



***The  
Bavinck  
Review***

VOLUME 1 ✕ 2010

# *The Bavinck Review*

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# The Bavinck Review

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# Editorial

## Introducing *The Bavinck Review*

By John Bolt

*Calvin Theological Seminary*

The coming into being of this online journal, *The Bavinck Review* (TBR), is the result of a providential confluence of events beyond Herman Bavinck's wildest dreams. For starters, take the computer and the internet. Add to these the facts that he wrote his *Reformed Dogmatics* from within the church and for the church with the hope that it would "stimulate further study"<sup>1</sup> and that his modesty would have prevented him from thinking that after a half-century of dormancy, a pioneering group of Bavinck scholars—Heideman, Bremmer, Veenhof—would help bring about a renaissance of Bavinck studies in his own country that has yet to cease, and the present resurgence of interest in Bavinck's theology becomes amazing. He might have hoped for it, but he never would have expected it. Like Calvin (see Bavinck's own reflection on Calvin's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday in this issue), he surely would not have sought it for himself.

Yet, what would have amazed Bavinck above all else is that, a full century after he published the first edition, a small multi-denominational group of Reformed pastors, laymen, and theologians in Grand Rapids, Michigan, would form a translation society for the sole purpose (initially) of translating his *Reformed Dogmatics* into the English language. Had he envisioned something so unbelievable he surely would have dismissed it as a quixotic attempt, perhaps by some hopelessly nostalgic minority theologians of Dutch immigrant

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Bavinck, trans. John Bolt, "Herman Bavinck, Foreword to the First Edition (Volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," *CTJ* 45 (2010): 10.

descent. That the translation would be enthusiastically embraced by a leading evangelical publisher and that it would be broadly received with similar enthusiasm and (perhaps?) sell more copies in a decade than his first edition, would have invited downright disbelief. After all, it was Bavinck who said with prophetic confidence at the conclusion of his survey of Reformed dogmatics: “There is clearly no rosy future awaiting Calvinism in America.”<sup>2</sup> And yet, here we are, in America, inaugurating a journal published in the English language by an Institute named after him and devoted to scholarship in “the theology of Herman Bavinck and the Bavinck tradition.” Bavinck’s gloomy evaluation of the future of American Calvinism, therefore, is one of the rare places where Bavinck is just plain wrong.

There are a number of people and entities that deserve public thanks for helping make *TBR*—and the larger Bavinck renaissance—a reality. The Dutch Reformed Translation Society provided the impetus and funding for translating the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. Richard Baker and the Baker Publishing Group took the project on in faith and provided the superb professional editorial labor to turn out a first-class final product. My colleagues in the administration and faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary approved the establishment of the *Bavinck Institute at Calvin Seminary* and provided financial assistance from the CTS Faculty Heritage Fund for the 2008 “Pearl and Leaven” conference and for the translation and publication of the forthcoming *J.H. Bavinck Reader*. Then, there are also the seventy plus individuals who have become members of the Bavinck Society since its birth in December 2009. *TBR* and the world of Reformed theology thank you all.

The work of the scholars who participated at the Pearl and Leaven Conference in September 2008 is now available to the larger public thanks to the April 2010 issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal*, which contains most of the papers presented there. This inaugural issue of *TBR* contains two additional presentations from the conference (see the articles by Bratt and Van Kuelen).

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<sup>2</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 204.

*TBR*'s electronic format is well suited for these two essays since the images, so easily reproduced electronically, played an integral part of the conference presentations. Bavinck's reflection on John Calvin's 400<sup>th</sup> birthday has also been enhanced with visuals.

The format of this inaugural issue is the basic template that will be used for future issues: Scholarly articles; an original translation of a Bavinck essay; a nugget of "Bavinckiana" under the rubric "Pearls and Leaven"; a bibliography of recent publications on Herman Bavinck, his missiologist nephew, J. H. Bavinck, and possibly others in the Bavinck tradition; and book reviews. It is our goal to make the bibliography definitive, and this will require the input and cooperation of our readers. Items for inclusion should be e-mailed to the editor at [bavinst@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:bavinst@calvinseminary.edu) with "bibliography" in the subject line.

# The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures: Culture and Politics in 1908

James D. Bratt

Dept. of History, Calvin College

This essay explores the historical context in which Herman Bavinck delivered his Stone Lectures at Princeton in 1908.<sup>1</sup> It takes off from a leading motif in the analysis that George Harinck made of Bavinck's *first* trip to North America in 1892. That tour, Harinck found, was the start of Bavinck's move "van buiten naar binnen," from without to within,<sup>2</sup> a move that would become increasingly characteristic of Bavinck's approach to biblical hermeneutics, to theological reflection, and to the cultural commentary which he built out of both. *The Philosophy of Revelation* lectures, delivered on his second trip sixteen years later, registers the maturation of that approach and documents its time in that "from without to within" was the trademark of a revolution in elite culture that was underway across the North Atlantic world in the first decade of the twentieth century. This essay, therefore, aims to sound the resonances between that cultural movement and the Bavinck of the Stone Lectures—the resonances and the discord between the personal and the institutional, the parochial and the international.

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<sup>1</sup> Bavinck's Stone Lectures were published simultaneously in Dutch, German, and English. For the English publication see Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation: The Stone Lectures for 1908–1909, Princeton Theological Seminary* (New York, London, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longman, Greens, and Co., 1909).

<sup>2</sup> Harinck lays out this analysis in his Introduction to a republication of Bavinck's *Mijne reis naar Amerika* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998). See also George Harinck, "Land dat ons verwondert en ons betovert': Bavinck en Amerika," in George Harinck & Gerrit Neven, eds., *Ontmoetingen met Herman Bavinck* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006).



The move “outside-in” for Bavinck first required a movement from “inside-out,” Harinck explains. That happened on the 1892 tour in two senses. It happened geographically as Bavinck found some release from the claustrophobic atmosphere at Kampen Theological Seminary in the open spaces of Canada and the USA. It happened theologically as well.



*Kampen Theological Seminary*

In the midst of writing a multivolume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* as an ecumenical theology from a Reformed point of view, Bavinck took the opportunity of this trip to explore some of the broader reaches of that holy catholic church. From these inside-out moves, Harinck argues, could proceed Bavinck's ensuing steps outside-in: the application of received theology to the experience of the reader, of inherited tradition to the felt issues of the heart.

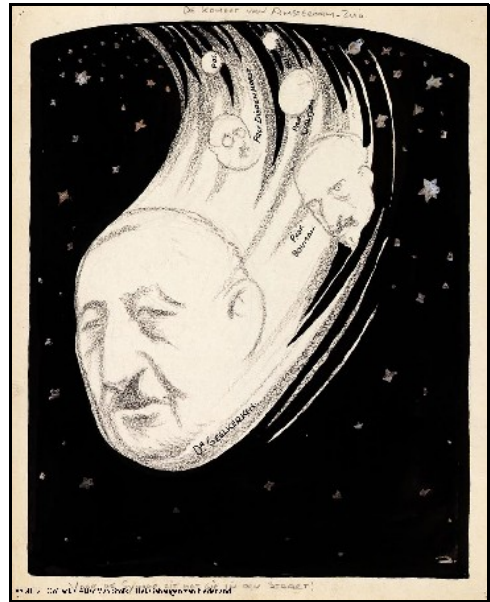
A similar two-way motion characterized Bavinck's 1908 trip. This time he sought an inside-out release not from the compression of church but of political affairs as he had experienced them in the Anti-Revolutionary Party over the previous dozen years. His hunger for open air matched an emerging new mood in the party and in Dutch neo-Calvinism more generally, a sense that old issues had been resolved and a new day stood at hand. All manner of contemporaries perceived that a “young generation” was on the rise, searching for its own voice and a fresh approach fit to the distinctive problems it faced. As it happened, a renovated Bavinck was there to show the way. The seminary professor who wrote theology had become a public intellectual writing on pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, ethics, and eventually the two hot issues of women's rights and war. Though now involved with the whole wide world, Bavinck was still making a procedural move from without to within, from text to psyche, appealing less to formal authority and more to existential need. *The Philosophy of Revelation* stands as a substan-

tial progress report along this new way and as an indication of why the rising generation took its author to heart.

The lectures have a still broader resonance, however. From without to within was the trademark of a broad cultural movement that was welling up across the North Atlantic world at just this time—the culture of modernism. The new Bavinck was a cautious participant of this trend, identifiably swimming in its current nonetheless. *The Philosophy of Revelation* thus gives an early indication of how a sympathetic neo-Calvinist would deal with what came to be the prevalent high culture of the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. The connection between the political and cultural in Bavinck underscores this linkage in that, at some of its key sites of emergence, the new modernism was precisely a movement from politics to culture, from the frustrations of the outside world to the shimmering possibilities of the world within. Bavinck shared in that impulse as well.

### BAVINCK AND THE CONTESTS OF NEO-CALVINISM

Bavinck's Stone Lectures fell exactly halfway between the two most painful episodes in his professional life. In 1920, twelve years *after* his Stone Lectures trip, Bavinck would pass through the ordeal of the Synod of Leeuwarden, where his denomination, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, having already summoned its members toward greater suspicion of their ambient culture, disciplined one of Bavinck's former students for excessive ecumenism in doc-



A Caricature of J. G. Geelkerken, “De komeet van Amsterdam-Zuid,” by L. J. Jordaan (Source: *De Groene Amsterdammer*)

trine and life.<sup>3</sup> This ordeal also set in motion a process that led six years later to the ouster from the GKN of the Rev. J. G. Geelkerken and the departure of some other of Bavinck's favorite past students—along with his widow—over charges of liberal biblical hermeneutics. The strain of the 1920 synod precipitated the heart attack from which Bavinck would die little more than a year later, in August 1921.

In 1896, twelve years *before* his Stone Lectures, Bavinck had fought a more successful, yet no less bruising double battle: one against the traditionalists at Kampen Seminary who rejected Abraham Kuyper's notions of theology and theological education, which Bavinck endorsed; the other against Kuyper's one-time prime collaborator and then prime target, Alexander F. de Savornin Lohman.<sup>4</sup>



*Caricature of Lohman (left)-Kuyper struggle in 1892*



*Alexander F. de Savornin Lohman  
(1837–1924)*

In the first phase of the Kuyper-Lohman battle, which concerned broadening the franchise in civil elections, Bavinck had largely cheered Kuyper's pro-democratic push from the sidelines. But no sooner was this round over than Kuyper started maneuvering behind the scenes to remove Lohman also from the faculty of the Vrije Universiteit, and here Bavinck served in a lead capacity. As chair of the association that controlled the

<sup>3</sup> R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn Tijdgenooten* (Kampen: Kok, 1966), reviews these events briefly, 264–66. Substantial detail and analysis are supplied in D. Th. Kuiper, *De Voormannen: een social-wetenschappelijke studie...* (Kok: Kampen, 1972), 252–306.

<sup>4</sup> For greater detail beyond Harinck's able summary in Bavinck, *Mijne reis*, see Bremmer, *Bavinck en zijn Tijdgenooten*, 53–107.

VU, Bavinc plotted with Kuyper to bring before its 1895 annual meeting a motion to conduct an inquest into Lohman's teaching so as to determine whether it proceeded from clearly "Calvinistic principles." The motion being passed, the process and its outcome were virtually foreordained; Lohman was duly removed from his post in 1896.

Part of Bavinc's reward was to be named the featured speaker the next year at the great banquet celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Kuyper's editorship at *De Standaard*, the central organ of the entire neo-Calvinist movement.<sup>5</sup> The event by all accounts marked the high point in that titanic figure's long, multi-faceted career. Bavinc rose to the occasion with an oration celebrating Kuyper's success at bringing Calvinism into fresh engagement with the times, restoring it to honor in national life. For the next several years Bavinc seemed to be emerging



*"Abraham the Terrible"*

as Kuyper's heir in the movement. After Kuyper left the *Vrije Universiteit* in 1901 to become prime minister, Bavinc was inducted into his chair as professor of theology. As the highly contested election of 1905 approached, Bavinc was persuaded—against his better judgment and via heavy pressure from Kuyper—to take over as chair of the Central Committee of the ARP since it would not be seemly for the prime minister to function as party chief. Kuyper

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<sup>5</sup> Details on the *Standaard's* 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary fête are given in Roel Kuiper, "Uit de dal omhoog," in George Harinck, et al., eds., *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829–1980* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 102–04. The event is interpreted more skeptically in Johan Stellingwerff, *Kuyper en de VU* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), 218–20.

assured Bavinck that his longstanding operatives would handle all the details; Bavinck's job was to deliver a powerful keynote address at the convention and send the delegates off to the hustings at a high pitch of enthusiasm.<sup>6</sup>

Bavinck delivered on demand. Still, his rookie status and his conciliar temperament amid the most divisive election in Dutch history had a role in the confessional coalition's narrow defeat. Kuyper departed in a huff for a long trip around the Mediterranean Sea, which left some of the younger men (Kuyper turned 68 in 1905, Bavinck 51) to pick up the slack. These were then in position to take the reins of government in 1908 when the shaky Liberal Cabinet that had succeeded Kuyper's collapsed. Theo Heemskerk took over as prime minister in what Kuyper expected to be a caretaker role until the national elections in 1909; Heemskerk, Bavinck, and the other "young leaders" thought otherwise. In fact, Kuyper would not lead the Anti-Revolutionary ticket in 1909; Heemskerk and a Cabinet of lawyers and policy activists carried on instead for four more years in office and accomplished a fair bit of the party's agenda.<sup>7</sup> It was just as this silent coup was beginning to take shape that Bavinck quit his position on the Central Committee and put an ocean between himself and the wrath of the old master, which descended in 1908.



Theo Heemskerk  
(1852–1932)  
Prime Minister of the  
Netherlands,  
1908–1913

The instrument of Kuyper's attack was a series of *Standaard* articles that he subsequently published as a brochure, *Our Instinctive Life*.<sup>8</sup> The piece begins with Kuyper's own "fable of the bees,"

<sup>6</sup> George Harinck covers Bavinck's role in the 1905 election in "Als een schelm weggejaagd?" in D. Th. Kuiper and G. J. Schutte, *Het Kabinet Kuyper (1901–1905)* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 270–73.

<sup>7</sup> See George Harinck, "De Antirevolutionaire Partij 1905–1918" in Harinck, et al., eds., *De Antirevolutionaire Partij*, 134–46.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Ons Instinctieve Leven* (Amsterdam: W. Kirchner, 1908). The bulk of the text is available in English translation as "Our Instinctive Life" in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand

more accurately, of the spiders, for whom he shows a fascination comparable to that of Jonathan Edwards two hundred years before. Kuyper argued that the instinctive wisdom of the insects partakes of the wisdom of God; how much more so, he continued, does the practical intelligence of the common people. How much better is this sort of knowledge than that gained by mere “reflection.” Book learning is “artificial” and fleeting, concluded the founder of and long-time professor at a university; the “perfect” knowledge promised us in the next world by I Corinthians 13 will be “spontaneous, immediate, and completed at once”—quite like the practical intuition of the everyday.<sup>9</sup>

Kuyper’s target was clear. The rising leaders in the ARP were proposing to make party processes more collaborative via discussion clubs led by men from the middle ranks; further, to bring professional competence to bear on policy formation by replacing clergy pronouncements with the trained expertise of lawyers and social scientists. Kuyper retorted with some rough sociology. There are three kinds of people in the world, he announced: the large mass of folk who live by practical wisdom, a few genuine scholars of profound and original study, and a chattering class of “amphibians” who roam between these two levels, superficially learned but ignorant of the real life of the commoners whom they were inviting to the policy table. What “the non-learned public” wanted, Kuyper said, was not to take part in policy formation but to hear rival proposals and then “to use their own instinctive life as touchstone” for decision. “For the rest [they were glad] to rely on their leaders.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, that leadership was sealed not in discussion groups but by the powerful oratory that the party faithful loved to hear in election season. They flocked to the party convention from their separate villages to feel the power of a vibrant national movement. As they were swept up by “the *psychology of the crowd*,” the party’s paper statement of principles became their living conviction, and

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 255–77.

<sup>9</sup> Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 258.

<sup>10</sup> Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 267–69, 275–77; Quotations are from pp. 268, 267.

the campaign platform laid out before their eyes the staircase to a better tomorrow. "It is by virtue of the power and animation that radiates from these meetings that we have become who we are," Kuyper concluded. A fourth type of figure had thus come into play, transcending the earlier three of commoner, scholar, and derivative intellectual—"the *genius*" who weaves together academic studies, policy proposals, tactics, and political theory with the eloquence that accords precisely with the commoners "themselves instinctively felt in essence."<sup>11</sup> Given Kuyper's record of oratorical accomplishment, there is no doubt who he thought that genius was.

By invoking the psychology of the crowd Kuyper joined a lively current of social analysis. The phrase was the title of a pioneering work in social psychology recently published by French sociologist Gustav Le Bon that memorably defined how a crowd can become a being in itself, with a will and mind that swept up those of its individual members.



Gustave Le Bon  
(1841–1931)



Max Weber  
(1864–1920)

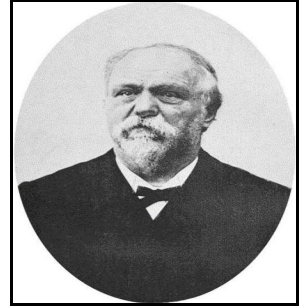
That process happened under the power of what the German pioneering sociologist, Max Weber, was defining in these years as charismatic leadership. Moreover, Kuyper's *Instinctive Life* appeared the same year that French syndicalist Georges Sorel published his *Reflections on Violence*, which combined Marxism and vitalist philosophy to establish the necessity for some "myth" to motivate the oppressed masses.<sup>12</sup> For Sorel it

<sup>11</sup> Kuyper, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 276, 277, 260.

<sup>12</sup> Gustav Le Bon, *La psychologie des foules* (1895; E.T. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 1896). Kuyper alludes to this explicitly, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 264–65. Weber's analysis of charismatic authority was posthumously published in 1922 in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* chapter 3, §10. It appeared in English as "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization," in *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947). Georges Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* (1908; E.T. *Reflections on Violence*, 1914).



was the myth of the general strike; for Kuyper, the “organic bonds” between leader and people of Calvinistic “instinct.” All this theorizing addressed the future of politics “beyond reason”—that is, beyond the high property and education franchise restrictions that classic Liberals had enforced to keep the promise of Enlightened politics alive. Those barriers had been breached in the turn toward democratic rule that Kuyper had promoted. But democratic movements, in turn, experienced new problems of their own, and Kuyper, along with the more famous contribution of Weber, was addressing these as well: the problem of transition from charismatic to bureaucratic authority. Recognizing that transition to be inevitable, Kuyper intended to fight it as much and as long as he could.



*Georges Sorel*  
(1847–1922)



*Theodor Herzl*  
(1860–1904)

As both a witness and then something of a target of Kuyper’s efforts, Bavinck could appreciate Kuyper’s motives but also feared their consequences. He didn’t have to look into the future of Hitler and Göbbels to see why; he could read about the hysterical anti-Semitism of contemporary political oratory in Vienna or reflect on the wiles of Joseph Chamberlain in fomenting support for

the recent British war in South Africa.<sup>13</sup> “Jingoism” was of recent vintage; so was the new Zionism led by Theodore Herzl in Vienna. Bavinck still had a political future in 1908, but it would be service in the Dutch parliament’s Upper House where learning and calmer reflection were still expected and somewhat insulated from democratic passions. From that position,



*Joseph Chamberlain*  
(1836–1914)

<sup>13</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980), chapters 1, 4, and 6.



and his post at the VU, he helped write the 1915 brochure, "Leader and Leading in the ARP," which showed beyond all doubt that Kuyper's day was over.<sup>14</sup> But the new day that Kuyper's charismatic populism had helped inaugurate was here to stay, and it formed the political setting in which the new cultural modernism emerged. Many of the movement's great pioneers lived in Vienna, heirs to the bourgeois elite that had helped manage public affairs in the heyday of small electorates and classic Liberalism. The ugly side of the new politics drove the new generation to abandon the public activism of their fathers and seek a more genuine freedom (not to mention sanity) in cultural expressions of the inner self. Bavinck's turn from mass politics toward psychological themes partook of the same impulse.

### THE NEW CULTURAL MODERNISM

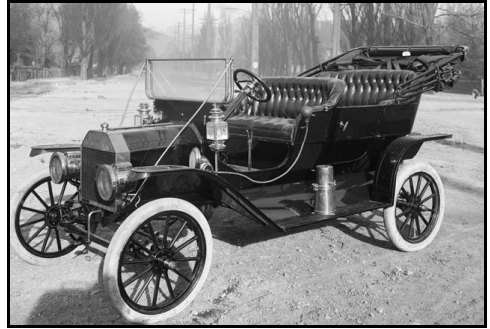
In analyzing the relationship of Bavinck to cultural modernism we need to be very clear about which "modernism" we are talking about.<sup>15</sup> This was *not* the classic theological Modernism that had

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<sup>14</sup> Herman Bavinck, et al., *Leider en leiding in de Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (Amsterdam: ten Have, 1915).

