as the Rushdoony-orientated preterist postmillennial organization in the USA, and it had some peculiar emphases regarding the nature of the church and the necessity of Christians being active politically to change human society legislatively. Much of its emphasis was commendable but it had some distinct, and in my opinion, peculiar views embodied in the whole package. This all got a grip in the BRF in the years 1998 to 2002, and caused a serious upset and rift in the whole BRF, which involved my resignation as editor and the appointment of Allen Baird, who was sympathetic, at least, to the Kuiper Foundation emphasis.

Today, the people enamoured by the Kuiper Foundation are no longer with the BRF. In 2002, they were active in the dismantling of the Ballymena Covenant Reformed Church, from which Rev. Angus Stewart has, by God's grace, been enabled, with a few of the old stalwarts, effectively to rebuild the congregation again. The upheaval in the BRF brought about a radical change in the orientation and standard of the BRJ, and a serious 60 percent cut in its subscription base, which latter, I believe, has not been regained. As to the Kuiper Foundation and its journal, you can see it still exists via its website but it seems to me that it has lapsed into something of a low profile. I believe for the moment it is "asleep" and its journal is no longer published, nor do they organize any conferences.

(ii) James Begg Society and its journal: Set up by Scottish Calvinists in about 1994, they worked among the faithful of the Free Kirk of Scotland, and were active propagating and advocating a radical overhaul of the goings-on in the Free Kirk. This resulted in the schism of about 1999, when the Free Church (Continuing) denomination was set up. Having run a well-produced magazine for some years and republished some worthy old Scots theological tomes, the

organization and its magazine now seems to have disappeared all together. I suppose its *raison d'être* was rendered somewhat unnecessary due to the new denomination and its monthly denominational magazine.

(iii) Christian Research Society and its journal: Set up at about the same time as the BRF, it operated out of somewhere in eastern England. The journal carried critical analyses of the multi-variant trends in modern evangelicalism in Britain but after about 5 years or so it all disappeared, after publishing some useful material.

3) You will see that by God's grace the *BRJ* has still survived despite wholesale criticism from mainstream evangelicalism in the British Isles. It seems to me that it has the potential for regaining the ground it lost in the crisis period of 1998-2002. If I may make the following suggestions:

First, the marketing and subscription side of the *BRJ* needs a special boost, perhaps by organizing it under its own marketing committee which would also shoulder the burden of advertising and mailing. Overseas and the mission fields of Asia were opening up to it back in 1998, much of which was lost during the disruption of 1998-2002. I remember posting a parcel of about a dozen to twenty to just one of our subscribers in Singapore. Another lot went out to Australia and more to India.

Second, a return to "quarterly" status. This would obviously double your work as editor, which is another reason why I suggest that all other concerns (of the marketing, etc.) be shouldered by a team set up to serve this need.

4) Finally, I presume that you have been appraised of the fact that all my copies of the *BRJ* from No. 1 to No. 8 (when the late Tony Horne was editor) and thereon from No. 9 to the last one I produced in 2001 are now in the hands of David Hutchings, who I understand is digitizing all of them plus some further issues. My copies in David's hands are all in practically mint condition, and ought eventually to be bound and deposited with you as editor. Together with them is an index to Subjects and an index to Contributors, researched and printed by Tony Horne just a few years before he passed on.

My thanks to you for your faithful and laborious work as Editor.

Editor Response:

Thank you for sharing this piece of *BRJ* history and for an overview of contemporary Christian journals in the British Isles for our current readership. Knowing this history is helpful: “I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands” (Ps. 143:5). The simple purpose of the *BRJ* to promote the knowledge of the Reformed faith is still as relevant and worthwhile as when it began, and we may be thankful it continues to serve this purpose.

As for improvements in marketing or subscriptions, I am very happy to continue to leave that to the genius and labour of others. My small contribution in this area has been to start an editor’s blog and share content on social media (britishreformed.org/blog). Any willing volunteers and people with concrete ideas are welcome to contact the BRF Council. My thanks to you and David Hutchings (along with our webmaster and other helpers) for your contributions in ensuring past issues of the *BRJ* are available in good quality on-line (britishreformed.org/journal/issues).

Whether we can achieve a return to “quarterly” status depends on various factors. First, there are various competing demands on my time and energy. Sitting in front of a computer solving complicated software problems all day is not very conducive to having the mental energy for sitting in front of a computer in the evening reading, writing, editing and proof-reading complicated theological articles, assuming my wife and children do not also need my time in the evenings. If I were just writing the editorials, maybe we could manage “quarterly” publications but, as previously mentioned, we need more writers (ideally from the British Isles) who will produce articles of suitable quality on appropriate topics for our readers. I have a long list of articles that I would like to write myself (if I find the time and energy) but I would be even happier to see someone else write competently on these subjects. I would appreciate your prayers for me (that I would have more time, energy, faithfulness, discipline and zeal) and for this work generally.

Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great,
but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the
harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest
(Luke 10:2).