

Me." Surely we would not expect a legal code to be given. Rather we look for "authoritative instruction" coming from the mouth of Messiah. Indeed, it is this Messianic *tôrâ* that is in view when Matthew comments on the response to Christ's Sermon on the Mount: "the multitudes were amazed at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (7:28, 29; cf. John 7:46).

Conclusion

We have seen that the etymology of *tôrâ* points to the idea of "direction, instruction". In covenantal, wisdom and prophetic contexts, there can hardly be question that the emphasis of *tôrâ* is pedagogical; hence "instruction" seems to be the best translation. Even in priestly and juridical contexts, where "rule, regulation" might be used to express *tôrâ* in certain situations, we found that education was central to those concerns. Geerhardus Vos speaks of the relation of gospel and law in such passages by saying that gospel "is found *in the law itself*". That which we call 'the legal system' is shot through with strands of gospel and grace. Especially the ritual law is rich in them. Every sacrifice and every lustration proclaimed the principle of grace.⁶⁰ We cannot avoid the conclusion that *tôrâ* is primarily and essentially authoritative "instruction, teaching" whether given orally or transmitted in writing.⁶¹ We further conclude that even when framed in what might be called legal terminology, Christ's own summary of the whole law removes the idea of the law as a rigid, legalistic restriction of human and social relations. Rather, we are encouraged to apply these two basic requirements as a hermeneutic for anthropological relations precisely because they focus on, and are an expression of, our theology, i.e., who God is and what relation we sustain with Him as His covenant people. To reduce *tôrâ* to an abstract code of law is to strip the covenant of its theological and personal meaning. To divorce *tôrâ* from its theological revelation is to denude God of his sovereign mercy and forgiveness and to emasculate the gospel of its genuine offer of grace and pardon.

NOTES

⁶¹ During eleven years in the pastorate and sixteen years of teaching biblical studies in college, I have asked parishioners and students alike what idea comes to mind when they hear about "law" in the Bible. Invariably the answer is something like "legislation, regulations." This is true on a popular level. It may be attributed to a continuing influence of the older dispensationalism. It is gratifying to see a changing attitude among recent moderate dispensationalists (see Kenneth L. Barker, "False Dichotomies Between the Testaments." *JETS* 25/1 [1982], 3-16, where he quotes favorably an editorial observation: "The old heresy that the OT is a book of law as opposed to the NT which is a book of grace dies hard." Barker adds, "It dies hard in spite of the fact that numerous writers have demonstrated the abundant presence of grace in the OT," (p.6). In Reformed circles, the issue of "theonomy" has tended toward a legalistic application of "law" (at least civil law) if not a rigid definition of "law".