<sup>15</sup> Secondary literature on Modernism and its emergence is vast. I have been particularly guided by Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, and T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981). These two works build upon the following classic studies: H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Re-orientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York: Vintage, 1958); Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence* (New York: Knopf, 1959); and Gerhard Masur, *Prophets of Yesterday: Studies in European Culture, 1890–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1961). More recent analyses include J. W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), and William Everdell, *The First Moderns: Profiles in the Origins of Twentieth-Century Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). More summary and definitional treatments are available in Art Berman, *Preface to Modernism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Daniel J. Singal, ed., *Modernist Culture in America* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991), 1–27; Norman F. Cantor, *The American Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 44–51; and Douglas Tallack, *Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (London: Longman, 1991), 147–

arisen in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. That Modernism was an adaptation to the worldview of positivist science and reason which the new cultural modernists now rejected. Nor are we talking about the socioeconomic process of “modernization,” defined as the logic of development that would make “everything predictable and calculable in service of maximum efficiency and the conscious pursuit of profit.” On his 1908 trip to America Bavinck could witness this sort of modernization first-hand in the debut that year of the Model T Ford and the founding of Ford’s great rival, General Motors. The product and the firm epitomized for a generation to come the plague of industrial rationaliza-



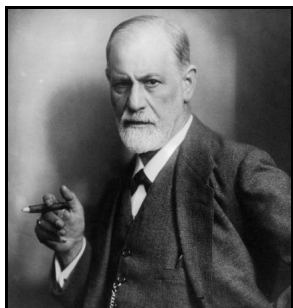
1910 Ford Model T

tion that the new cultural modernists would resist. Near its conclusion Bavinck’s *Philosophy of Revelation* cites Weber’s famous epigram on the type of personality the process wrought: “professionals without spirit, pleasure-seekers without heart; non-entities [who] pride themselves on having mounted to a previously unattained level of civilization.”<sup>16</sup> The new modernists’ perceived mission in life was to redeem and preserve the genuinely human against this modernization. Like the cultural movements of Romanticism, the Enlightenment, and the Renaissance that had preceded it, the new modernism was international and cross-disciplinary. It formed a part of, but a very specific phase in, the “modern” era understood most broadly as having dawned with the Renaissance, Reformation, and European voyages of exploration. The new cultural modernism can be said to have proceeded along the logic of this more generically “modern” trajectory, but at some sites (most recognizably in the arts) it clearly repudiated the early modern agenda. In painting it was defined by Picasso and Kandinsky, in lit-

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<sup>16</sup>Tallack, *Twentieth-Century America*, 11. Bavinck quotes Weber in *The Philosophy of Revelation*, 348.

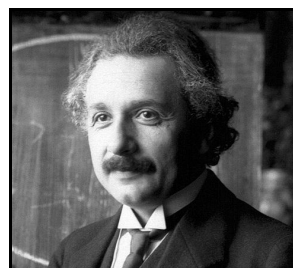


Sigmund Freud  
(1856–1939)

erature by Joyce and T. S. Eliot, in architecture by Gropius and Corbusier. It is *that* modernism which we have in view.

Lest it seem *prima facie* that Bavinck could not belong in this company, we should note that the new modernism, like the other great cultural movements before it, could be open as well as hostile to religious claims, just as it could land Left, Right, or Center on the political spectrum. We should also see that

Bavinck's Stone Lectures fall right in the middle of the brilliant fifteen-year passage in which this movement arrived. William Everdell in *The First Moderns* records its progress year by year. In 1900 the new century was inaugurated with the announcement of three invisibilities at the heart of life: the quantum, postulated by Max Planck, the gene by Hugo de Vries, and the unconscious by Sigmund Freud. In 1901 Bertrand Russell discovered an inescapable contradiction at the foundations of mathematical logic



Albert Einstein  
(1879–1955)

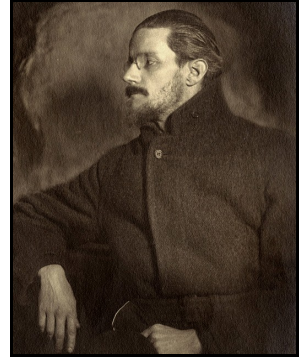
that doomed his project to kill metaphysics once and for all; simultaneously Edmund Husserl laid the foundation for a rebirth of Idealism from the necessary workings of subjective consciousness. In 1903 time was broken into sixteen parts per second by the debut of the first mass-released motion picture; in 1905 time was made relative to space by Einstein amid the five papers he published that year which revolutionized physics. The year before, 1904, Weber delivered his seminal



Pablo Picasso  
“Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J.)” (1906–07)

paper on the new sociology at the St. Louis World's Fair; the year after, 1906, Picasso began working on "The Last Supper" of modernism, "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon."

In 1907 August Strindberg radically altered dramatic time in the theater of Dream Play; in 1908 Arnold Schoenberg pioneered atonality in music in his "Book of the Hanging Gardens"; in 1909 W. C. Handy moved to Memphis where he started composing the blues of that name upon a syncopated tempo, laying the foundations for a new American popular music. In 1910 James Joyce was at work with the stories that became *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, announcing a definitive turn in fiction.



James Joyce  
(1882–1941)



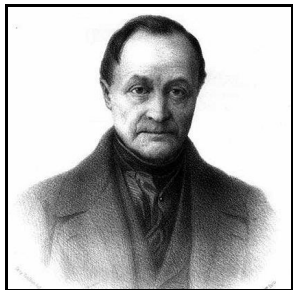
T. S. Eliot (1888–1965)

In 1911 Vassily Kandinsky published *On the Spiritual in Art* at the end of the road that had begun with the Impressionists and now got rid of the object in painting altogether. All these beginnings came together in 1913,



"Nude Descending a Staircase,  
No. 2" by Marcel Duchamp,  
Armory Show, New York City,  
1913

modernism's *annus mirabilis*: the Armory Show in New York City, the tempestuous debut of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, the publication of the first volume of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time (Remembrance of Things Past)*, of Kafka's *Amerika*, of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, of T. S. Eliot's "Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock." To repeat, Bavinck's *Philosophy*

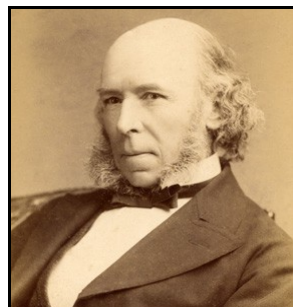


Auguste Comte  
(1798–1857)

of *Revelation* and Kuyper's *Our Instinctive Life* appeared at the midpoint of this process.

Mere coincidence in time might indicate little, however, so let's delve into the assumptions and aspirations of the new modernism to see what part Bavinck might have had in its company. One overriding commonality appears right away. The *bête noire* of Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation* is evolutionary monism—that is, the thesis that all of

life belongs without remainder to a single materialist flow driven by deterministic mechanisms that are decipherable by strictly empirical observation and logical extrapolations therefrom. The new cultural modernism shared his antipathy: it too scorned the monist, materialist, and utilitarian; the mechanistic, positivistic, and deterministic. The most commonly invoked renditions of this worldview had been postulated in the previous generation by Darwin and Marx in their grand narratives of natural and human history, respectively. If those two giants sometimes showed ambivalence toward what was proclaimed in their name, others stepped forward to proclaim the Science of one evolution or another as humanity's new religion. The best remembered of this company of prophets are August Comte and Herbert Spencer, and it was to such assertions as theirs that classic theological Modernism had responded by trimming the sails of Christian dogma so as to save place for Christian ethics. The last version of this cult (in the literal sense of the term) was announced for the new century by Ernst Haeckel in his modestly understated title of 1900: *The Riddle of the Universe at the End of the Nineteenth Century*. As it happened, Haeckel turned out to be the high priest of the past, partly by virtue of the work of the modernists who introduced themselves as prophets of "the new."



Herbert Spencer  
(1820–1903)

Measured not just by their common antipathy but by positive preferences, Bavinck sympathized with the modernists' esteem for the dynamic and the intuitive, for fresh air and the possibilities of freedom. "God is busy doing great things these days," Bavinck proclaimed in his 1911 essay titled none other than "Modernism and Orthodoxy," and one of the best was to have opened the twentieth century to a rebirth of the spiritual.<sup>17</sup> Bavinck would especially appreciate the divine irony at the root of this rebirth, which ultimately went back a generation to doubts that had welled up at the



*Ernst Mach (1838–1916)*

heart of science itself—in fact in the most esteemed of early-modern sciences, mathematics and physics.<sup>18</sup> As philosophers of mathematics discovered in the 1870s, this universal language of science turned out to rest on assumptions, not proof; a point is a postulation, not an objective observation, and number is a convention as much as a "fact." Probing into the heart of matter, physicists in the same decade found that the only way to talk about gases was in the idiom of statistical probability, not of fixed description. The

Viennese physicist Ernst Mach brought these two currents together in 1889, announcing, as an adamant positivist himself, that science's methods force us to conclude that science's fabric is a human contrivance which categorizes sensations according to useful conventions; it was thus incapable of bearing the authority that Comte or Haeckel assigned it. On the cutting edge of science, in sum, the nineteenth century closed with positivism undone by its own hand,

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<sup>17</sup> Cited in R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus* (Kampen: Kok, 1961), 123.

<sup>18</sup> Everdell, *First Moderns*, chapters 3 and 4.



monism fractured, and evolution, if such existed, was indeterminate, as much a function of human will as of natural environment.

### WAS BAVINCK THIS SORT OF MODERNIST?

We can conclude at this point that, the enemy of my enemy being my friend, Bavinck and the new cultural modernism were friends indeed. But did it go further than that? Could Bavinck give more than one cheer for modernism? The answer is nuanced and tentative and lands upon a negotiated middle ground—a characteristic place for Bavinck, of course, but also for modernists themselves. We can proceed by asking how modernists filled the space opened by the collapse of positivist monism and how Bavinck regarded these surrogates. One move they did not make was to revert to the systematic articulations characteristic of Romanticism. In this respect Bavinck had more patience with the new modernists than did the older Kuyper, who insisted on the grand inclusivity that Romanticism promised. As cultural historian Art Berman explains, the new modernism was premised on psychology much like Romanticism had been on philosophy; its German guru was Freud, not Schelling. Both movements privileged art and started the creative process from a turn deep within, but Romantics then tried to soar up to the transcendent to grasp an Absolute higher truth; Modernists gave up on the stars and sought to find a sufficient truth in the self. Romantics looked to artistic genius to mediate between humanity and heaven; Moderns hoped that artistic improvisation might create a spot of human survival on a technocratic earth.<sup>19</sup> Theirs was the consummate turn “outside-in.” To repeat, for Kuyper these reductions would not do at all; for Bavinck they inspired quiet curiosity. Within that framework the new cultural modernism—for all its variety—showed six consistent traits:

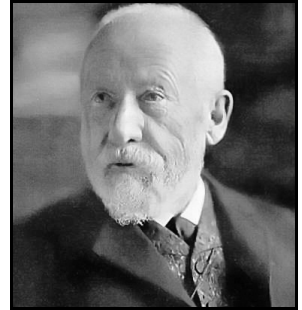
(1) It extrapolated *subjectivity* into a radical perspectivalism and (2) consequently endorsed *multiple perspectives* on any subject. (3) It extrapolated from the dissolution of monistic evolution into a *radical ontological discontinuity* and tried to overcome that

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<sup>19</sup> Berman, *Preface to Modernism*, 5–24.

discontinuity by (4) postulating *narrative* as a self-conscious, therefore limited and relative, view of life. (5) The characteristic tone of these narratives being *irony* (simultaneous multiple tones), the equivalent in fiction or self-understanding of cubist perspective in painting and relativity in physics, (6) tentativeness or *provisionality* emerged as its characteristic prescription for human conduct.<sup>20</sup>

Bavinck's response to this menu as gleaned from his Stone Lectures amounts to a yes-no judgment, "yes-for-awhile" but finally "not enough." Of the new modernist tenets Bavinck could most clearly endorse the first on the list, the inescapable role of perspective in framing human perception, reflection, knowledge, and behavior. Again and again across his later writing he demonstrates the necessary role and formative power of worldview in all we think and do. In this regard he is one with Kuyper and with Kuyper's contemporary Wilhelm Dilthey, the modernist formulator of this approach in the social sciences.<sup>21</sup> Notably, however, it is the systematic integration of perceptions within the world-



Wilhelm Dilthey  
(1833–1911)



Abraham Kuyper  
(1837–1920)

view frame that Bavinck most values; the point of a point of *view* is to give us an intelligible *world*. If Bavinck moves toward that coherence at a somewhat more leisurely pace than did Kuyper, he nonetheless has the final destination clearly in mind as motivating the journey. He is genuinely hospitable toward other points of view he meets along the way

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<sup>20</sup> These generalizations are based on the literature cited in note 15 above. Particularly succinct summaries include Cantor, *The American Century*, 44–51, and Berman, *Preface to Modernism*, 5–24.

<sup>21</sup> On Dilthey, see David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 82–98; and Masur, *Prophets*, 160–71.



before asserting, typically in the later pages of an essay, a Christian perspective as the stronger option.

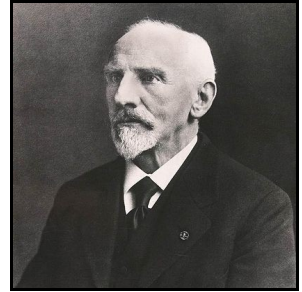
Again, the comparison with Kuyper is illuminating. To some extent their differences reflect contrasting temperaments. Kuyper suffered from an acute need for certainty; Bavinck—perhaps from his parents' Seceder piety—seems to have been more patient amid the struggles of faith. Kuyper's Romantic "wholeness hunger," moreover, manifested itself in a relative rush to judgment. His one-cheer for the enemy of an enemy tends to fall, as it were, in the dependent clause beginning a sentence, to be followed by the firm "nonetheless" of critique. Bavinck more typically uses that opening clause to show why he is reluctant to give a third or even a second cheer for a co-belligerent before going on in the main part of the sentence to show why the first cheer is well deserved. Besides personality and philosophy, audience also came into play. Even when he wrote as an academic, Kuyper always had in mind the undereducated rank-and-file of his movement who might not be able to deal with nuance or detail, who needed to be assured in their faith and motivated for political combat. Bavinck's typical cultural-modernist turn away from the masses toward peer professionals, fellow *cognoscenti*, gave him some margin for open exploration. But he would not stay open all the way. At the end, no matter how fragmented reality seemed to be, and how illuminating it could be to explore it as such in this vale of human relativity, Bavinck was sure that it all cohered in God's absolute unity—and that human life could proceed only under that assurance.

Bavinck's limits on modernist relativity are therefore twofold. First, he did not take its new cultural anthropology to heart. The Stone Lectures manifest a lingering Victorian, and therefore also imperial, confidence in the self-evident superiority of European to other civilizations.<sup>22</sup> Bavinck's narrative typically proceeds by a run from the Greeks through the Middle Ages to the Reformation to the

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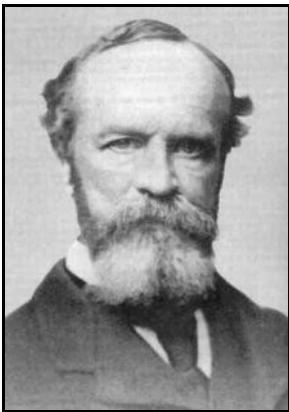
<sup>22</sup> A particularly thorough treatment of Victorianism as premised on a hierarchy of the "civilized" European over the "savage" others is Daniel J. Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

present, concluding that the errors of the day are nothing new under the sun but originated in classical antiquity and can be redressed (just as modernity's real gains can be appropriated) via a reapplication of Reformational insights. Despite his close, persistent friendship with the pioneering Islamicist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, there is in this Bavinck little genuine investigation of other world religions to demonstrate that their answers on the question at hand are really so insufficient



Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936)

as he claims. Bavinck asserts this again and again in the Stone Lectures, but he does not show it to even the partial satisfaction of a student of world religions. That grappling would wait for his nephew, J. H. Bavinck. Secondly, Bavinck simply assumed that people cannot live provisionally, without final answers or bedrock assurances. But is this assumption true? William James, whom Bavinck quotes extensively in his later work, thought not; rather, James argued from human behavior that moderns indeed do operate by the provisional, whatever they tell themselves in a pinch and that in fact we can *only* live this way.<sup>23</sup> James's argument is not sociological (i.e., that living by absolutes generates lethal conflict among people of different absolutisms) but rather psychological. Had he known the details of James's life, Bavinck could have argued that it was, indeed, autobiographical.



William James (1842–1910)

The specter of Herbert Spencer's block universe nearly drove James to suicide since it replicated on a scientific level what James' father had declaimed in his feckless journey

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<sup>23</sup> See James's mature essays: *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (1897), *Pragmatism* (1907), and *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912). Paul Jerome Croce, *Science and Religion in the Era of William James, Volume I: Eclipse of Certainty, 1820–1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

down the smorgasbord of pantheisms.<sup>24</sup> In his essay "Experience" (1844), Ralph Waldo Emerson, a confrere of James' father, admitted that the Nature he had extolled in his great essay of 1836 had turned out to be an enigmatic surface upon which we bravely skate. All we can do, Emerson concluded in "Fate" (1851/60), is "build altars to the Beautiful Necessity."<sup>25</sup> James the younger voiced the new-modernist response to that classical Modernist judgment in regarding life instead as a billowing sea upon which, bless its murky waters, we are challenged to discover our powers and stretch toward the misty shore. Bavinck the Dutchman knew skating surfaces and billowing seas both, and knew better than these Americans how precious firm ground was beneath one's feet. But whether one needed the assurance of dry ground or only a rhetorical orientation to dry ground depends, finally, on one's worldview. The twentieth century would show that on the level of elite culture, people could indeed live provisionally, however much a Calvinist worldview might affirm that they could not.

We can briefly mention two other disparities between Bavinck and the cultural modernists before turning, in conclusion, to some of their deeper affinities. First, even more than with the Romantics, for the modernists art was religion in the sense of an ultimate commitment.<sup>26</sup> Art was the act by which empirical fact could be infused with human value, where fragmented reality could approach a tentative unity. It is notable then, that of all his later work, Bavinck's biographer R. H. Bremmer passes over his lectures on aesthetics in silence. Just as Weber analyzed religion as one confessedly tone-deaf to its sirens, Bavinck might have been dispositionally immune to the new modernism's sacred site. Secondly, over the long run the new movement's preeminent social and political thinkers vested the search for provisional truths in community, a community created by the energy of perennially searching selves who come upon a

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<sup>24</sup> Howard Feinstein, *Becoming William James* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>25</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience," *Essays: Second Series* (Boston: J. Munroe, 1844), 35; "Fate," *The Conduct of Life* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1860), 22.

<sup>26</sup> Berman, *Preface to Modernism*, 33.

middle range (not an ultimate set) of values adequate to the task at hand.<sup>27</sup> That sort of community for Bavinck would have been the church, and his Stone Lectures would have suggested a new ecclesiology. But in fact the church was increasingly a site of frustration for him and led finally to lethal conflict. Bavinck turned instead to revelation as the site of a perennial divine-human interaction that suspended the world in being—at least so long as one parsed the relationship of logos and scripture properly. Bavinck died before that bell tolled for him; his student Geelkerken lived to hear its knell.

We should not end on that note, however, for there is more that is creative and relevant in Bavinck, even for our postmodern times. Let us return to one mark of the new cultural modernism that we have not yet treated and label another one by a different name. First, the renaming mark: What is it to live provisionally other than to live by faith, by the better thing hoped for, the reality not seen in this world? Bavinck's wrestling with the new modernist relativity brought him to the title of what many regard as his best book, *The Certainty of Faith*.<sup>28</sup> The old monists would insist that faith is no certainty at all; James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* would happily grant that faith is a worthy venture for one who has been twice born. The prophecy of the at least twice-born Bavinck was well fulfilled in the fact that the promise of the twentieth century made it possible (and its realities, necessary) to live by faith again, call it what you will. Further, if we recognize that the Christian faith dwells among many in a pluralistic world, believers need not wind up in terminal irony, as if at alternate hours we regard ourselves with a different eye or live by another faith every other day. We can rather live by the old Christian virtue of charity, loving our neighbor, who is unlike ourselves, as ourselves. Perhaps in the process we can gain a new look at ourselves too as we walk on through the relativities of time and space under the aspect of eternity.

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<sup>27</sup>This is especially well articulated in James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3–11, 340–94.

<sup>28</sup>Herman Bavinck, *De Zekerheid des Geloofs* (Kampen: Kok, 1901); E.T. *The Certainty of Faith* (Ontario: St. Catharines, 1980).

# **Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*: Some Remarks about Unpublished Manuscripts in the Libraries of Amsterdam and Kampen**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is not well known that during the years of Herman Bavinck's professorate at Kampen Bavinck taught not only dogmatics, but also ethics. Several documents which Bavinck used for his lectures in ethics are stored in the Bavinck archives.<sup>1</sup> For example, the archives contain a small lecture notebook which likely dates from the beginning of Bavinck's career at Kampen (or even earlier). In this notebook Bavinck arranges his ethics course into ten sections:<sup>2</sup>

1. Sin
2. Man as a moral creature
3. Election (foundation of Christian life)
4. Faith (source and principle of Christian life)

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<sup>1</sup> Archive 176 of the Historical Documentation Centre, Free University, Amsterdam (hereafter abbreviated as "Bavinck Archives").

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck Archives, box 4/32, no. 42: §1. De zonde; §2. De mens als zedelijk wezen; §3. De verkiezing (grondslag van het christelijk leven); §4. Het geloof (bron en principe van het christelijk leven); §5. De boete (ontstaan van het christelijk leven); §6. De wet (regel van het christelijk leven); §7. De vrijheid (voorrecht van het christelijk leven); §8. Het altruïstisch karakter van het christelijk leven; §9. De verhouding van het christelijk tot het burgerlijk leven; §10. Het christelijk leven in de gemeenschap.

5. Penance (origin of Christian life)
6. Law (rule of Christian life)
7. Freedom (privilege of Christian life)
8. The altruistic character of Christian life
9. The relationship between Christian and civil life
10. The Christian life in community

Inhoud.		
Cap. I	de Zonde	pag. 7
II	De Mensch als Zedelyk wezen	p. 15.
III	De Verkiezing (opontslag v. t. christ. leven)	p. 26
IV	Het Geloof (bron en principe v. t. chr. leven)	p. 35
V	De Boete (ontstaan van t. christ. leven)	p. 45.
VI	De Wet (regel van t. christ. leven)	p. 53.
VII	De Vrijheit (voorzicht v. t. chr. leven)	p. 65
VIII	Het altruïstisch karakter v. t. chr. leven)	p. 79
IX	De Verhouding van t. christ. tot t. burgerlyk leven	p. 87
X	Het christ. leven in de Gemeenschap.	p. 99.

Table of Contents from the small lecture notebook

In addition to this small notebook the archives contain an extensive manuscript entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek* (*Reformed Ethics*).<sup>3</sup> The numerous notebooks which Bavinck used to write the manuscript have been severely damaged: Many pages have been torn from each other, and the paper is crumbling. Furthermore, the manuscript is not finished. It breaks off in the middle of a discussion about the Christian family. In the margin of the text, Bavinck

<sup>3</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, in Bavinck Archives, box 13/32; no. 186 (hereafter abbreviated as *GE*). Since the pages are not numbered, I will refer to the paragraph numbers, followed by page numbers if necessary (e.g. *GE*, §1, p. 1). At each paragraph the page numbers will restart at 1 (e.g. *GE*, §2, p. 1).

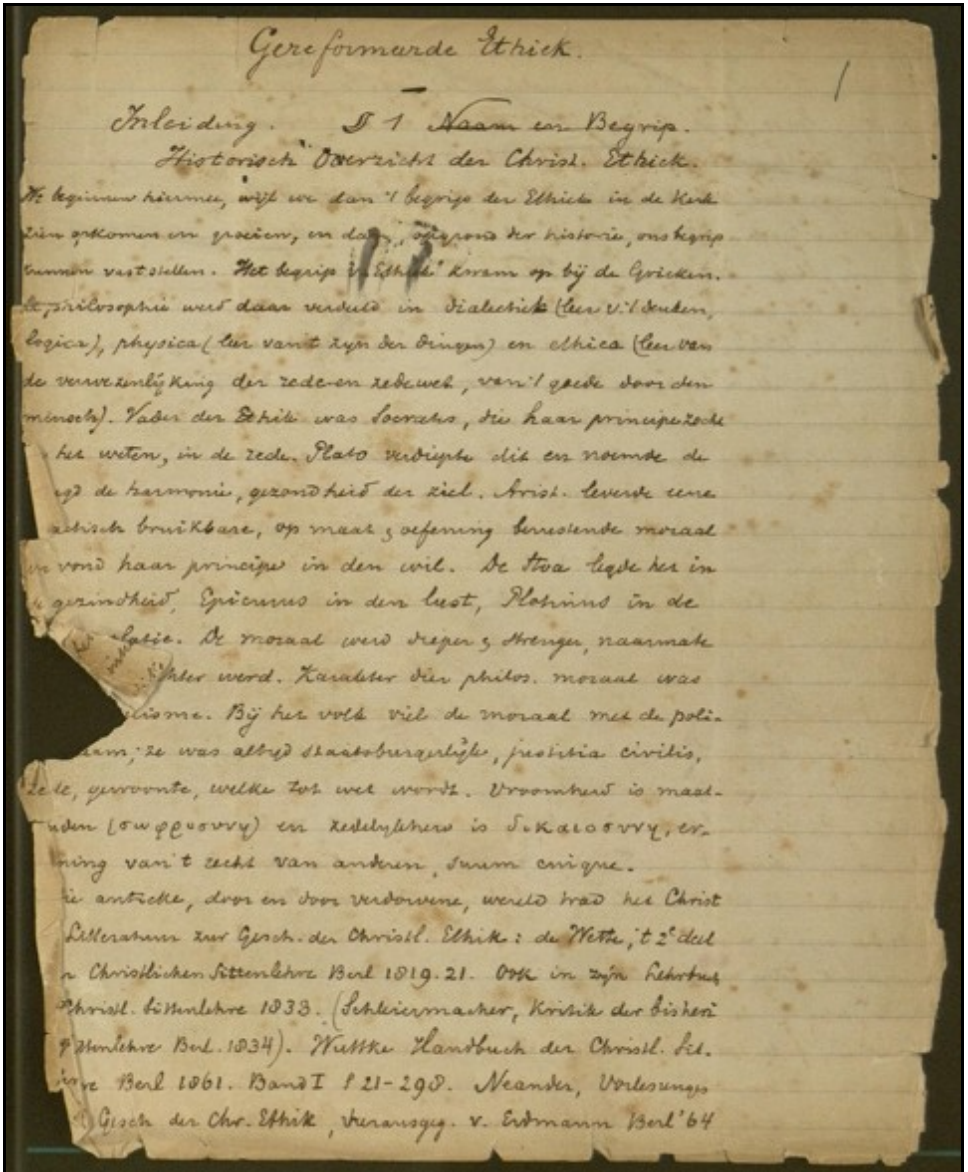
has added notes and references to literature studied or published after he wrote his text.



*Bavinck's Reformed Ethics (Gereformeerde Ethiek) manuscript*

It is difficult to date the document. Because of its length and elaborate references to Holy Scripture as well as to sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century Protestant theologians, Bavinck must have worked at it for years. In fact, the manuscript is virtually an unpublished monograph.





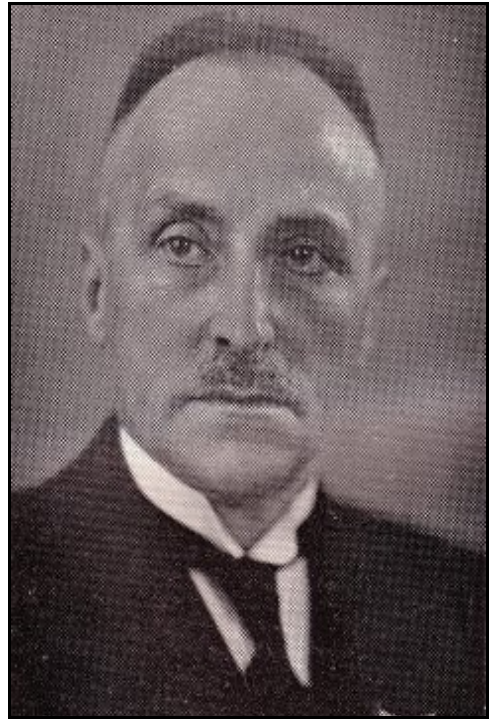
A damaged page from Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* manuscript

Although it is not possible to date the origin of Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* based on the data in the manuscript itself, there is correlative evidence which suggests that Bavinck used his *Re-*



formed *Ethics* manuscript during the academic years 1884–1886 and 1894–1895. This evidence is found in two other unpublished, handwritten manuscripts.

The first manuscript, entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek. Acroam. van: Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck* (“Reformed Ethics. Class Notes of Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck”),<sup>4</sup> was made by Reinder Jan van der Veen (1863–1942),<sup>5</sup> who studied theology at Kampen from September 1878 until July 1886.<sup>6</sup> Van der Veen’s manuscript, which numbers 327 pages, originally consisted of two volumes, but unfortunately the first volume has been lost. On several pages in the second volume Van der Veen dates his class notes, providing evidence that these notes refer to Bavinck’s lectures in ethics of the years 1884–1885 and 1885–1886. The lost first volume probably contained notes on Bavinck’s lectures of the year 1883–1884—the first year of Bavinck’s professorate at Kampen!



*Cornelis Lindeboom (1872–1938)*

The second manuscript is entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek—Dictaat van Prof. Bavinck* (“Reformed Ethics—class notes of Prof. Bavinck”).<sup>7</sup> This 406-page manuscript was registered at the Kampen library archives in 1983. Unfortunately there is no information available on the

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<sup>4</sup> Library of the Protestant Theological University at Kampen, shelf mark 101A20 (hereafter abbreviated as *GE-Van der Veen*).

<sup>5</sup> Van der Veen’s signature is on the title page of this manuscript.

<sup>6</sup> J. van Gelderen and F. Rozemond, *Gegevens betreffende de Theologische Universiteit Kampen 1854–1994* (Kampen 1994), 110.

<sup>7</sup> Library of the Protestant Theological University at Kampen, shelf mark

manuscript's author and origin. It is possible that the library obtained the manuscript in 1983 and failed to note its origin. But it is also possible that the manuscript was present in the library for many years and was not catalogued until 1983. Whatever the case may be, comparison with other manuscripts in Kampen's library suggests that the author may be Cornelis Lindeboom (1872–1938), who studied theology at Kampen from September 1889 until July 1895.<sup>8</sup> The manuscript can be tentatively dated to the year 1895.<sup>9</sup>

Both manuscripts offer a fine impression of Bavinck's lectures on ethics. The text of the manuscripts is written down very carefully. Every sentence is completely written out and grammatically correct. The style is typically Bavinck's. When, for instance, biblical references to a theme are listed, this is done in exactly the same way biblical references are listed in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. The style of the manuscripts, therefore, gives the impression that the text was verbally dictated by Bavinck. There is, nevertheless, some

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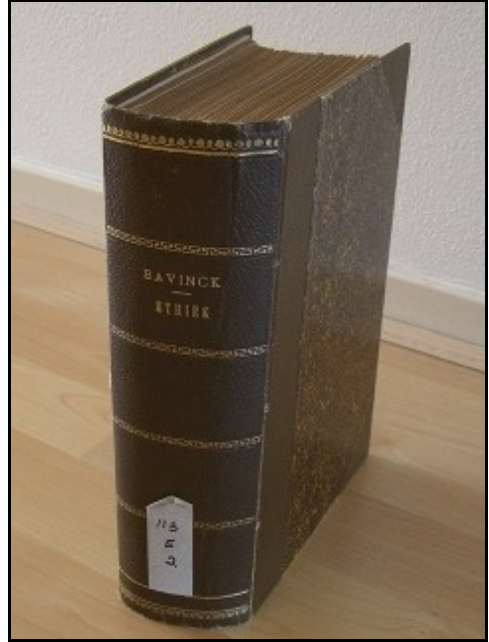
113E2 (hereafter abbreviated as *GE-Lindeboom*).

<sup>8</sup> Cornelis Lindeboom, the only son of Kampen's New Testament professor Lucas Lindeboom (1845–1933), studied theology at Kampen from September 1889 until July 1895 (Van Gelderen and Rozemond, *Gegevens*, 116). After one year of study at Lausanne he worked as a minister in Sprang (1896), Bolnes (1900), Apeldoorn (1905), Gorinchem (1908) and Amsterdam (1914–1937). See *In uwe voorhoven. Ter herinnering aan het leven en den arbeid van Ds. C. Lindeboom* (Amsterdam: S.J.P. Bakker, 1938); B. Wielenga, "Ds. C. Lindeboom," in *Jaarboek ten dienste van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* 23 (1939), ed. F.C. Meijster and K. Schilder (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1939), 430–434; H. Mulder, "Lindeboom, Cornelis," in *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, vol. 3 (Kampen: Kok 1988), 249–250.

<sup>9</sup> The manuscript refers once to volume one of the first edition of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* (*GE-Lindeboom*, 38). Because this volume was published in 1895, the manuscript must be dated to this year or later. If it is true that Cornelis Lindeboom is the author of the manuscript, the date can be determined exactly to the year 1895; for, Lindeboom ended his studies at Kampen in the summer of that year. This date would also explain why the manuscript is incomplete. The notes break off in the middle of a discussion of the Ten Commandments. Bavinck probably continued this discussion after the summer of 1895. But at that time Cornelis Lindeboom no longer attended Bavinck's classes.

distance between Bavinck and the text. Probably Van der Veen and Lindeboom worked out their notes in detail after class.<sup>10</sup>

It is striking, moreover, that the structure of Van der Veen's and Lindeboom's class notes is almost identical to the composition of Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* manuscript. This similarity makes it likely that Bavinck had given his lectures in ethics in the years 1884–1886 and 1894–1895. If this inference is correct, then Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* manuscript can be dated to the first years of Bavinck's professorate at Kampen.



*Bound copy of the  
Lindeboom manuscript*

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<sup>10</sup> Extracurricular editing can be inferred, for instance, from a passage in *GE-Lindeboom*, 150: “Geloof is het werk Gods, Joh. 6:29 (deze tekst is wellicht foutief gekozen door den Prof: “Gods” is Gen. Obj. hier).” (“Faith is the work of God, John 6:29 (this scriptural passage was perhaps chosen wrongly by the professor: “of God” is here an objective genitive).”) It is most unlikely that Lindeboom added this comment during the lecture. Nevertheless the manuscript offers a fine impression of Bavinck's lectures on Reformed ethics in 1895. Lindeboom's comment on John 6:29 also makes it clear that the references to Scripture were mentioned by Bavinck. The same must be said of the many references to works of 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th century Protestant (Reformed and Lutheran) theologians. It seems impossible that these could have been inserted by a student. For that reason, not only the structure and the main lines of the text but also many details reach back to Bavinck.

THE STRUCTURE OF BAVINCK'S *REFORMED ETHICS*

As mentioned above it appears that Bavinck worked on the manuscript of *Reformed Ethics* for years. In the same period he was also working at his *Reformed Dogmatics*. The four volumes of the latter were published successively in the years 1895, 1897, 1898 and 1901. It is not surprising, therefore, that Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* resembles his *Reformed Dogmatics* in several ways.

A good example of this resemblance is the similar structure of the two works. Bavinck starts the *Reformed Dogmatics* with an introduction to the science of dogmatic theology and its method and organization.<sup>11</sup> The introduction is then followed by a chapter on the history and literature of dogmatics.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript has a similar introduction, although in reverse order. The manuscript starts with an outline of the history of Reformed ethics and its literature.<sup>13</sup> The introduction is then followed by sections on terminology, organization, and methodology.<sup>14</sup>

Bavinck prefers the term "ethics" to "morality."<sup>15</sup> The task of ethics is to describe the birth, growth and revelation of spiritual life (geestelijk leven) in reborn man.<sup>16</sup> In other words, "ethics is the sci-

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<sup>11</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 25–112.

<sup>12</sup> Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 115–204.

<sup>13</sup> *GE*, §1.

<sup>14</sup> *GE*, §§2–4.

<sup>15</sup> *GE*, §2, page 1: "Wij verkiezen Ethiek, wijl dat woord nog niet, als moraal (zedepreek) kwaden reuk heeft; en wijl men onderscheid maakt tusschen moraal, als practische moraal, serie van levensregelen, als beschrijvend het doen als meer uitwendig en inductief, en ethiek als meer streng-wetenschappelijk, als beschrijvend het zijn, als meer inwendig, principieel, deductief"; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> *GE*, §2, page 4: "De Ethiek heeft nu te beschouwen, hoe de mensch als redelijk, verantwoordelijk wezen zich toeigent en verwerkt de gave en krachten der eerste schepping, en 't Evangelie der genade aanneemt; hoe hij wedergeboren wordt, hoe dat leven aan krankheid, verzoeking, strijd onderworpen is; hoe het in daden (v. verstand, wil etc) zich omzetten en in een zedelijk leven naar Gods wet in alle omstandigheden zich openbaren moet. Ze beschouwt dus de

entific description of the realization of the mercy of Christ in our personal human life.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Bavinck, although ethics and dogmatics are closely related, they also must be distinguished. In the *Reformed Dogmatics* Bavinck writes:

Dogmatics describes the deeds of God done for, to, and in human beings; ethics describes what renewed human beings now do on the basis of and in the strength of those divine deeds. In dogmatics human beings are passive; they receive and believe; in ethics they are themselves active agents. In dogmatics, the articles of faith are treated; in ethics, the precepts of the Decalogue. In the former, that which concerns faith is dealt with; in the latter, that which concerns love, obedience, and good works. Dogmatics sets forth what God is and does for human beings and causes them to know God as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; ethics sets forth what human beings are and do for God now; how, with everything they are and have, with intellect and will and all their strength, they devote themselves to God out of gratitude and love. Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God; ethics is that of the service of God.<sup>18</sup>

In his *Reformed Ethics* manuscript Bavinck describes the difference in exactly the same way:

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voorbereiding, geboorte, ontwikkeling en openbaring naar buiten van den geestelijken mensch. Zij is de ‘Entwicklungsgeschichte des von Gott erlösten Menschen’ (Harless), de wissenschaftliche Darstellung von der Verwirklichung der Gnade Christi, d.h. seines göttlichen Lebeninhaltes in der Form des menschlichen Personlebens (Beck S. 84).”

<sup>17</sup> *GE-Lindeboom*, 14: “[...] de Ethiek beschouwt de voortbrenging, de geboorte, de ontwikkeling, en de openbaring van het geestelijk leven in den mensch, en wel in den wedergeboren mensch. Ze is dus: de wetenschappelijke beschrijving van de verwerkelijking van Christus’ genade in ons menscheeljk persoonlijk leven; met andere woorden ze beschrijft de verwerkelijking van het heil Gods in den mensch.”

<sup>18</sup> Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 58.

In dogmatics we get an answer to the question: what does God do for us? In this regard, we as human beings are only passive and receptive. Ethics tells us what we, as a consequence, have to do for God [...]. In dogmatics God descends to us; in ethics we ascend to God; in dogmatics we receive God, in ethics we give ourselves to Him; in dogmatics we say: God first has loved us with an eternal love; in ethics we say: and because of that we love Him.<sup>19</sup>

The method of ethics, Bavinck argues, is the same as in dogmatics. The point of departure is God's revelation. Holy Scripture is the principle of knowledge (*kenbron*) and norm (*norma*).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, three methodological steps must be distinguished: (1) collecting and systematizing biblical data, (2) describing how these data have been adopted in the church, and (3) developing these data normatively (thetically) with a view to our own time.<sup>21</sup> This threefold method in his *Reformed Ethics* manuscript is exactly the way Bavinck proceeds in the *Reformed Dogmatics*.

With respect to the composition of his ethical theory, Bavinck first discusses the ethical frameworks of several other Protestant theologians, including Antonius Driessen, Willem Teellinck, Campegius Vitringa, Benedictus Pictetus, Petrus van Mastricht, August Friedrich Christian Vilmar, Hans Lassen Martensen, Heinrich Heppe, and Adolf von Harless. After having noticed that the ethical formulations of these theologians are more or less the same, Bavinck chooses a similar, traditional structure for his own formu-

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted from *GE-Lindeboom*, 14–15; cf. *GE*, §2, p. 5: “In de dogmatiek: wat doet God voor, in ons? Hij is daar alles. De dogmatiek is een woord Gods aan ons, van buiten, boven tot ons komende; wij passief, luisterend, ons latende bewerken. In de Ethiek: wat wordt er van ons, als God ons zoo bewerkt, wat doen wij voor hem? Wij actief, juist door, op grond der daden Gods aan en in ons, wij psalmzingend en lovend en dankende God. Dogmatiek: God tot ons afdalend. Ethiek: wij tot God opstijgend. Dogmatiek: Hij de onze. Ethiek: wij de zijne. Dogmatiek: zij zullen zijn aangezicht zien. Ethiek: Zijn naam zal op hun voorhoofden wezen. Dogmatiek: uit God. Ethiek: tot God. Dogmatiek: Hij heeft ons liefgehad. Ethiek: daarom hebben wij hem lief.”

<sup>20</sup> *GE*, §4, p. 4; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> *GE*, §4, p. 5; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 22.

lation. Thus he organizes the structure of his ethics into three parts: (1) man before conversion—the state of sin, conscience, morality, *ethica naturalis*; (2) regenerate man—the new life in its preparation, origin, parts, states, conditions, resources, blessings, marks, sicknesses, and consummation; and (3) regenerate man in his family, occupation, society, nation, and church.<sup>22</sup> Bavinck indicates that he intends to end his ethics on an eschatological note with some reflections on the Kingdom of God.

Later in the manuscript Bavinck elaborates on this threefold plan, adjusting the titles of the three parts as follows: (1) man before conversion; (2) man in the conversion; and (3) man after conversion.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Bavinck adds a fourth part, “The social spheres in which moral life has to reveal itself.”

### Part One of *Reformed Ethics*

Of course in this article it is not possible to discuss the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript in detail. Thus I will have to confine myself to a few comments on its main outlines. A quick glance at the titles of the three parts gives the impression that Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics* is entirely dogmatic in character. Dogmatics precedes ethics, and ethics is completely dependent on dogmatics. This interrelationship is confirmed when we read the first part of Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics*: man before the conversion. This part is divided into three chapters and twelve sections.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *GE*, §3, p. 2: “Zoo krijgen we dus drie deelen: I. De mensch voor de bekering, in den toestand der zonde, geweten, zedelijkheid, ethica naturalis. II. De mensch wedergeboren; ’t nieuwe leven in zijn voorbereiding, oorsprong, deelen, staten, toevallen, hulpmiddelen, zegen, kenteekenen, krankheid en dood, voltooiing [...] III. De wedergeboren mensch in het huisgezin, beroep, maatschappij, staat, kerk”; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 23, 137, 256.

<sup>24</sup> Deel 1. De mensch voor de bekering. Hoofdstuk 1: De menschelijke natuur, op zichzelf beschouwd (§5. De mensch geschapen naar Gods beeld; §6. De inhoud der menschelijke natuur; §7. De levensvertrouwingen/betrekkingen van den mensch). Hoofdstuk 2: De mensch in de toestand der zonde (§8. De oude/natuurlijke mensch; §9. Beginsel en verdeeling der zonden; §10. Zelfzuchtige zonden in engeren zin; §11. Zonden tegen den naaste; §12. Zonden

In the first chapter, entitled, "Human nature, considered in itself," Bavinck states that man is created in the image of God.<sup>25</sup> In ethics, man's creation in the image of God is a crucial given. According to Bavinck, three basic principles can be derived from man's creation in God's image, namely: (1) Originally man was good; (2) Morally man cannot be properly understood apart from God; (3) Man's nature was corrupted by sin. Bavinck defends these basic principles against Fichte, Hegel, Rothe, and Darwin.<sup>26</sup>

Bavinck devotes the second chapter of the first part of *Reformed Ethics* to the doctrine of sin. He starts by clarifying that he will not talk about the nature, guilt, and punishment of sin. These issues should be treated in dogmatics.<sup>27</sup> Another part of the doctrine of sin, however, should find its place in ethics. Bavinck tells his students that he learned this from theologians like Vilmar, Lampe, Buddaeus, and others, all of whom developed their doctrines of sin in both dogmatics and ethics.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, in the second chapter Bavinck designs a detailed system of sins. He distinguishes three types of sin: selfish sins, sins against one's neighbor, and sins against God. Each can be divided into sensual (zinnelijke) and spiritual (geestelijke) sins.<sup>29</sup> For example, sins against one's neighbor are sins in which the neighbor or

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tegen God; later Bavinck adds a section about Graden in de zonden). Hoofdstuk 3: De zedelijke natuur des menschen in den toestand der zonde (§13. Het beeld Gods in den gevallen mensch; §14. Het geweten; §15. De wet; §16. De justitia civilis). In the *GE-Lindeboom* manuscript the titles are almost identical.

<sup>25</sup> Bavinck elaborates on the image of God in the second volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics*. Therein he begins the chapter about human nature with these words: "The essence of human nature is its being [created in] the image of God" (Herman Bavinck, *God and Creation*, vol. 2 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 530).

<sup>26</sup> *GE*, §5, pp. 3–9; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 25–30.

<sup>27</sup> *GE*, §9, p. 1; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 49. Bavinck discusses the origin, spread, nature, and punishment of sin in the third volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics* (Herman Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, vol. 3 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 25–190).

<sup>28</sup> *GE-Lindeboom*, 49; cf. *GE*, §9, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> *GE*, §§10–12; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 70–80.



what belongs to him is used for oneself. These sins can be sensual in character: sins against the neighbor's decency, property, or life. They also can be spiritual in character: sins against the neighbor's good reputation or his authority.<sup>30</sup> Bavinck's ethical doctrine of sin, therefore, is clearly a supplement to the doctrine of sin offered in his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

In the third chapter Bavinck sketches "The moral condition of man in the state of sin." He describes the consequences of sin for the nature of man, for soul and body, for reason, will and feelings, and he concludes that natural man lacks every capability to do what is right.<sup>31</sup> God conserves humanity, however, via his general grace which curbs man's inclination to do evil. Although man has fallen into sin, he still has a reasonable, moral nature<sup>32</sup> which reveals itself in human conscience.<sup>33</sup> According to Bavinck human conscience is bound to God's law.<sup>34</sup> For that reason he follows with sections on natural law (*lex naturalis*) and on how this law takes shape in individuals, state, and society.<sup>35</sup>

## Part Two of *Reformed Ethics*

The second part of Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* offers a compre-

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<sup>30</sup> *GE*, §11; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 75–79.

<sup>31</sup> *GE*, §13, p. 7; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 86: "[...] de natuurlijke mensch mist alle vermogens om het goede te doen."

<sup>32</sup> *GE*, §13, §15, p. 1; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 81–91, 124; Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *GE*, §14, §15, p. 1; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 124. In the third volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics* Bavinck argues that "before the fall, strictly speaking, there was no conscience in man" and that "human conscience is the subjective proof of humanity's fall" (Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 173). Otherwise Bavinck does not pay much attention to human conscience in the *Reformed Dogmatics*. He was probably of the opinion that that this topic should be discussed in ethics. In any case he devotes a long section to human conscience in *Reformed Ethics* (*GE*, §14; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 91–124). Bavinck already wrote an article on human conscience in 1881: Herman Bavinck, "Het geweten," in *Kennis en leven. Opstellen en artikelen uit vroegere jaren* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, s.a. [1922]), 13–27.

<sup>34</sup> *GE*, §15, p. 1; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 124.

<sup>35</sup> *GE*, §15, §16; cf. *GE-Lindeboom*, 124–136.

hensive analysis of the spiritual life of the Christian organized into ten sections.<sup>36</sup> Bavinck starts with a description of the nature of spiritual life. Its basic principle is loving God, and this love is brought about by the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

After sections on the origin of spiritual life (i.e. regeneration), its fundamental activity (i.e. faith), and objections to the views of mysticism, pietism and Methodism,<sup>38</sup> Bavinck arrives at the heart of spiritual life: the imitation of Christ—a subject which interested Bavinck during his whole career.<sup>39</sup> Christ is not only a king, a priest and a prophet, he argues, but also a model, an example, an ideal. This implies that we have to follow Him.<sup>40</sup> According to Bavinck the imitation of Christ does not mean that we have to duplicate Christ's way of living literally or physically, especially not his poverty, chastity, and obedience.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Bavinck rejects the way of life in Roman Catholic monasteries. Neither does imitating Christ involve any kind of mysticism or a rationalistic obedience to Christ's commandments.<sup>42</sup> For Bavinck, rather, imitating Christ consists in "the recognition of Christ as a Mediator." Inwardly, Christ must take shape in us. Outwardly, our lives must be shaped in conformity with the life of Christ. The imitation of Christ becomes manifest in vir-

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<sup>36</sup> Deel II. De mensch in de bekering. §17. De natuur van het geestelijk leven; §18. Oorsprongen van het geestelijk leven; §19. De (eerste, grond)werkzaamheid van het geestelijk leven; §20. Mysticisme, Pietisme en Methodisme; §21. De vorm van het geestelijk leven (De navolging van Christus); §22. De ontwikkeling van het geestelijk leven; §23. De verzekering (en Verzegeling); §24. De krankheden van het geestelijk leven en hare oorzaken; §25. Middelen tot herstel; §26. Volmaking van 't geestelijk leven; *Meditatio mortis*. In the *GE-Lindeboom* manuscript the titles are almost identical.

<sup>37</sup> *GE*, §17, p. 8; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 5; *GE-Lindeboom*, 139.

<sup>38</sup> *GE*, §20; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 19–41; *GE-Lindeboom*, 144–174.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. John Bolt, "The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck," PhD diss., St. Michael's College, 1982; *idem*, "Christ and the Law in the Ethics of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, no. 1 (1993): 45–73.

<sup>40</sup> *GE*, §21, p. 1; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 41v.; *GE-Lindeboom*, 174.

<sup>41</sup> *GE*, §21, p. 22; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 56v.; *GE-Lindeboom*, 184ff.

<sup>42</sup> *GE*, §21, p. 23; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 57v.; *GE-Lindeboom*, 185.

tues like righteousness, sanctity, love, and patience.<sup>43</sup>

Bavinck continues with sections on the growth of spiritual life, the assurance of faith, sicknesses of spiritual life (i.e. the struggle between flesh and spirit, temptations and spiritual abandonment), remedies to restore spiritual life (i.e. prayer, meditation, reading the Word of God, singing, isolation, fasting, watching, and vows), and finally the consummation of spiritual life after death.<sup>44</sup>

The very long section on the assurance of faith is especially striking since one can ask whether it is proper to treat this theme in ethics. After a long historical survey of the topic Bavinck gives special attention to the doctrine of the marks (kentekenen) of the believer, such as, grief over sin, love of God's Word, and serving God. This section undoubtedly reflects the situation of the Dutch Reformed Churches (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) in Bavinck's day including Bavinck's own responsibility as a seminary professor for this church. In the tradition of the Secession the doctrine of the marks of grace was a difficult theme, one which directly influenced the spirituality of the congregation. Moreover, discussions about this doctrine could be linked to heated disputes over Abraham Kuyper's theory of presumptive regeneration.<sup>45</sup> It is telling, then, that we find in Van der Veen's and Lindeboom's class notes on this section a reference to Bavinck's own years as a minister in the congregation of the Christian Reformed Church (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk) at Franeker!<sup>46</sup> In both sets of

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<sup>43</sup> *GE*, §21, pp. 24ff.; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 58v.; *GE-Lindeboom*, 185–187.

<sup>44</sup> *GE*, §§22–26; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 60–77, 77–125, 125–156, 156–159, 159–160; *GE-Lindeboom*, 187–199, 199–233, 233–251, 251–254, 255.

<sup>45</sup> See Jan Veenhof, "A History of Theology and Spirituality in the Dutch Reformed Churches (Gereformeerde Kerken), 1892–1992," trans. Harry Boonstra, *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, no. 2 (1993): 268–271; *idem*, "Discussie over het zelfonderzoek—Sleutel tot verstaan van het schisma van 1944. Terreinverkenning ten dienst van verder onderzoek," in *Vrij gereformeerd: Verzamelde artikelen*, ed. Dirk van Keulen, et al. (Kampen 2005), 183–190.

<sup>46</sup> *GE-Van der Veen*, 89: "Prof. B. vertelde, dat een vrouw uit zijn vroegere gem. verzegeld was geworden door Jesaja 27:1!"; *GE-Lindeboom*, 208: "Ja zelfs heb ik in mijne Gemeente te Franeker—aldus verhaalde Prof. Bavinck—eene vrouw gekend, die verzegeld was met Jes. 27:1." The reference to Franeker is

class notes there are no other references to Bavinck's pastorate at Franeker. It is interesting, too, that Bavinck twice criticizes Abraham Kuyper in this section, which is also noted in both Van der Veen's and Lindeboom's class notes.<sup>47</sup> In light of Kuyper's highly controversial views on presumptive regeneration among the Secession churches Bavinck's criticism can hardly be accidental. We can only conclude, therefore, that for Bavinck the assurance of faith and the doctrine of the marks of grace were vitally important.

### Part Three of *Reformed Ethics*

The third part of Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* is entitled "Man after conversion." It comprises three chapters. In the first chapter<sup>48</sup> Bavinck discusses "Sanctification in general," a theme he also discusses in the fourth volume of the *Reformed Dogmatics*.<sup>49</sup> In *Reformed Ethics* Bavinck concentrates on the doctrine of duty. A general discussion of the relationship between the Christian and the law<sup>50</sup> is followed by discussions about the difference between precepts or commands (*praecepta*) and counsels (*consilia*)—Bavinck explicitly rejects the Roman Catholic view of counsels—about acts which are morally indifferent (*adiaphora*), and about the clash (*collisio*) of duties.<sup>51</sup> Bavinck mentions some of these topics briefly in the *Reformed Dogmatics*,<sup>52</sup> but the broad elaboration of them in the *Reformed Ethics* clearly shows that Bavinck deliberately divided

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lacking in *GE*.

<sup>47</sup> *GE*, §22, pp. 25, 37. See *GE-Van der Veen*, 101v., 113; *GE-Lindeboom*, 217, 226. We do not find Kuyper's name elsewhere in the *GE-Van der Veen* and *GE-Lindeboom* manuscripts.

<sup>48</sup> Deel III. De mensch na de bekeering. Hoofdstuk 1: De heiliging in 't algemeen (§27. De leer (theorie) van de plicht; §28. *Praecepta* en *consilia*; §29. De plicht en het geoorloofde; *Adiaphora*; §30. *Collisio* van plichten; §31: *Verdeeling* der plichten).

<sup>49</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, vol. 4 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 230ff.

<sup>50</sup> *GE*, §27; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 161–180; *GE-Lindeboom*, 256–266.

<sup>51</sup> *GE*, §§28–31; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 180–245; *GE-Lindeboom*, 266–309.

<sup>52</sup> Bavinck, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, 239, 260.

the subject matter between dogmatics and ethics and that his *Reformed Ethics* was intended to be a companion to his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

In the second, third and fourth chapters of part three Bavinck connects the doctrine of duty with the Ten Commandments. In the second chapter he analyzes the first four commands as duties to God.<sup>53</sup> In the third chapter he discusses some duties to ourselves and links this duty to the fifth command. Bavinck writes concretely about duties to our physical life (i.e. one's care for food and clothing) and to our soul.<sup>54</sup> Finally, in the fourth chapter Bavinck discusses Christian charity and links this duty to the sixth through tenth commands.<sup>55</sup>

#### Part Four of *Reformed Ethics*

In the fourth part of *Reformed Ethics* Bavinck planned to discuss how the Christian life should reveal itself in several social spheres. The first chapter is devoted to the family. For example, Bavinck explains in detail about the obligation to marry, impediments to marriage, degrees of consanguinity, engagement, the celebration of marriage, the nature of marriage, divorce, and the relationship between man and wife.<sup>56</sup> Then the document breaks off.

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<sup>53</sup> *GE*, §§32–35; cf. *GE-Van der Veen*, 268–327; *GE-Lindeboom*, 325–385.

<sup>54</sup> Hoofdstuk 3. Plichten jegens onszelven (§36. In 't algemeen (de plicht tot zelfbehoud); §37. Plichten jegens het lichamelijk leven; §38. Vervolg: Zorg voor het voedsel; §39. Vervolg: Zorg voor de kleding; §40. Vervolg: Zorg voor het leven; §41. Plichten jegens 't lichamelijk leven, voortvloeiende uit het 7e, 8e, en 9e gebod; §42. Plichten jegens de ziel).

<sup>55</sup> Hoofdstuk 4. Plichten jegens den Naaste; §43. De naastenliefde in het algemeen; §44. Graden in de naastenliefde; §45. Zorg voor 't leven des naasten (zesde gebod); §46. Plichten jegens de eerbaarheid van den naaste (zevende gebod); §47. Plichten jegens den eigendom van den naaste (achtste gebod); §48. Plichten jegens den goeden naam van den naaste (negende gebod); §49. De begerlijkheid (tiende gebod).

<sup>56</sup> Deel IV. De levenskringen, waarin het zedelijk leven zich heeft te openbaren. Hoofdstuk 1: De familie. §50. De geschiedenis der familie; §51. De verplichting tot het huwelijk; §52. Beletselen van het huwelijk; §53. De graden der bloedverwantschap; §54. De verloving; §55. De huwelijksluiting; §56. Het

Bavinck probably would have added paragraphs about topics such as raising children, brothers and sisters, friendship, occupation, society, nation, and church. This much may be inferred from the introduction of the manuscript and from another unpublished document in the Bavinck Archives, which was likely used by Bavinck in his lectures on ethics, and which, I believe, also dates from the 1880s.<sup>57</sup>

### INTERMEZZO

As I noted above Bavinck must have worked on his *Reformed Dogmatics* and his *Reformed Ethics* at the same time for many years. The careful division of the subject matter between dogmatics and ethics shows that his *Reformed Ethics* was intended as a companion to his *Reformed Dogmatics*. This interrelation raises the question of why Bavinck did not finish and publish his *Reformed Ethics*. This question is even more compelling when we realize that around 1900 there was an urgent need for a Reformed ethics in the Dutch Reformed Churches. In 1897 Geesink, Professor of Ethics at the Free University, in his rectorial address entitled "Ethics in Re-

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wezen van het huwelijk; §57. De echtscheiding; §58. Man en vrouw.

<sup>57</sup>The document is entitled *Ethiek (Ethics)*, and it can be found in the Bavinck Archives, box 4/32, no. 43. After an introductory section covering terminology the *Ethics* document contains sections about philosophical ethics in general, principal schools of philosophical ethics, a brief outline of the history of philosophical ethics, and contemporary views of philosophical ethics. These sections are followed by a short sketch of Reformed ethics. The sketch consists of three main sections: (1) an introduction (with subsections on terminology, the history of Reformed ethics, and the foundations of Reformed ethics), (2) the first part, and (3) the second part. The first part, which has no title, is divided into seven subsections: (a) Doctrine of sin; (b) The origin of spiritual life; (c) Its development; (d) Its consummation; (e) Its resources; (f) Its blessing; and (g) Its norm. The second part, entitled, "Revelation of that [spiritual] life in the World," is divided into six subsections: (a) In the family (Bavinck plans to speak about marriage; monogamy; the single state; second marriage; adultery; celibacy; divorce; the duties, aim and blessing of marriage; parents and children; upbringing; education; brothers and sisters; shaping of the character; servants; family friends; friendship); (b) In the obligation; (c) In society; (d) In the state; (e) In the church; and finally (f) a section on the Kingdom of God.

formed Theology” (De ethiek in de gereformeerde theologie) complains about “the dearth in our time of specifically Reformed ethical studies.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Bavinck himself was well aware of the need. In the preface of his small booklet, *Present-Day Morality (Hedendaagsche moraal)*, which was published in 1902, Bavinck writes:

In our circles [i.e. the Dutch Reformed Churches] we are greatly lacking in publications which discuss and elucidate the moral principles and questions of the present day. In this respect, we are suffering from a pitiful deficiency, which hopefully will be remedied soon by the cooperation and effort of many.<sup>59</sup>

Why, then, did Bavinck not publish his *Reformed Ethics*? Was Geesink working on a Reformed ethics? And did Bavinck not want to obstruct his colleague by thwarting his plans? If this were true, Bavinck’s position would be comparable with Abraham Kuyper’s with regard to dogmatics. After the completion of his *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* (1894) Kuyper planned to write a Reformed dogmatics, but he gave up his plan when he heard that Bavinck was working on such a project.<sup>60</sup> Geesink did in fact write a Reformed ethics, but he did not publish it during his lifetime. The Dutch Reformed Churches had to wait until 1931 for its posthumous

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<sup>58</sup> W. Geesink, *De ethiek in de gereformeerde theologie. Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat der Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam op 20 oktober 1897* (Amsterdam: Kirchner, 1897), 6: “Deze armoede van onzen tijd aan specifiek Gereformeerde ethische studie.”

<sup>59</sup> H. Bavinck, *Hedendaagsche moraal* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902), 7: “Aan geschriften, die de zedelijke beginselen en vraagstukken van den tegenwoordigen tijd bespreken en toelichten, bestaat er in onze kringen een groot gebrek. Wij lijden ook in dit opzicht aan een jammerlijk tekort, dat door veler samenwerking en inspanning spoedig moge ingehaald worden.”

<sup>60</sup> J. Stellingwerff, “Over de bibliotheek en de boeken van dr. A. Kuyper en over enkele publicaties, die zijn ijdelheid zouden hebben gestreeld of zijn verweer opgeroepen indien ze tijdens zijn leven waren verschenen,” in *Geboekt in eigen huis: Bevattende een opsomming van de werken van Abraham Kuyper zoals vermeld in de catalogus van de bibliotheek van de Vrije Universiteit* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1987), 31ff.

publication by Valentijn Hepp.<sup>61</sup> Or did Bavinck have another reason for not publishing his *Reformed Ethics*? Perhaps another manuscript gives a clue here.

### THE DE JONG MANUSCRIPT

The Bavinck Archives also contain a handwritten manuscript entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek van Profess. Dr. H. Bavinck (Reformed Ethics of Prof. Bavinck)*.<sup>62</sup> Just like the Van der Veen and Lindeboom manuscripts, the De Jong manuscript is comprised of lecture notes. The manuscript's author is Jelle Michiels de Jong (1874–1927), who began studying theology at Kampen in September 1901. In 1903 De Jong followed Bavinck to Amsterdam to continue his studies at the Free University.<sup>63</sup> Subsequently, he worked as a minister in the small Frisian villages of Foudgum (1906), Wons (1913), and Duurswoude (1918–1924).<sup>64</sup>



J. M. De Jong (1874–1927)

<sup>61</sup> W. Geesink, *Gereformeerde ethiek, voor den druk gereed gemaakt en voorzien van een levensbeschrijving door Prof. Dr. V. Hepp*, 2 vols. (Kampen: J.H. Kok 1931).

<sup>62</sup> *Gereformeerde Ethiek van Profess. Dr. H. Bavinck*, made by Jelle Michiels de Jong, Bavinck Archives, box 26/32 (HB Diktaten); hereafter abbreviated as *GE-De Jong*. The Library of the Protestant Theological University at Kampen preserves a handwritten duplicate of the *GE-De Jong* manuscript (shelf mark 187D15). This anonymous duplicate once belonged to G.C. Berkouwer, the former dogmatician of the Free University. He received the manuscript as a gift on the occasion of his inaugural address on 11 October 1940.

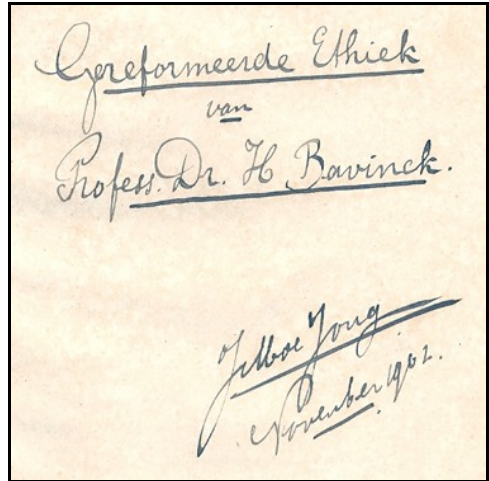
<sup>63</sup> Van Gelderen and Rozemond, *Gegevens*, 122.

<sup>64</sup> *Gemeenten en predikanten van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, s.l. (uitgave Algemeen secretariaat van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, 1992), 316. See also D. v.d. Meulen, "Ds J.M. de Jong" in *Jaarboek ten dienste*



De Jong signed the title page of the manuscript and dated it “November 1902”—a few weeks before Bavinck moved from Kampen to the Free University on 16 December 1902.<sup>65</sup> De Jong’s date explains why the manuscript is incomplete: after November 1902 Bavinck no longer gave lectures in ethics at Kampen. Just like the manuscripts of Van der Veen and Lindeboom, the De Jong manuscript often gives the impression that the text comes close to Bavinck himself. We even find a sentence with the verb in the first person singular.<sup>66</sup>

The De Jong manuscript, which numbers 331 pages, starts with ethical terminology. Bavinck explains, for example, the etymologies of selected Greek, Latin, and Germanic words,<sup>67</sup> and the meaning of and the difference between terms like habit (*gewoonte*), usage (*gebruik*), custom (*zede*), and morality (*zedelijkheid*)<sup>68</sup>. As in the other manuscripts Bavinck prefers the term “ethics” rather than “morality” or the German “*Sittenlehre*.”<sup>69</sup> The task of ethics is “to let us see and know the principle and the system of morality.”<sup>70</sup>



Cover page from the De Jong handwritten “dictaat” of Reformed Ethics

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*van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, vol. 12, ed. G. Doekes and J.C. Rullmann (Goes 1928), 355–357.

<sup>65</sup> Van Gelderen and Rozemond, *Gegevens*, 32.

<sup>66</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 26.

<sup>67</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 1–7.

<sup>68</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 7–12; cf. 153.

<sup>69</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 12–17.

<sup>70</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 17: “Ethiek heeft dus tot taak om ons te doen zien en kennen: Het Principe in de eerste plaats en het systeem van het zedelijke in de tweede plaats.”

Gereformeerde Ethiek.Inleiding.

## § I Begrip der Ethiek.

I De oudste getuigenissen welke ons een inzicht geven in 't ontstaan en de beteekenis vft menschelyke voorstellingen zijn ons bewaard in de Taal. De taal is het oudste document voor de vorming en ontwikkeling vft menschelyke begrippen. Daarom begint elke wetenschap en ook de Ethiek met de afleiding vft naam, waarmee deze wetenschap is aangeduid. Toch moet men er daarbij op bedacht zijn dat de beteekenis vft woorden nooit stil staat, verandert altyd zich ontwikkelt, en het dus licht gebeuren kan dat een woord eene beteekenis waarin wij het nu gebruiken voortpronkelyk niet gehad heeft en omgekeerd. Bij de etymologie moet dus tegelykertyd nagegaan de geschiedenis vft beteekenis vft woord.

De Jong manuscript, p. 1

After this general introduction the manuscript is split up into two parts. Surprisingly, in the first part (pp. 18–139!) Bavinck teaches philosophical ethics. He presents the characteristic questions which this discipline seeks to answer, such as, “What is good?” and “Why is it good?”<sup>71</sup> In Bavinck’s view ethics is grounded in philosophy; thus, “someone’s philosophical ethics,” writes Bavinck, “will be in accordance with the principles of his philosophy.”<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> GE-De Jong, 24.<sup>72</sup> GE-De Jong, 23, 142.

Bavinck aims to sketch a detailed outline of the history of philosophical ethics and opts for a systematic approach.<sup>73</sup> He starts by describing and analyzing six philosophical systems which seek the principle and the norm for ethics in man itself, namely: (1) the rational ethics of classical Greek philosophy; (2) the ethics of a special moral faculty, a *semen virtutis* or moral sense (Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson); (3) the ethics of moral sentiment (Adam Smith); (4) the ethics of aesthetic formalism (Johann Friedrich Herbart); (5) the ethics of practical reason (Immanuel Kant); and (6) the ethics of intuitive cognition (Thomas Reid).<sup>74</sup>

This survey is followed by an analysis of nine philosophical systems which seek the principle and the norm for ethics outside of man, namely: (1) in God; (2) in nature (Heraclitus, Stoa, Tolstoy); (3) in the government (Thomas Hobbes); (4) Hedonism (Aristippus); (5) Eudemonism (Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius); (6) the ethics of self-improvement (zelfvolmaking) (Spinoza); (7) Utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill); (8) the ethics of Evolutionism (Charles Darwin, John Spencer); and (9) Positivism (Auguste Comte).<sup>75</sup> Finally, Bavinck discusses what he terms “the despair of all morality or pessimism” (Eduard von Hartmann, Arthur Schopenhauer).<sup>76</sup>

For the most part these descriptions are stated in a neutral and instructional style, and Bavinck withholds his own opinions. Only a few times does he make comments. At the end of the section on classical Greek philosophy, for instance, Bavinck mentions that many scholastic theologians adopted Aristotelian thought in their ethics. According to Bavinck, “in itself there is no great objection to this.”<sup>77</sup> “We can profit,” continues Bavinck, “from Aristotelian thought, and without doubt Aristotle’s ethics is basically the best

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<sup>73</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 25–26.

<sup>74</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 26–64.

<sup>75</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 64–18.

<sup>76</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 129–138.

<sup>77</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 36: “Op zichzelf is hiertegen niet zoo groot bezwaar.”

philosophical ethics.”<sup>78</sup> According to Bavinck Aristotle's only mistake is to think that man can achieve the ethical ideal—developing all his moral faculties and strengths in accordance with his own moral nature—by his own strength.<sup>79</sup> Bavinck is very critical in his description of the ethics of evolutionism.<sup>80</sup> Several times in the manuscript he severely opposes the theories of Darwin.<sup>81</sup>

It is striking for present-day readers that Bavinck hardly pays any attention to Nietzsche. Bavinck occasionally mentions his name,<sup>82</sup> but compared with other philosophers Nietzsche comes off badly. This is understandable, however, when we realize that around 1900 Nietzsche was not well-known in the Netherlands.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 36: “Ook met de gedachten van Arist[oteles] kunnen we onze winst doen en zonder twijfel is de Ethiek van Aristoteles de beste philos[ophische] Ethiek in hoofdzaak.”

<sup>79</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 36: “Want wat is het schone er in [Aristotle's philosophical ethics]? Dat hij met de Christenen hierin overeenstemt dat de mensch in het zedelijke al de hem geschonken gaven en krachten harmonisch ontwikkelen moet in overeenstemming met zijne zedelijke natuur. Hij dwaalt alleen daarin dat dat ideaal voor den mensch in eigen kracht bereikbaar zou zijn.”

<sup>80</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 100–120.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, *GE-De Jong*, 18ff., 161ff., 166, 174, 205, 281ff., 291ff. Many of Bavinck's other publications are likewise sharply critical of Darwin (Bavinck, *God and Creation*, 83, 511–520, 525ff., 535–537; *idem*, “Evolution” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 105–118; cf. Willem-Jan de Wit, “Beeld van gorilla en chimpansee of beeld van God?: De eerste pagina's van Herman Bavinck's manuscript ‘De mensch, Gods Evenbeeld’ (1884). Inleiding, tekst en commentaar,” in *Ontmoetingen met Bavinck*, ed. George Harinck and Gerrit Neven (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006), 165–182).

<sup>82</sup> See *GE-De Jong*, 24ff., 136–138, 176, 251, 267. In the *Reformed Dogmatics*, too, Bavinck mentions Nietzsche's name only a few times: Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 118; *idem*, *God and Creation*, 44, 89, 210, 526; *idem*, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, 59, 238, 531; *idem*, *Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, 258, 647.

<sup>83</sup> To the best of my knowledge Abraham Kuyper introduced Nietzsche's philosophy in the Netherlands in his 1892 rectorial address entitled *De verflauwing der grenzen* (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1892) (English translation: “The Blurring of the Boundaries” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans/Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1998), 363–402).

men het zoeken in rede, geweten, verstand, ge-  
voel, in een byz. aandaling des gevoels byv.  
van medelijden etc.

Of men kan het zoeken buiten den mensch. b.v.  
in God, natuur, staat, overheid, eigen vol-  
making, anderer geluk, welvaart, lusten  
genot.

Of eindelijk kan men met velen v[er] tegenw[er]stijg  
v[er] alle Philos. Eth. wanhopen.

Dienaangaande, dienovereenkomstig zal ik  
trachten een overzicht te geven v[er] verschillende  
stelsels v[er] Philos. Ethiek.

## Hoofdstuk. I

A. Princiep en Norma in den Mensch.

§ 1. Ethiek v[er] d. Reeta Ratio.

Dit is die Eth., welke 't princiep en de norma v[er] redel.  
handelen vindt in 't menschen redel. natuur. 't is  
v[er] alle Rationeelle Ethiek (niet rationalist. Eth.).  
Dere Eth. dagteekent v[er] 't Grieken. 't is die Eth. welke na  
Socrates en Plato inzonderk door Aristoteles behan-  
delt werd. Bij de Grieken lag de grondslag v[er] 't redel.

De Jong manuscript, p. 26<sup>84</sup>

The second part of the De Jong manuscript is devoted to theo-  
logical ethics. Two sections can be distinguished. On pp. 139–160

<sup>84</sup> Ed. note: The last sentence before the beginning of Chapter 1 (lines 10-12 from top) reads as follows: “Concerning [all these possibilities] and corresponding to them, I will attempt to give an overview of the various systems of philosophical ethics.” [“Dienaangaande, dienovereenkomstig zal ik trachten een overzicht te geven v[er] d[e] verschillende stelsels van de philos[ophische] ethiek.”]

we find a short outline of Bavinck's theological ethics. It is possible that Bavinck started his 1901–1902 lectures on ethics in September 1901 with philosophical ethics.<sup>85</sup> Producing these lectures took so much time that Bavinck could not offer his students an elaborated theological ethics before the summer of 1902. For that reason he confined himself to an outline.

Bavinck begins the outline with an introduction to the following topics: related terminology; the question why philosophical ethics is insufficient (i.e. theoretically speaking philosophical ethics cannot find a norm for morality, and practically speaking it cannot overcome human selfishness); the relationship between dogmatics and ethics; and the history and organization of theological ethics.<sup>86</sup> After the introduction Bavinck divides his theological ethics into three chapters:

1. "The doctrine of the moral subject" contains sections on the following: man as the image of God; the disturbance of the image of God by sin; man's moral nature in the state of sin; man as a moral creature; the moral capacities of man; the moral acts of man; the insufficiency of natural morality; special grace; spiritual life; the development of spiritual life; the relationship between spiritual and moral life; and special gifts.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Other evidence, however, suggests that Bavinck taught theological ethics during the academic year 1901–1902 and again in 1902–1903 (*Handelingen der twee-en-zestigste vergadering van de Curatoren der Theologische School van "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland," gehouden 1–3 juli 1902 te Kampen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902), 26; cf. *Almanak van het studentencorps, "Fides Quaerit Intellectum," voor het jaar 1903* (Kampen: Ph. Zalsman, 1903), 37). During the year 1900–1901 Bavinck would have taught "Overzicht van de geschiedenis der Ethiek" (Survey of the history of ethics), which could be interpreted as philosophical ethics (*Handelingen der een-en-zestigste vergadering van de Curatoren der Theologische School van "De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland," gehouden 3–5 juli 1902 te Kampen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1901), 35; cf. *Almanak van het studentencorps, "Fides Quaerit Intellectum," voor het jaar 1902*, s.l. s.a., 33). Perhaps De Jong attended Bavinck's lectures in ethics one year before he officially started his theological studies.

<sup>86</sup> *GE-Lindeboom*, 139–145.

<sup>87</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 145–152: Deel A. Leer van het zedelijk subject (§1. De mensch als beeld Gods; §2. Verstoring van het beeld Gods door de mensch; §3.



2. “The doctrine of the law” contains sections on the following: the law as the rule of gratitude; the nature of law; the division of law; the breaching of law (i.e. a detailed doctrine of sin); and ten sections on the Ten Commandments.<sup>88</sup>

3. “The purpose of morality” contains sections on the following: the purpose of morality in general; the honor of God; the purpose of morality with regard to individual man; the purpose of morality with regard to families (i.e. the Christian family); moral good in society; moral good in company (including art, science and education); moral good in the nation; the church seen from a moral point of view; the kingdom of God.<sup>89</sup>

This brief survey of the outline and the organization of the De Jong manuscript reveals both similarities and differences between it and the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript. As for similarities both manuscripts start with man as the image of God and plan to end with the kingdom of God. Furthermore, the themes and contents of many sections can be found in both manuscripts. But there are also the following differences:

In the first place, the titles of the main parts differ. In the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript we have the dogmatic and schematic sounding “Man before the conversion,” “Man in the conversion,” and “Man after the conversion.” In the De Jong manuscript we find

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De mensch als zedelijk wezen in de toestand der zonde; §4. De inhoud van het zedelijke in de mensch; §5. De zedelijke kwaliteiten van de mensch (leer van de deugd); §6. De zedelijke handelingen van de mensch; §7. Ongenoegzaamheid der natuurlijke moraal; §8. Bijzondere genade; §9. 't Geestelijk leven; §10. Ontwikkeling van het geestelijk leven; §11. Geestelijk leven in verband met het zedelijk leven; §12. Bijzondere gaven).

<sup>88</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 152: Deel A. Leer van het zedelijk subject 155: Deel B. Leer van de Wet (§13. De wet als regel der dankbaarheid; §14. De natuur der (zede)wet; §15. Verdeeling der wet; §16. Overtreding der wet; §§17–26. 1e-10e gebod).

<sup>89</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 156–160: Deel C. Het doel van het zedelijke (§27. Doel der zedelijkheid; §28. De eere Gods; §29. Doel van het zedelijk goede van den enkelen mensch; §30. 't Zedelijk goede van de familiën; §31. 't Zedelijk goede in de maatschappij; §32. 't Zedelijk goede in den kring van het gezellig leven; §33. De staat; §34. De kerk uit zedelijk standpunt; §35. Het rijk Gods).

the more philosophical sounding “The doctrine of moral subject,” “The doctrine of law,” and “The purpose of morality.”

In the second place, the first and the second parts of the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript have been fused together into the first chapter of the De Jong manuscript.

In the third place, the third and the fourth parts of the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript have become the second and the third chapters of the De Jong manuscript. As a result the composition of the De Jong manuscript corresponds more or less with the composition Bavinck sketched in the introduction of his *Reformed Ethics* manuscript.

Finally, the doctrine of sin, which could be found in the first part of the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript, has been moved to the second chapter of the De Jong manuscript. Page 161 of the De Jong manuscript restarts its numbering at chapter 1, section 1: “Man as the image of God.”<sup>90</sup> This section is followed by these topics: “The vocation of man as created in the image of God,” “Fallen man,” “Principle and classification of sins,” “Stages and development of sin,” and “The image of God in fallen man.”<sup>91</sup> All of these sections have been worked out in detail.

I assume that Bavinck had again decided to deliver his lectures on theological ethics after the summer of 1902.<sup>92</sup> Thus the placement of the doctrine of sin in chapter two of the De Jong Manuscript is striking, for Bavinck discusses sin again in the first part of his *Reformed Ethics*. This repetition may be due to the fact

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<sup>90</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 161–180.

<sup>91</sup> *GE-De Jong*, 180–205, 206–234, 234–279, 280–296, and 296–325 respectively. These sections are numbered §§6–10. The numbering of the section on “Man as the image of God” as §1 is probably a mistake. I assume that it should have been numbered §5. The section numbers §§1–4 were reserved for the introduction.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Handelingen der twee-en-zestigste vergadering van de Curatoren der Theologische School van “De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland,” gehouden 1–3 juli 1902 te Kampen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902), 26: “Door Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck (zal D.V. in den cursus 1902/03 behandeld worden): [...] Ethiek: De leer van de zedelijke natuur des menschen in den toestand der zonde.”



that Bavinck, realizing that his forthcoming transfer to Amsterdam was taking more time than he liked, re-used his *Reformed Ethics* manuscript in the autumn of the year 1902.

## HERMAN BAVINCK, REFORMED ETHICS, AND PHILOSOPHICAL ETHICS

During his long career, Herman Bavinck was not only interested in dogmatics, but also in ethics.<sup>93</sup> This fact is illustrated by Bavinck's various publications related to ethics. In 1880, for example, he obtained his doctorate with a thesis on the ethics of Zwingli.<sup>94</sup> One year later Bavinck published two articles on the human conscience.<sup>95</sup> In 1885–1886 he wrote a series of three articles on the imitation of Christ.<sup>96</sup> Later in 1918 Bavinck would rewrite these articles to form the booklet, *The Imitation of Christ and Modern Life* (*De navolging van Christus en het moderne leven*).<sup>97</sup> Previously I mentioned the booklet, *Present-Day Morality* (1902). We also could think of Bavinck's speech on "Ethics and Politics" (recently translated into English), which he delivered at a meeting of the Dutch Royal Academy of Science in 1915,<sup>98</sup> and of his publications on the war question in the days of the First World War.<sup>99</sup>

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In addition to writing on ethics Bavinck also lectured on ethics

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Bolt, "Christ and the Law in the Ethics of Herman Bavinck," 45ff.

<sup>94</sup> Herman Bavinck, *De Ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli* (Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1880).

<sup>95</sup> Herman Bavinck, "Het geweten," *De vrije Kerk* 7 (1881): 27–37, 49–58; Also published in *Kennis en leven. Opstellen en artikelen uit vroegere jaren* (Kampen: J.H. Kok s.a. [1922]), 13–27.

<sup>96</sup> Herman Bavinck, "De navolging van Christus," *De vrije kerk* 11 (1885): 101–113, 203–213; 12 (1886): 321–333.

<sup>97</sup> Herman Bavinck, *De navolging van Christus en het Moderne Leven* (Kampen s.a. [1918]); Also published in *Kennis en leven: Opstellen en artikelen uit vroegere jaren* (Kampen s.a. [1922]), 115–144).

<sup>98</sup> Herman Bavinck, "Religion and Politics" in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, 261–278.

<sup>99</sup> See Dirk van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck and the War Question," in Dirk van Keulen and Martien E. Brinkman, eds., *Christian Faith and Violence, Volume 1* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005), 122–140.

during his years at Kampen. The extensive *Reformed Ethics* manuscript provides clear evidence that Bavinck must have worked simultaneously on his *Reformed Dogmatics* and his *Reformed Ethics*. The latter, which itself was dogmatical in character, was meant as a companion to the former.

Comparison of the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript with the Van der Veen and Lindeboom manuscripts brings to light that Bavinck, at least in 1884–1886 and 1894–1895, delivered his lectures on ethics on the basis of his *Reformed Ethics* manuscript.

Moreover, comparison of the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript with the De Jong manuscript reveals that Bavinck struggled with the composition of his ethics. In the introduction of *Reformed Ethics* he opts for a traditional composition in three parts. The subsequent, detailed elaboration, however, consists of four parts. The De Jong manuscript shows how Bavinck returned to a composition in three parts. In the De Jong Bavinck also says farewell to the titles “man before the conversion,” “man in the conversion,” and “man after the conversion.” Perhaps this structure was too schematic.

The biggest difference between the *Reformed Ethics* and the De Jong manuscripts is the place of philosophical ethics. In *Reformed Ethics* (and in the Van der Veen and Lindeboom manuscripts) Bavinck hardly pays any attention to philosophical ethics. In the De Jong manuscript, however, the whole first part is devoted to it.

We should not conclude from this difference that Bavinck taught philosophical ethics for the first time in the academic year 1901–1902. Previously I referred to another unpublished manuscript, *Ethics*, which probably dates from the 1880s.<sup>100</sup> In this document Bavinck discusses philosophical ethics in general, gives a brief outline of its history, and surveys contemporary views of it.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Ethiek (Ethics)*, Bavinck Archives, box 4/32, no. 43. See note 57 above.

<sup>101</sup> The brief outline of the history of philosophical ethics is divided into three sections: A. Greek philosophy; B. Newer times (Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza); C. Newest philosophy: criticism and speculation (Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher). Furthermore Bavinck discusses five “contemporary views of philosophical ethics”: independent morality, Positivism, Utilitarianism, Evolution

Compared with the De Jong manuscript the outline in *Ethics* is somewhat simplified, although Bavinck voices critiques more explicitly. The *Ethics* manuscript also shows that Bavinck paid attention to philosophical ethics earlier than the academic year 1901–1902 in his lectures on ethics. Possibly Bavinck taught ethics in a biennial program in which philosophical ethics alternated with theological ethics.

In the Bavinck Archives we find another manuscript, though a relatively small one.<sup>102</sup> I think it must date to Bavinck's last years at Kampen. After the introduction the manuscript is divided into two parts: (1) philosophical ethics and (2) Reformed ethics. The first philosophical sections are briefly worked out. Compared with the De Jong manuscript almost all the section titles are the same. Only in the philosophical part are two sections added: Buddhism and anarchism. Bavinck likely gave his 1901–1902 lectures in ethics with this smaller manuscript in front of him.

Comparison of all the manuscripts reveals that during his years at Kampen Bavinck's interest in philosophy increases.<sup>103</sup> At minimum we must admit that in 1902 philosophy has become Bavinck's serious discussion partner. It seems that, according to Bavinck, Reformed ethics could no longer afford to neglect philosophy. This thrust can also be seen in his booklet, *Present-Day Morality* (1902), and in his speech "Ethics and Politics" (1915). Philosophy holds an important position in both publications.

An analogous but opposite development can be observed with regard to the references to the works of Protestant theologians of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. In the *Reformed Ethics* manuscript (and in the Van der Veen and Lindeboom manuscripts) we find many references to the Protestant "fathers."

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theory, and Pessimism.

<sup>102</sup> Herman Bavinck, "Gereformeerde Ethiek," Bavinck Archives, box 15/32, no. 204.

<sup>103</sup> For a general analysis of Bavinck's attitude towards philosophy see Jan Veenhof, "De God van de filosofen en de God van de bijbel: Herman Bavinck en de wijsbegeerte," in *Ontmoetingen met Bavinck*, ed. George Harinck and Gerrit Neven (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006), 219–233.

In the De Jong manuscript the fathers can barely be found.

The differences between the *Reformed Ethics* and the De Jong manuscripts may also explain why Bavinck did not publish the former: he was not satisfied with it. Its composition had to be changed, and perhaps philosophy could no longer be ignored. Why Bavinck did not publish a Reformed ethics after his move to Amsterdam is a question I cannot answer. We can only guess. One reason could be that Geesink was responsible for ethics at the Free University.

Finally, it is often said in Bavinck scholarship that during his years at Amsterdam Bavinck lost interest in dogmatics and instead developed his interest in culture, philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. The first part of this argument was refuted some years ago by George Harinck, Kees van der Kooi, and Jasper Vree. They published Bavinck's notes on the position of Rev. J.B. Netelenbos in his conflict with the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches.<sup>104</sup> The notes show that Bavinck did not lose his interest in dogmatics.

The ethical manuscripts in the Bavinck Archives, moreover, clearly show that in his time at Kampen Bavinck was already interested in philosophy and culture. This observation supports Jan Veenhof's proposition that we should not exaggerate the distance between Bavinck's first (Kampen) and second (Amsterdam) period and that we should not interpret the differences between both periods as a split.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende": *Aantekeningen van H. Bavinck over de zaak-Netelenbos, het Schriftgezag en de situatie van de Gereformeerde Kerken (november 1919)*, ed. G. Harinck, C. van der Kooi, and J. Vree (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994).

<sup>105</sup> J. Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie: De Openbarings- en Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in vergelijking met die der ethische theologie* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1968), 101; cf. George Harinck, "Eén uur lang is het hier brandend en licht geweest," in *Ontmoetingen met Bavinck*, ed. George Harinck and Gerrit Neven (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006), 107–117.

# John Calvin: A Lecture on the Occasion of his 400th Birthday, July 10, 1509—1909<sup>1</sup>

*Herman Bavinck*  
*Translated by John Bolt*

The [Protestant] Reformation deserves its own distinct place in the midst of the movements and events that inaugurated the new [modern] era. It was born out of the soul's need for assurance of salvation, bore a religious-ethical character, and sought to reform the church of Christ in accord with the apostolic mandate.

Luther was the passionate prophet who first articulated the Reformation's great ideas in a voice that penetrated people's hearts and in a language they all understood. Alongside Luther, Zwingli deserves honor for undertaking an independent reformation in Switzerland, which, though related to the German Reformation, developed its own character by subordinating



*Portrait of John Calvin at the  
Bibliothèque de Genève  
(Library of Geneva)*

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<sup>1</sup>Originally published as Herman Bavinck, *Johannes Calvijn: Eene lezing ter gelegenheid van den vierhonderdsten gedenkdag zijner geboorte, 10 Juli 1509–1909* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1909); available online at <http://goo.gl/bNDuf>. The original contains no notes or images except for a black-and-white facsimile of John Calvin's portrait, displayed above, by an unknown painter. The following notes and images are supplied by the translator.

justification by faith to the glory of God's name.

Calvin, born on July 10, 1509, in the northern French city of Noyon, was twenty-five years younger than Luther and Zwingli and stood on the borderline between the first and second generation of Reformers. Nonetheless, he deserves to be counted with the aforementioned because he brought the two together into a higher unity, systematized the ideas of the Reformation, and organized its labors. With some justification Calvin has been called the "savior" of Protestantism, preserving the Reformation stream from silting up and allowing its life to flow widely and broadly into our modern history.

There is a noteworthy, providential harmony between the education that Calvin received as a youth and the task to which he was called as an adult. Unlike Luther, Calvin did not come from peasant stock but grew up in a middle class family that had achieved a measure of prosperity and social standing. His father, Gérard had married Jeanne Lefranc from an important family, and he occupied a significant post in the service of the church. The young Calvin thus had the opportunity to mingle with the sons of the respectable and even noble classes and in those circles to learn the manners that made it possible for him later in life to operate easily in the upper strata of society. These experiences gave him, despite his simplicity, an aristocratic bearing. For his own part, he valued this privilege highly. Though he was extraordinarily dedicated to his studies, he was definitely not a one-sided person only interested in learning. On the contrary, he lived in the midst of good company, was remarkably sensitive to the well-being of his fellow students, and demonstrated dedication to the smaller and greater responsibilities of friendship.

In addition to the privileges of this cultured life, Calvin also enjoyed an outstanding literary education. Only fourteen years of age, in August 1523 he was sent by his father to Paris to be educated at the Collège de Marche by the humanist scholar Maturin Cordier, who shared the humanist zeal to reform the Latin schools. Cordier guided the young Calvin through the mysteries of the Latin and French languages, thereby laying the foundation for the mastery

over both languages that Calvin exhibited later in his writings, a mastery still praised in our day by literary experts such as Ferdinand Brunetière.

Admittedly he only benefitted from Cordier's instruction for a short time because he was soon transferred to the Collège de Montaigu. Nonetheless, Calvin benefitted from this change because under the tutelage of Noël Bédier (Natalis Beda) he became familiar with the older, medieval methods of instruction and was able to see clearly the difference between the two. This instruction in Latin and French was followed later on in Bourges by Mechior Wolmar's instruction in Greek. It is also likely that in the summer of 1531, having returned to Paris to resume his humanistic studies, Calvin enjoyed instruction in the Hebrew language by the renowned François Vatable.

Calvin demonstrated his complete facility with the foremost Greek and Latin writers in his first published work, a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia* (*On Compassion*; The preface is dated April 4, 1532). Still, his vantage point in this work remains wholly humanistic. He makes only sparse use of Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers. Not until later did he place his linguistic ability, his philological awareness, his fine literary sense, and his powerful and passionate style in the service of the gospel. Notwithstanding his great literary ability he did not become a renowned writer. Words for him were not an end in themselves, only a means. His humanism was put in the service of the Reformation. Just as Moses was reared in the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to lead God's people by it, so too did Calvin in his later years put the knowledge gained in his literary education to use in translating and interpreting Holy Scripture and in the education and governance of the church of Christ.

A similarly superb formation in law was added to this literary education. Initially, Calvin's parents intended for him to serve the church and, therefore, according to the strange custom of the day, he was provided a benefice. However, when he had completed his preparatory studies his father made known his wish that his son study law as a more suitable way to gain wealth and honor. These

changes in the wishes of the elder Calvin undoubtedly were precipitated by a conflict with the Roman Church council of Noyon that lasted until the father's death and concluded with his excommunication. The father lost his sympathy for serving in the church and steered his young son in the direction of law.

Apparently the young Calvin had no objections, and he followed his father's wish. Perhaps, then, he had already come under the influence of his cousin Olivetan's<sup>2</sup> reservations about the truth and purity of the Roman church and religion. However that may be, at the end of 1527 or beginning of 1528, Calvin left Paris, first for Orléans to enjoy the tutelage of the famed jurist Pierre de l'Estoile, a representative of the old way, and then to Bourges where the law was taught on the new humanist foundation by the equally famous Andreas Alciatus.<sup>3</sup> Calvin progressed rapidly



Calvin's Preface to Olivetan's La Bible Qui est toute la Sainte escripture

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Robert Olivétan (c.1506–1538) translated the first French Protestant Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek texts (*La Bible Qui est toute la Sainte escripture*, 1535). John Calvin wrote a Latin preface for the translation.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Alciatus (Alciati; 1492–1550) was an Italian jurist and founder of the French humanist school of jurisprudence. Alciati is famous for his *Emblemata* (1531), a collection of short Latin verse texts and accompanying woodcuts that created a new European genre, the popular emblem book. The illustration provided (on the following page) is Emblem 5, “Human Wisdom is Folly Before the Lord.” Alciati’s accompanying note reads: “What should I say? How should I address by name this biform monster, which is not man, and not a snake? Rather a man without feet, a snake without upper parts, he can be called a snake-footed man and man-headed snake. The man farts out a snake; and the snake has belched a man. There is no end to the man, and no beginning to the beast. Thus at one time Cecrops reigned in learned Athens; thus Mother Earth brought forth the giants. This image signifies a cunning man, but one lacking in religion, and one who cares only for earthly things.” (Alciati’s *Book of Emblems* is available online in English at <http://www.mun.ca/alciato/etext.html>.)



in this science and was awarded an honorary doctorate. Above all else, this study of law benefitted Calvin in many ways for his later life: It sharpened his mind, opened his eyes to the differences between social classes, developed his diplomatic skills, and stood him in excellent stead for ordering the ecclesiastical and civil life of Geneva.



*From Alciati's Book of Emblems, 5, "Human wisdom is folly before the Lord"*

Nonetheless, all this preparation, notwithstanding its value, was insufficient to turn Calvin into a Reformer. For this something else was needed—a definite conversion needed to take place in his soul. From his childhood onward, Calvin possessed a pious demeanor and a strict conscience. He was guilty of no gross sins. Accusations to the contrary are pure slander. However a great change took hold in this life, long in preparation but finally and suddenly out in the open. When he arrived at Paris in 1523 the new, reformational ideas had penetrated many circles, and men such as Lefèvre had already made the case for needed reform in the church long before Luther. Luther's writings quickly became influential and were echoed by others. All of Paris was in upheaval. It is likely that Farel, a student of Lefèvre's, had established a secret church by 1523. The opposition did not sit still. The renowned theological faculty of the Sorbonne swiftly condemned Luther's doctrine as heresy, and the parliaments declared themselves decidedly against any novelty in religion. Francis I occasionally leaned in a different direction but had little inclination toward the Reformation. It was not long before persecution broke out. The first Protestant was martyred at the stake on August 18, 1523.

All this must have left a deep imprint on Calvin's serious personality—an imprint undoubtedly strengthened by his interaction with men such as Olivetan, Melchior Wolmar, Etienne de la Forge, G. Roussel, and others who were to a greater or lesser

degree inclined to the new ideas. It did not take long before Calvin himself took the determined step and joined the Reformation. Though doubts had arisen in his heart, he had held back because of reverence for the church. And yet, finally, the decisive hour arrived. Exactly when this took place we do not know. All we can say is that it took place before October 1533.

It is unknown to us how the change happened. Calvin, who did not like to talk about himself, spoke infrequently and sparsely about it. Actually, he only referred to it once in his later writings, in the Preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms* in 1537. He says there that previously he “was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery” until “God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame.” In his fine 1539 letter to Cardinal Sadoletto he provides, by way of example, a description of someone who became convicted of the errors of Rome and joined the Reformation. Perhaps this description drew from his own experience; for, in the description we get a picture of someone who in a lightning stroke uncovered the pool of errors in which he had been swimming, judges his previous life with weeping, and sighs and makes himself available to God. Now he was fully persuaded, and all doubt was banished from his heart.

Calvin thus came to the Reformation along similar paths as Luther and Zwingli—a deep religious-moral experience also characterized his conversion. Yet, amidst the similarity there was also distinction. Luther experienced deep guilt and discovered the joy of God’s forgiving grace in Christ. Zwingli experienced the gospel as a liberation from legal bondage toward the glorious joy of adoption as God’s child. Calvin experienced a deliverance from error to truth, from doubt to certainty. The German Reformer held on for dear life to the Scriptural word: “The just shall live by faith.” The Swiss Reformer’s favorite verse was the invitation from Jesus: “Come to me all who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest.” The Reformer who was born in France found his strength in Paul’s boast: “If God is for us, who can be against us.”

Calvin was unable to remain long in Paris after his conversion. A remarkable event took place on November 1, 1533. Calvin’s friend

Nicholas Cop, rector of the university, delivered a rectoral address that has justly been called the French equivalent of Luther's 95 theses and a manifesto of the French reformation. There are some who believe that Calvin was the author. If this is true, we would have the first evidence of his conversion. But even if this cannot be proved, and others judge it to be unlikely, the address remains of no lesser significance. It resulted in a storm of outrage and unleashed a persecution that easily surpassed the earlier one. Cop himself was forced to flee, and many others followed suit. Calvin too fled Paris. In May 1534 he refused the payment he had up to then received from his benefice. After wandering for a time in France, where we are not able to keep track of him completely, he left his fatherland and took abode in the city of Basel in February 1535.

He labored intensely to complete his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that he had started earlier in Angoulême. The fury of persecution continued in France. When the persecution evoked great bitterness in Germany, Francis I defended himself in an edict dated February 1, 1535, with the pretext that only [impious] Anabaptists and those who sought to disturb the peace and order of the state were being burned at the stake, not the pious adherents of the Reformation. When Calvin became aware of this edict he could no longer be silent. He completed his *Institutes* in great haste in order to defend his persecuted brothers from such a slanderous charge. He added to the work a preface to the King of France, dated August 23, 1535, which is stylistically one of the most polished products that flowed from Calvin's pen. It is also one of the most brilliant defenses of the Christian faith ever written.



Renata, Duchess of Ferrara

When the book finally appeared in print in March 1536, published in Latin

by the Basel printer Platter, Calvin had already left the city in order to stay a short while in the court of the Duchess Renata of Ferrara, who was sympathetic to the Reformation.<sup>4</sup> After staying for a few weeks he returned to Basel, spent a short time in France, and on his return journey arrived in Geneva and stayed overnight with the intention to continue on his trip.

However, matters were guided in a different direction. For several reasons, including the industrious agitation of Farel, the Reformation had found entry in Geneva. On August 27, 1535, it was officially endorsed by the civil authorities. Nonetheless, there was a long way to go before it took root in every heart and became a formative power in the life [of the city]. Demolition had taken place, but construction still needed to be done. Farel and those around him did the best they could, but they were not fully prepared for the enormous task that had now been placed on their shoulders. By chance, in July 1536, Farel heard that Calvin was in Geneva. He visited Calvin and pleaded with him to stay in order to further and complete the work of the Reformation in the city. But Calvin dismissed the request, excusing himself because of his youth, his inexperience, his natural bashfulness, and the need to continue with his study. But Farel would not let him go, and he repeated his entreaty, finally adjuring him with these words: “You may continue with your studies, but in the name of the Almighty God I declare to you: You will experience God’s curse if in the work of the Lord you refuse to help us and seek yourself more than Christ!”

This adjuration moved Calvin to the innermost depths of his soul. It seemed to him that he was hearing the voice of God himself in these words, and so he yielded to it and stayed. From this time on Calvin and Geneva belonged together.

Calvin was well prepared for the work that awaited him here. The *Institutes*, published only months earlier, contained the program for his labors. Calvin knew what he wanted. It was clear to him and his spirit was keen. The publication of this volume was

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<sup>4</sup> Renée de France (1510–1574; Italian: *Renata di Francia, Duchessa di Ferrara*) was the second daughter of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany; she became the Duchess of Ferrara in 1534.

Calvin's first, great reformational act, and at the same time a significant event in the history of Christ's church.



*“The Reformation Wall” in Geneva’s Bastions Park features Farel, Calvin, Beza, and Knox. Construction on this monument began in 1909, the year of this essay.*

What stands out above everything else in this instruction in the Christian religion is the complete certainty, the rock-hard conviction that shines through on every page. The man who is speaking knows that he is in the grip of truth, that he has made God's business his own, and that he is beyond all wavering. It is true that Calvin had previously entertained doubts. But following his conversion he is absolutely certain and considers all doubting as the most serious sin that can beset a Christian. There is not the slightest indication of any change in his conviction at any later time. The book he published was small in its scope, and he would amplify it many times. But he never changed its content. The basic ideas in the last edition are identical to those of the first. What he believed

at the outset he confessed until the end. Of course, Calvin built his *Institutes* on the foundation of his predecessors—Luther, Melancthon, Erasmus, Bucer, Zwingli, and Farel. He was clearly more of a systematizing spirit than a creative one. Nonetheless, he did much more than simply repeat what his predecessors had said. He took the scattered building blocks, organized them, and added to them. He rounded off the ideas of the Reformation, filled in the lacunae, moderated excesses, pruned hyperbolic statements, all with French sharpness and clarity, creating a synthesis in the confession of truth. Thus, thanks to his labors, a new type of Christian piety and theology came into being.

The certainty of which Calvin speaks in the *Institutes* is definitely not of a scientific or scholarly kind but of a religious-moral sort. It is the certainty of faith concerning the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. For Calvin this faith is a matter of absolute certainty—it is sure and solid because of the Holy Spirit's work in the human heart. Nothing in the entire world can satisfy us but the grace of God in the person of Christ who comes to us in the pages of Holy Scripture. And there it shines forth before us in all its fullness and truth. The grace of God in Christ is the core and heart of Calvin's *Institutes*. The work is not an attempt to set forth a scholarly argument, and even in the arena of dogmatics it is not a full statement. Yet, especially in the first edition, as a short summary statement of faith, the *Institutes* sticks to the simplicity of Holy Scripture itself. The essence of the Christian faith was and remained for Calvin this simple truth: In Scripture God tells us how much he loves us. The content of special revelation is God's mercy towards us and the assurance that this mercy effects in our hearts. Revelation and experience of salvation are intimately bound together. Objective truth and subjective assurance—unshakeable confidence about the reality of revelation and undoubting certainty about our own salvation—belong together as two halves of the same ring. Faith embraces both together in one and the same act.

Calvin does not stand still, however, with this certainty. He does not distract himself with the experiences of his own soul but proceeds from this certainty of God's grace in Christ and follows it

to its origin and source. He climbs up from the creature to the Creator, from the temporal to the Eternal, from the visible to the Invisible, from becoming to Being, from the vicissitudes of history to the unchanging decree of the Lord. He is not driven by logical reasoning or passion for systematic completion, but he is instructed by Scripture and led by his own soul's experience. If God's grace is truly and fully grace, and if the certainty of faith is absolute, then both point directly to the divine energy that is hidden behind them and manifested in them. God reveals his almighty and merciful will in the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and in the assurance of salvation that the Holy Spirit's witness has implanted in the heart [of the believer]. Grace and election, the Gospel and the complete sovereignty of God, are not in opposition and mutually exclusive according to Calvin; rather, grace, in the true and full sense of the word, is electing in nature, and the Gospel is nothing other than making known and realizing the divine will concerning salvation. The Gospel is at the same time the source of our knowledge of God and the means of grace.

In reaction to rationalism, modern philosophy re-conceives the essence of the world as will, as energy, and as power.<sup>5</sup> In a highly nuanced sense, Calvin shares this conviction. He rejects the notion of God as a benevolent guardian over his creation as well as that of God as a deistic being who calls the material world into existence with all its potentialities and then leaves it all to its own development. For him, God is almighty, sovereign, ungrounded will, a will manifested in everything, especially in the diversity and inequality of creatures and furthermore in the moral division that exists among human beings and brings about the manifold miseries of life. He acknowledges an almighty and freely powerful will that withholds privileges, that revokes blessings, that determines disasters and evils, and that brings about ruin and destruction through sin and unrighteousness. It will not do, says Calvin, to close one's eyes to this. Reality proclaims it. Scripture bears witness to it.

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<sup>5</sup> Bavinck repeatedly criticized the naturalism of nineteenth-century thinkers such as Ludwig Büchner, *Force and Matter; or, Principles of the Natural Order of the Universe*, 4th ed., translated from the 15th German edition (New York: P. Eckler, 1891).

A sovereign will rules that gives no accounting for his acts. There is an undeniable decree that undergirds this mysterious world of misery and grief.

Calvin does not, however, follow the course taken by many in our day and conclude from this miserable reality that this almighty and unfathomable will must be blind, irrational, cursed, and that it is in the realm of possibility that the entire world is a work of darkness above which human consciousness can only rise for a fleeting moment. Nor does he take the route of many who share this world view of justifying himself over against God and accusing him of injustice. Rather, he takes his stance with Paul and Augustine on God's side, casts humanity in the dust and calls out: "Who are you, O man, to talk back to God and to put him before your judgment seat?" (Romans 9:20).

He adds two more points. First, there is no active will of God that brings only misery: For, evil is not an autonomous power; Sin is not a substance but a corruption and deformation of the good; The material as well as the spiritual is a creature of God's power. Second, therefore, whatever injustice and misery the world portrays for us, the earth is still full of God's good gifts: For, all creatures are governed by his wise and holy decree, and even the smallest part displays his glory; No human being is completely and totally outside God's grace, a common grace that extends to the whole world, lets the sun shine on the just and the unjust, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Moreover, above everything, because of the person of Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit, we know that the will of God in all its endless diversity of expression is at the core of its essence *saving grace*, and we know that it leads humanity and the world out of darkness into light and through death to eternal life. God's judgments are unsearchable and his paths beyond tracing out. Yet in faith we understand that the world is governed not blind chance or unfathomable fate but by the will of an almighty God and faithful Father.

Just as Calvin proceeds from the certainty of God's grace and



returns to his sovereign, determining will, so also he presses forward, beyond the diversity of all that is created to the final destiny of all things. Repeatedly one encounters in Calvin's writings the expression, *coram Deo*, in the presence of God. He locates the whole creation, all things, particularly human beings, in direct connection with God and places them before his face. Everything is contemplated in the light of eternity, which casts over all creatures the luster of God's glory. The entire world in its length and breadth is taken as an organic and harmonious whole existing between the purpose of God and the destiny he intends for his creation. Creation is an instrument, an organ, a plaything in the hand of his will for the glory of his name. In that cosmic whole every creature and every sphere of life has its own place: Heaven and earth, plant and animal, humans and angels, family, state and business, calling, science, and craft—They are all empowered with wisdom and called to work at discerning God's will. Each has its own nature and law. Nevertheless, even with all that diversity there is an underlying unity: All originate from the same divine will, and all—whether they are aware of it or not, whether they are in agreement with their own wills or in conflict with them—serve to glorify God's excellencies.

It is the privilege and calling of the church of Christ *consciously* and *willingly* to live for the glory of God, and Calvin himself lived that way. For him God was not only a God from afar but also a God who is near. He experienced God's presence and walked in the light of his countenance, giving his body and soul completely as a sacrifice to God expressed in obedience. As his life and doctrine were of one piece, so he asked others to live: Word had to become deed, doctrine life, and faith a work. The divine will made known in Christ and witnessed to in human consciousness by the Holy Spirit had to be expressed in the energy and activity of the believer's will. A Christian was not permitted to close him or herself off in innerness or to take refuge in the salvation experience of personal feelings; rather, Christians who live in accord with God's will must extend themselves to the final purpose of all his ways—the glory of his name. We are not our own. We are God's possession. His will is our law. Obedience to that will is the highest virtue of the Christian. Good works, therefore, are necessary, not to inherit eternal life, but

as the fruit of faith, as tokens of God's grace, as signs of his election.

In Calvin's judgment this confession of election is so far from encouraging indifference and godlessness that, instead, it strengthens the believer's self-awareness, fills the believer's heart with assurance of salvation, and thereby directs the believer's will to intense activity. In Calvin's thought the moral life is accorded the highest value and receives religious and eternal significance. The Christian's good works, then, are not just so many isolated acts but are the expression of one unified moral life: They proceed from one source, are directed by one law, and serve one goal. Admittedly, Calvin's view bears a puritanical, even a rigorist character. Self-denial and meditation on the future life are strongly encouraged. Yet in principle he remains opposed to all asceticism. The dying of the old man has the resurrection of the new man as the other side of the coin. The Christian is a truly human child of God, fully prepared to do all good. The church is the organized fellowship of believers that always shows herself to be God's people by her holy walk. The final goal of all things is the glory of God to which all creatures—men and women, parents and children, office and calling—are called into service.

This was the high ideal that inspired Calvin and that he outlined in his *Institutes*. He did not leave it at that, however. He sought to bring this ideal into being, first in his own person, and subsequently in every sphere into which his influence was felt. Calvin was not only gifted with a sharp penetrating mind, with a strong and reliable memory, with a burning passion, but also with a committed resolute will. He was a force of nature, a man of power and action, a dominant spirit. Rarely has the combination of clarity and power been so united as it was in him. And in Geneva the unsought opportunity was given to him to put these gifts to use and to turn his ideals into reality.

Initially treading carefully, he remained in Farel's shadow. However, slowly but surely, thanks to the force of his personality, he came to stand on center stage. He drafted a Confession in 21



*Cathédrale St-Pierre, Geneva, where Calvin preached*

articles to which all the citizens of Geneva were obligated to swear.<sup>6</sup> He set forth a Catechism for instructing the youth.<sup>7</sup> Through his preaching and teaching he acquainted his listeners with the content of the entire Scriptures, including the Old Testament. And he established a church order by which the life of the church could be regulated.

Calvin's reforming work soon met fierce resistance. In fact the opposition became so strong that only two years after his arrival, on April 23, 1538, both he and Farel were deposed from their offices, and within a few days they were banned from the city. Pulled by Bucer, Calvin went to Strasbourg to become the preacher to the French congregation, and he soon felt at home in his new field of labor. With uncommon zeal he devoted himself to his tasks of

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<sup>6</sup> *The Genevan Confession of Faith* (1536); available online at <http://www.creeds.net/reformed/gnvconf.htm>. Recent scholarship attributes this confession to Farel, or at least to Farel and Calvin.

<sup>7</sup> *The Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1545); available online at <http://www.ondocrine.com/2calo504.htm>.

preaching the Word and explaining the Holy Scriptures; home visitation; discipline and diaconal work; opposing the Anabaptists, many of whom he won to his own point of view; and studying the numerous religious and political questions of the day. In many respects the stay in Strasbourg was beneficial for Calvin. Not only was it there that he found in Idelette de Bure a gentle spouse who faithfully stood by his side for nine years until her death in 1549 and to whom he felt linked with bonds of tender love, but also Strasbourg occupied a prominent place in the German realm and was at the center of Reformed Protestantism with a large, prospering church and an outstanding preparatory and higher school. In Sturm, Bucer, Capito, Hedio, and others,<sup>8</sup> Strasbourg had a score of men who had committed with heart and soul to the Reformation and who served it with unyielding faith.

From Strasbourg Calvin was also given opportunity to participate in the important Colloquies at Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg<sup>9</sup> and to become personally acquainted with some of the German princes and Reformers, including Melanchthon. In Strasbourg it was possible, more so than in Geneva, for Calvin to get a sense of the progress of the Reformation in all of Europe and to discern how matters stood with the political powers. From here he was able to take into his view the whole of Christendom, and it became impressed on his mind that nothing was more important for the Reformation than unity and cooperation. In Strasbourg he became a Reformer who belonged not to one city or national but to all of Protestantism.

Enriched in understanding and experience, Calvin returned to Geneva after a full three years. Ecclesiastical and political

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<sup>8</sup> Jacob Sturm von Sturmeck (1489–1553); Martin Bucer (1491–1551); Wolfgang Fabricius Capito (1478–1541); Caspar Hedio (1494–1552).

<sup>9</sup> These colloquies on the doctrine of justification, with Reformed, Lutheran and Roman Catholic participants, took place in 1540–1541. A 2004 dissertation on these colloquies completed at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam argues that Calvin played a much more significant role than had been believed: See Johannes Maarten Stolk, *Johannes Calvijn en de godsdienstgesprekken tussen rooms-katholieken en protestanten in Hagenau, Worme en Regensburg (1540–1541)* ([Kampen]: Kok, 2004).

circumstances had developed in such a manner that his return was generally and eagerly desired. After initial wavering Calvin responded to the longing [for his return], and in September 13, 1541, he re-entered the city from which he had been banned. His reputation fully restored, his position strengthened, he was now even more resolute and determined to make his vision become a reality. He began in a circumspect and magnanimous manner, but he never lost sight of his great goal: The church of Christ becoming the people of God and living fully according to the Word of God. He introduced a new and strict church order with a consistory (i.e., the preachers and twelve elders appointed by the magistrates) watching over the worship and moral conduct of Geneva's citizens and administering various penalties (i.e., rebuke, public confession of sin, ecclesiastical ban) in order to keep them in the right path. The consistory, however, had no jurisdiction over civil penalties. In this way Calvin granted the church its own sphere and independent task. As a fellowship of believers the church had to fulfill an additional calling beyond maintaining the pure preaching of the Word—she was to be a community/fellowship [*gemeenschap*] whose elders exercised discipline over all its members and whose deacons demonstrated mercy to all the poor and sick.

Nonetheless, in addition, the magistrates were also called to further the glory of God when drafting laws, governing, and judging. Already in his Prefatory Address to the *Institutes*, dedicated to Francis I, Calvin expressed his conviction that the King was God's servant and obligated to glorify God in his task by being led by God's Word. Church and state, he tells us in the *Institutes*, are like soul and body—they are to be distinguished while at the same time intimately joined together in serving the same final goal. While the state has its own sphere and no authority in matters of faith or human conscience, it must in its own way labor for the coming of God's kingdom. [Included in this labor] are maintaining pure doctrine, protecting the true church, removing all idolatry, and having a regard for the first as well as the second table of the law. Accordingly, the structure of Geneva's civil authority was restructured. A new administration was established to punish all law-breakers with harsh penalties. Extensive regulations were put

in place for all offices and positions. Marriage and family, work and leisure, customs and morals were strictly supervised and disciplined. Thus the entire life [of Genevans] was regulated in detail and placed under the ecclesiastical and civil authority.

Now of course during the time of the Reformation people were accustomed to the patriarchal rule of the magistrates and the close regulation of their lives by discipline. Notions of a people's liberty and individual rights were developed later. In spite of this, there was no absence of criticism against the regime Calvin sought to establish in Geneva. In the struggle to bring his ideal to reality Calvin had to overcome considerable resistance. He had to take on those who were not accustomed to a strict rule of life, some of whom were under the influence of a pantheistic libertinism and wanted to live by the dictates of their own hearts (e.g., Pierre Ameaux and Jacques Gruet).<sup>10</sup> He also had to eliminate the opposition of the older, aristocratic families (e.g., Perrin, Favre, Bertelier) who wanted to retain their previously privileged positions and did not want to submit to the authority of this foreign interloper. He also had to defend his [trinitarian] orthodoxy against Caroli<sup>11</sup> and his doctrine of predestination against Castello,<sup>12</sup> Bolsec,<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Gruet is famous for having pinned a nasty letter about Calvin on the pulpit of St. Pierre. After an investigation he was found guilty of numerous offenses and beheaded in June 1547.

<sup>11</sup> Pierre Caroli (1480–1545) was a University of Paris theologian who accused Calvin and Farel of Arianism and Sabellianism because of their reluctance to affirm the Athanasian Creed. A series of colloquies in 1537 (Laussane and Bern) failed to resolve the matter. Calvin's later (1545) reflection on the Caroli dispute can be found in *CO* 7:289–340.

<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Catellio (1515–1563) was a French Reformed preacher who advocated freedom of conscience and thought.

<sup>13</sup> Jérôme-Hermès Bolsec (d. c. 1584) was a French Carmelite theologian and physician, who, after becoming a Protestant, took up cudgels against Calvin in 1551. Banned from Geneva for his fiery bombast against Calvin's person, he was given refuge in the court of Renata, Duchess of Ferrara (see note 4 above). He wrote a vicious biography of Calvin that was published in 1557. Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 16–17, describes Bolsec's work as follows:

and Trolliet.<sup>14</sup> The most serious conflict was with the Spaniard Michael Servetus, for the conflict involved much more than a heterodox minister of the time: It embroiled all of Christendom in [a struggle with] neo-Platonic pantheism. After being condemned and sentenced with the death penalty in the Roman Catholic city of Vienna, in an act of unbelievable blindness Servetus fled to Geneva, almost deliberately to meet his end. Shortly after his arrival in the city he was arrested and charged with heresy, blasphemy, and slandering Calvin. Two months later, on October 27 1553, he was burned alive at the stake. This was Calvin's life until 1555—a constant strife. The Reformation in Geneva would only come into being after a long and frightful struggle.

There can be no doubt that Calvin all too often manifested the imperfections of his character as he sought to make his vision become reality. While he could be polite and friendly—as, for example, in the exchange with Cardinal Sadoletto—as a rule he addressed his opponents with countless insults. The possibility of their good faith never seems to have crossed his mind. Thanks to

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. . . Jerome Bolsec, with whom Calvin crossed swords in 1551 . . . published his *Vie de Calvin* at Lyons in June 1577. Calvin, according to Bolsec, was irredeemably tedious and malicious, bloodthirsty and frustrated. He treated his own words as if they were the word of God, and allowed himself to be worshipped as God. In addition to frequently falling victim to his homosexual tendencies, he had a habit of indulging himself sexually with any female within walking distance. According to Bolsec, Calvin resigned his benefices at Noyon on account of the public exposure of his homosexual activities. Bolsec's biography makes much more interesting reading than those of Theodore Beza and Nicolas Colladon; nevertheless, his work rests largely upon unsubstantiated anonymous oral reports deriving from "trustworthy individuals" (*personnes digne de foy*), which modern scholarship has found of questionable merit.

For a thorough discussion of the Bolsec matter see Philip C. Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551 to 1555: The Statements of Jerome Bolsec and the responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and other Reformed Theologians*, 2 vols (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, c1993).

<sup>14</sup>Jean Trolliet was a Genevan notary whom Calvin had previously rejected as a minister; he attacked Calvin's view of predestination as a doctrine that made God the author of sin.

his prickly and mercurial nature—he once acknowledged to Bucer that he had the temper of a wild animal—he not infrequently succumbed to words and deeds that do not pass the standard of Christian love. Many, even among his friends, disapproved of his vehemence and rigidity which alienated others who might have been eventually drawn by tenderness. The passion to control all of life with laws and regulations left far too little room for the spiritual working of the Word and for the freedom of the conscience. The boundary lines between consistory and council, church and state, and the [proper] activity of both in relation to punishment were all drawn improperly so that the potential for conflict was unending. Thanks to the vehemence of his passions Calvin did no small damage not only to his own reputation, but also to the cause he represented. In spite of all the rationalizations that could be provided for it, think of how terrible that one pyre of Servetus has been for Calvin's own reputation and for the later history of Calvinism.

Yet one thing is certain: In all of this Calvin never sought his own advantage. In fact, had he stayed in the Roman church a glorious future would have befallen him. He sacrificed his quiet study in Basel and later his pleasant and blessed labor in Strasbourg to answer the call of Geneva where misunderstanding, indignities, and libels would be his plentiful portion. He did it because in that call he discerned the will of God. When Francis I began to persecute the faithful in France under the pretext that they were guilty of political mutiny Calvin broke his silence. According to his own testimony, silence then would have been unfaithfulness. He frequently employed the image of a dog that barks when its master is attacked. Calvin served his own Savior and King with the same faithfulness. According to the testimony of Pius IV, money had no attraction to him.<sup>15</sup> He gave a good portion of his income as

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<sup>15</sup> Bavinck mistakenly refers here to Pius II who was pope from 1458–1464; clearly it is to Pius IV, pope from 1559–1565. The oft-quoted statement is: “The strength of that heretic, consisted in this, that money never had the slightest charm for him. If I have had such servants my dominion would extend from sea to sea.” See Philip Schaaf, revised by David Schaaf, *Creeds of Christendom*, 6th ed., 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), I:434.



preacher for the support of those in need and for the spread of the gospel. His estate, in total, amounted to little more than 4,000 guilders.<sup>16</sup> Like his pupil, Knox, Calvin feared no man and was no respecter of persons. It was as if he lived in the presence of God. On occasion he would halt in the middle of a speech, with one hand take off the hat on his head, point to heaven with the other and utter this brief phrase: “Everything for the glory of God!” Few people were as thoroughly driven by the fear of God and so completely dedicated with their entire life and thought and labor to his service as Calvin was. He was devoured by a zeal for the house of God.

Thanks to this exemplary dedication, matched with an unbelievable capacity for work, Calvin transformed frivolous Geneva into a model city of the Reformation whose piety and sound morality were generally praised. Refugees came from far and near to witness this spectacle and were inducted into the purposes of the Reformation. Calvin himself was such a refugee—he only became a citizen on December 25, 1559—but Geneva drew him because it was a “city of refuge” on the crossroads of France, Switzerland, and Italy that could become a center for the whole Reformation. Under Calvin’s leadership that is exactly what happened. Not only was he faithful to the small things so that nothing passed by his attention, but also he was incredibly many-sided. His sojourn in Strasbourg had enriched his vision and multiplied his relationships. His labors over time took on international significance. His goal was actually nothing less than the reformation of all of Christendom.

For Calvin Geneva became the watchtower from which he oversaw the entire religious and political movement of his day. He tirelessly fought the Roman Catholic Church. He skewered her errors with subtle irony and biting sarcasm, for example, in his expose of relics.<sup>17</sup> He also pulled on the harness against the

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<sup>16</sup> Calvin’s own final will and testament (available online at [http://www.reformed.org/calvinism/index.html?mainframe=/calvinism/calvin\\_will.html](http://www.reformed.org/calvinism/index.html?mainframe=/calvinism/calvin_will.html)) provides a total figure of 225 “golden crowns.”

<sup>17</sup> See John Calvin and Valerian Krasinski, *A Treatise on Relics* (Nabu Press, 2010 [1923]).

Anabaptists, the Libertines, and those who opposed the doctrine of predestination. By word and by writing, in speech and in correspondence, by way of a thousand sermons and a healthy, rich, and to-the-point exposition of nearly all the books of the Old and New Testaments, Calvin became the spiritual adviser and leader of the Reformation in practically all of Europe. He promoted the cause of the persecuted Christians and encouraged those imprisoned and facing martyrdom to be faithful and to stand strong. He opposed active rebellion against civil authority, but nonetheless approved of the Huguenot resistance in France after 1562, standing by the Huguenots with his counsel and deeds. He rejoiced in the Reformation's achievements in England under Edward VI, and his soul was thoroughly occupied with the persecution against the Reformation that followed under Bloody Mary. He negotiated with the King of Poland, encouraging him to take a more active part in promoting the reformation there,<sup>18</sup> and he corresponded with the Bohemian church on several matters of faith. He had numerous faithful pupils in The Netherlands and exercised great influence there through his writings and straightforward advice. His correspondence, of which hundreds of letters have been preserved, shows how well he was personally acquainted with the foremost leaders of the Reformation. These letters not only reveal Calvin's numerous connections with Lutheran and Reformed leaders, with kings and queens, but also they bear clear witness to his warm heart, intimate friendship, and empathy; his devotion and self-denial; his rich knowledge and wisdom.

It is almost impossible to imagine the extraordinary willpower and capacity for work of this man. Calvin only reached the age of 55, and he had to wrestle with a great deal of opposition, illness, and pain. Grievous tribulations in his own household and family, disappointment with his friends, and abuse from enemies were abundantly his lot. But Calvin made the most of the time. Sleeping little and living a simple and sober life, he sought little for himself, had few wants, and brought his soul and body into complete service

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<sup>18</sup> See *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. Marcus Robert Gilchrist, 7 volumes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983 [1858]), VI, 98–99; 244–45; 317–19; 323–25.

[of his Lord]. His life was dedicated to Christ and therefore bore rich fruit. His only child died in 1542 shortly after birth, and when others saw in this event a judgment of God, he was able to comfort himself with the thought that God had given him many spiritual children over the whole world.

In this international labor Calvin displayed a breadth of soul, a passion for unity and peace, and a conciliatory and accommodating tone not normally associated with him, which, for that reason, is all the more striking. No one surpassed the Reformer of Geneva in breadth of his perspective and wideness of horizon. In 1537 he refused Caroli's demand that he bind himself to the words and terms of the Athanasian Creed. When he was a minister in Strasbourg he accepted the order and liturgy of the French church and held back from instituting changes. Against Charles V in 1544 he argued that it was necessity for Protestants to overthrow the yoke of the Pope and to protect true religion. In his response to the 1549 Interim<sup>19</sup> he came to the fore as the spokesman and defender of the whole Protestant movement. He attempted to unite the Swiss and Lutheran churches on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper in the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549. The latter, however, rewarded his noble initiatives with gross ingratitude and rudely rejected them, especially after the Westphal entered the fray in 1552.<sup>20</sup>

Still, Calvin always retained the highest respect for Luther, honoring him as an outstanding servant of God. Until his death he also maintained his friendship with Melanchthon, notwithstanding the latter's vacillations. In Worms he even subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and defended it, provided he could interpret it in its altered form in accord with the intention of its author. He wrote a preface for the French edition of Melanchthon's dogmatic

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<sup>19</sup> The Augsburg Interim was a decree issued on May 15, 1548 by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg after he had defeated the forces of the Schmalkaldic League. It ordered Protestants to readopt traditional Catholic beliefs and practices, including the seven Sacraments.

<sup>20</sup> Joachim Westphal of Hamburg (1510–1574) was a Gnesio-Lutheran who in 1552 published a warning against those who deny the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper: *Farrago confusaneorum et inter se dissidentium opinionum de coena Domini, ex Sacramentariorum libris congesta*.

manual in which Calvin set forth his own views on predestination but still spoke with great appreciation for the German reformer's work and warmly commended it. Except when he had to defend it against opponents, he presented the doctrine of predestination with caution. In the Genevan Catechism predestination is more presupposed than laid out. Very wary of controversies about secondary matters and the divisions that often flowed from them, he spoke out in the strongest manner against those who left the church because of minor departures in doctrine and life though the essential truths of faith remained. He accepted the polity of the Polish and English churches even though they departed from Presbyterian order in more than one area. Although he accepted no deviation from the demands of God's Word and fiercely opposed the so-called Nicodemites, he tread softly with weaker brothers, willingly and patiently answering their numerous queries. His letters to his friends display great open-heartedness, though his tendency to grant his trust too quickly was often violated and abused. It was a source of rich gladness to his heart that there were others who remained true to him until his death and who would further his own work in his spirit after his departure; for, the greatest and richest blessing on Calvin's labors was granted after his death.

He died peacefully around eight o'clock in the evening on May 27, 1564, after having taken leave from the members of [Geneva's] city council and the pastors in a dignified manner with moving words. But his spirit lived on, and his ideas were worked out [by those who followed him]. And where Calvin's words and writings found entrance, either directly or by way of his pupils, in an amazing way he awakened the self-consciousness of people in all classes and ranks [of society] to greater trust in God and greater faith in themselves. This was a time when doubt and uncertainty reigned. Faith in the church, in religious leaders, in worship, in the reality of invisible things, had received a mighty shock. Mockery had replaced honor and respect, and the lamentable division and conflicts among Protestants had alienated many serious and conscientious people from the Reformation.



*Gnesio-Lutheran Joachim  
Westphal of Hamburg  
(1510–1574)*

Then Calvin appeared, and by his word and example he restored faith and enthusiasm in people's hearts, shored up conviction concerning the eternal things, and helped make life, even that of the least significant person, worth living. For the notion that one is the object of God's eternal, unchanging, and almighty love and that, therefore, one is firmly and unshakably convinced of this by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in one's heart, casts all defeat and doubt to the side. Incorporated into the fellowship of all the elect, one was oriented to deeds of world renunciation as well as world conquest. Calvin himself was a

sharp and sure character and formed other characters through his teaching and life. In a day when society was slowly changing, he did not resist [those changes] in either a despotic or hierarchical manner but took them by the hand and led them in the sure paths of the divine Word. The Reformation that proceeded from Geneva, contracted as it were as a covenant between the gospel, now purified from all kinds of medieval error, and the new bourgeoisie. While Luther, it has correctly been said, stood with one foot in the past and the other in the present, Calvin placed his one foot in the present and the other in the future.

This became obvious in the first place in his reformation of the church. Calvin's activity in Geneva and abroad was above all else dedicated to restoring the church in accord with Christ's own order. For years he labored intensely but fruitfully for the church's independence, for her freedom to administer discipline without interference, and for the pure administration of word and sacraments. But Calvin did not conceive of the church only in its official or institutional form, he also recognized in her the fellowship of true Christian believers who through their confession and life witness to the fact that they were God's people, anointed by

Christ as prophets, priests, and kings. For Calvin, the church is at one and the same time mother and fellowship of believers. While Luther more or less devalued these precious notions, narrowed church reform to the restoration of preaching, and left her polity to the civil authority, Calvin deduced from the Kingship of Christ the church's independence so that neither king nor priest could lord it over her. He thus lifted believers up from the pitiful situation of immature laity, gave to them the confession as their own personal possession—it was said that in Geneva anyone could give an account of his faith as well as a doctor from the Sorbonne—and prepared the way for a Presbyterian and synodical polity.

Calvin saw in the church something more than a community that gathered on Sunday for the preaching of the Word. Under his leadership the church became a society that during the week also exercised its influence within and without. The office of preacher was only one of many. In addition there was the office of elder to which responsibility was given for personal home visitation, oversight, and discipline; the office of deacon, which was responsible for showing mercy to all the poor and sick; and, finally, the office of doctor, which had the task of unfolding, defending, and teaching the truth. To demonstrate, as it were, the truth of the [congregation's] independence, Calvin retired the choirs and placed the singing of psalms on the lips of the congregation. This [phenomenon] was heard not only in church buildings but echoed in homes, in workplaces, in the barns, and in the fields.

In a similar way we can take note of Calvin's influence on statecraft. Calvin was no democrat in the modern sense of the word. His doctrine of predestination which roots all differentiation among creatures in the will of God is in direct conflict with socialist notions of equality, and he regarded the idea of popular



*Geneva's Coat of Arms*

sovereignty to be blasphemous and absurd. It was his desire that church and state, clearly distinguished in origin, essence, and calling, could still be united in working together for the glory and honor of God's name. As a symbol of this, the Coat of Arms of the City of Geneva, inscribed on its public buildings and on its coins and banners, includes the Christ monogram. And with respect to the form of the state, Calvin indicated his clear preference for an aristocratically ruled republic in which the power of the highest authority would be tempered by the vote of the people, and especially by the lesser magistrates, while the influence of the people would in turn be similarly moderated by the leading of the civil authority.

In this way he managed to extend the idea of freedom from the independent bourgeoisie to all the people. Leaning on the confession of election, Calvin gave to subject peoples a sense of dignity and self-worth that an Anabaptist passivism, which left the defenseless as so many sheep to be slaughtered, could not bear. While Lutherans opposed all resistance and, in Austria under Emperor Ferdinand I, for example, without any significant persecution and martyrdom, allowed themselves to be led back to the Roman Church,<sup>21</sup> Calvin brought the people in the state as well as the church to self-awareness and impressed upon them the conviction that the people do not exist for the sovereign but the sovereign for the people. In the same way that Calvin was a church reformer and statesman who, like David of old, was called from a humble state to become the messenger and servant of the Gospel, so he instilled in all his followers a religious conviction with political consequences that served as an impregnable bulwark of political freedom. The Huguenots in France, the Puritans in England and Scotland, and the Sea Beggars in the Netherlands all built on the foundation of Calvin's principles and found therein the legitimacy, the courage, and the power for their heroic struggles.

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<sup>21</sup> Ferdinand I (1503–1564) was Holy Roman Emperor from 1558. When his brother Charles V ordered a general Diet in Augsburg to discuss the religious problem of Europe's territories, Charles himself did not attend. Instead he delegated authority to his brother, Ferdinand. The key resolution of Augsburg was the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*.

Calvin's labors for all of society were no less richly blessed. Like Zwingli he had a powerful social passion. Not only has this [social] significance of the Swiss Reformation been acknowledged for a long time, but in recent years it has even been claimed that it in no small measure helped give rise to the capitalism of our day.<sup>22</sup> Of course, if with this term one has in mind the capitalist spirit of mammonism that is only concerned about acquiring earthly goods, then this inclination is in irreconcilable conflict with the gospel and with Calvin's cleaned-up confession. The Reformed faith is not materialistic but idealistic and ethical in nature. Just as he had done for the church and the state, so Calvin directed the whole of society to the glory of God and the service of his kingly rule. In particular, he placed all human vocations on a religious foundation from which they can only be removed at great cost to themselves.

By contrast, capital in and of itself is, no less than any other gift of God, a curse or a shame. The Reformation in fact restored the validity and dignity of natural life and removed the profane character with which the Middle Ages had imprinted the natural world. Luther is likely the first who translated Paul's Greek word with "calling" (*beroepe*).<sup>23</sup> In the same way that the Reformation brought people to self-awareness in church and state, so too marriage and family, profession and labor were all restored to honor in society. Calvin in particular poured the luster of godly glory over the whole of earthly life, and he placed all of natural life in the ideal light of eternity. He defended the lending of capital, the legitimacy of business, and he described art, science, and philosophy as rich gifts of God. He even established a school in Geneva for literary, scientific, and religious studies, and he knew that there was an inner bond between the earthly and heavenly calling. Perhaps his understanding of this seems inadequate to us now. In his time it was an extraordinary reformational act that had

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<sup>22</sup> Max Weber's important essay, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* was published in the *Archiv fur Socialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Volumes XX and XXI, 1904–1905.

<sup>23</sup> Bavinck does not specify the Greek word here; it undoubtedly is κλήσις, which is found, *inter alia*, in 1 Cor. 7:20: "ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ἣ ἐκλήθη ἐν ταύτῃ μὲνέτω."



rich and blessed consequences. By means of it numerous civic and social virtues blossomed and bloomed. Domesticity, cleanliness, industriousness, diligence, fidelity, concern for order, reserve, simplicity, frugality—all of these came to characterize the nations influenced by Calvin. Where the power of his principles went forth, the welfare of the people improved. To this very day these principles are operative in Protestant countries—in contrast to Roman Catholic countries—and more so among those of the Reformed confession than of the Lutheran.

Whatever tribute we now bring to Calvin on this commemoration of his four-hundredth birthday, and whatever memorials are erected in Geneva or elsewhere, he himself erected the most beautiful and enduring pillar of honor in the hearts and lives of his numerous spiritual descendents. These can give their predecessor and leader no greater tribute than by continuing to confess with heart and mouth, word and deed: “From him and through him and unto him are all things; to him be the glory forever!” (Romans 11:36).

# Pearls and Leaven

By John Bolt  
Calvin Theological Seminary

In this regular *TBR* feature we not only pick up the theme of the fall 2008 conference but also continue what was begun there: Providing small nuggets of “Bavinckiana”—mostly from his own writings—that illumine the men (i.e., Herman and J.H.) and highlight key themes or historical moments from their careers.

This first *Pearls and Leaven* explains why Herman Bavinck was so fond of the mixed metaphor. The images, of course, come from our Lord’s parables:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it (Matthew 13:44–46 (NIV)).

He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33 (NIV)).

The combination of these images is Bavinck’s favorite metaphor for speaking of the kingdom of God. His point is always that the kingdom of God must be seen as *both* a pearl *and* a leaven and that, most importantly, the kingdom is a pearl first and foremost and a leaven secondarily.

Consider, for example, what Bavinck says in his essay on “Christian Principles and Social Relationships”:

Even if Christianity had resulted in nothing else than this spiritual and holy community, *even if it had not* brought about any modification in earthly relationships, even if, for instance, it had done nothing for the abolition of slavery, it would still be and remain something of everlasting worth. *The significance of the Gospel does not depend on its influence on culture, its usefulness for life today; it is a treasure in itself, a pearl of great value, even if it might not be a leaven.*<sup>1</sup>

And then he adds:

But, although the worth of Christianity is certainly not only and exclusively, and not even in the first place determined by its influence on civilization, it nevertheless can not be denied that it indeed exerts such influence. *The kingdom of heaven is not only a pearl, it is a leaven as well.* Whoever seeks it is offered all kinds of other things. Godliness has a promise for the future, but also for life today. In keeping God's commandments there is great reward. Christianity in its long and rich history has borne much valuable fruit for all of society in all its relationships, in spite of the unfaithfulness of its confessors.<sup>2</sup>

Similar comments may be found in Bavinck's other works. In his 1888 rectoral address at Kampen, for example, he writes: "The kingdom of heaven may be a treasure and a pearl of great price, but it is also a mustard seed and a leaven."<sup>3</sup>

Later in this same address Bavinck faults Pietism for its failure to exhibit catholicity and its tendency toward isolation. He levels a concrete application of this criticism against his own *Afgescheiden* community. This *j' accuse* might turn the ears of CRCNA and RCA

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 144; emphases added.

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck, *Essays*, 141; emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27, no. 2 (1992): 236.

members in West Michigan a little bit red:

Many withdrew completely from life, literally separated themselves from everything, and in some cases, *what was even worse, shipped off to America* abandoning the Fatherland as lost to unbelief.<sup>4</sup>

Then Bavinck tenders this careful reminder:

Without a doubt, there is a glorious truth to be found in Pietism and all the religious movements akin to it. Jesus himself indeed calls us to the one thing that is necessary, namely, that we seek the kingdom of heaven above all. . . . Faith appears to be great, indeed, when a person renounces all and shuts himself up in isolation. But even greater, it seems to me, is the faith of the person who, while keeping the kingdom of heaven as a treasure, at the same time brings it out into the world as a leaven, certain that He who is for us is greater than he who is against us and that He is able to preserve us from evil even in the midst of the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bavinck, “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” 246; emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> Bavinck, “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” 248.

# Bavinck Bibliography: 2008–2009

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The Bavinck Bibliography is intended to become an annual feature of *TBR* comparable to the Calvin Bibliography that appears in the November issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal*. In keeping with the mission of the Bavinck Institute, the Bavinck Bibliography will incorporate primary and secondary sources for Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) and Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964). This initial compilation covers the years 2008 and 2009 only.

## **Herman Bavinck: Primary Sources<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough bibliography Herman Bavinck's works prior to 2008, see Eric D. Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), <http://www.BavinckGuide.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Originally published as Herman Bavinck, “Calvijn's leer over het avondmaal,” in *Kennis en Leven: Opstellen en artikelen uit vroegere jaren* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1922), 165-183.

<sup>3</sup> Originally published as Herman Bavinck, *Verzamelde Opstellen* (Kampen: Kok, 1923).

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<sup>5</sup> NB: Although the January 2009 and December 2008 articles are both numbered "(4)," they are distinct articles.

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# Book Reviews

**Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008, xiv + 386 pp. €89.00/\$132.00. ISBN 9789004163072.**

Reviewed by John Bolt, Professor of Systematic Theology, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, USA.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit in the self-authentication of Scripture is an important teaching of the Reformed tradition. Thus the Belgic Confession (art. 5) confesses that Christians “believe without doubt all things contained in [Holy Scripture]—not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God. . . .” Herein the Reformed tradition sets itself at odds with Tridentine Roman Catholicism, and vice versa. According to Vatican I not only is private interpretation considered a mistake because the Church is the only true interpreter of Scripture,<sup>1</sup> but also Vatican I decreed that the faithful cannot rely only on the testimony of the Holy Spirit alone without “external grounds” of the Church in order to accept Holy Scripture as the Word of God.<sup>2</sup> The Council even pronounced anathemas on those who deny that “faith can be made credible by external signs” and who seek only the “private” illumination of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Yet, remarkably, little serious

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<sup>1</sup>“Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,—in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine,—wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,—hath held and doth hold; [Page 20] or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published. Contraveners shall be made known by their Ordinaries, and be punished with the penalties by law established” (Council of Trent, Fourth Session, ch. 3; Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolarum*, 30th ed., [2004], # 1507).

<sup>2</sup>Vatican I, Session 3, chapter 3; Denzinger, ##1789–1795.

<sup>3</sup>Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolarum*, # 1812.

scholarly attention has been paid to this important teaching, thus we are indebted to Professor Van den Belt (Free University of Amsterdam; University of Utrecht) for this fine study.

Van den Belt's concern in this monograph on the self-convincing character of Holy Scripture (αυτοπιστία) is hermeneutical in nature, that is to say, his concern is both historical and theological; specifically, Van den Belt aims to determine what αυτοπιστία meant for the Reformed tradition and what its relevance is for church and theology today. To achieve the former he provides five chapters surveying the Reformed theological tradition—Calvin (2 & 3), Reformed orthodoxy (4), Benjamin Warfield (5), and Herman Bavinck (6)—followed by a concluding interpretive chapter. By his own admission, a personal background in the spiritual climate of Reformed churches where assurance of salvation was an important issue combined with an interest in evangelistic outreach in a post-modern setting played a significant role in the author's choosing a deliberate hermeneutical approach over a strictly historical one. Though I am not a historian, it seems to me that Van den Belt's historical scholarship has not suffered because of this choice. The topic is carefully delimited, the research is thoroughly up-to-date on scholarship from Calvin through Bavinck, and the judgments are circumspect and balanced. By being transparent about his goals from the outset, Van den Belt is able to avoid the trap of tendentious and selective use of historical materials.

The question of *autopistia* “is related to the *testimonium* of the Spirit, to the authority of the church, and to the evidences [of Scripture's truth]” (p. 12). For Calvin, certainty about Scripture could not be guaranteed by the church nor proved by evidences; to attempt to do so would be to place one's trust in human judgment. Nonetheless, both are useful as secondary arguments for those who already believe. And here especially the church's role in leading someone to faith is important. The *testimonium* of the Spirit and the *autopistia* of Scripture are closely tied together in Calvin; there is no hint of the dual subject-object scheme that is found in Protestant scholasticism.

The heart of this work is Van den Belt's important claim that in

Reformed orthodoxy (and also in Warfield and Bavinck) a shift takes place away from a simple confessional understanding of *autopistia* toward thinking of it as a logical necessity for the *principium* of theology. The relationship between *autopistia* and *testimonium* is now increasingly expressed in terms of *externum* and *internum* with the *testimonium internum* serving as the subjective counterpart of the external authority of Scripture.

Van den Belt considers Warfield and Bavinck as two Reformed theologians who needed to wrestle with the historical-critical approach to the Bible in their affirmation of Scripture's authority. As is generally known, of the two, Warfield places much more importance on evidences as proof for Scripture's authority. Bavinck's thought is more subtle than Warfield's, and Van den Belt devotes a longer chapter to the Dutch neo-Calvinist. The treatment is clear and thorough; nonetheless, I have a minor quibble and one big question. On page 230 Van den Belt writes: "In his *Reformed Dogmatics* he opens every locus with biblical references, but continues with a historical survey of the specific theological doctrine. . . ." This is perfectly true but it overlooks Bavinck's important inclusion in each locus of theology of the universal religious interests of non-Christians to such matters as sin, the need for a mediator, salvation, and eschatology. This is at one level a minor quibble, but I also wonder if this oversight may not have played a role in what I consider a more significant issue, namely, whether Bavinck's discontinuity with Reformed orthodoxy—considering faith and not the Spirit as the *principium internum*—comes from Van den Belt's wrestling with the modern subject-object dilemma (pages 262ff.).

Beginning with G.C. Berkouwer's 1932 dissertation, it has been a staple of Dutch Reformed theologians, including R.H. Bremmer, Jan Veenhof and S. Meijers, to analyze Bavinck through the lens of the modern subject-object problem. While Van den Belt's treatment of Calvin and Reformed Orthodoxy is noteworthy for its scrupulous attention to current scholarship and its avoidance of the all-too-frequent dismissals of "scholasticism" that characterized so much of the Berkouwer tradition, I wonder whether he is also too preoccupied with the modern form of the subject-object discussion and

whether that is a fruitful approach to Bavinck. It is true that “both the Roman Catholic and Protestant analysis of the deepest ground of faith finally end in the religious subject” (p. 278; Bavinck himself says so in *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 583, # 150). But why is this a “problem”? Is this not obviously necessary when we are trying to explain how religious subjects come to certainty of knowledge about God and the world? Does not all knowledge come into being in the consciousness of the human subject? Where else could it be found? And why does Van den Belt consider this “disappointing” and suggest Bavinck’s tendency to subjectivism (pp. 29off.)? Is Bavinck here not simply being a good Augustinian or Thomist in his realism? (See, e.g., *Reformed Dogmatics*, IV, # 449.) Van den Belt himself provides clues that suggest a different angle when he calls attention to the pedagogic importance of the church for both Warfield and Bavinck. Unfortunately, he fails to mine this rich vein sufficiently.

The same could be said for general revelation. It is Bavinck’s conviction that the God who is present to all people (via general revelation) has entered human history in Christ and in his redemptive work, thereby healing and restoring humanity to its fullness. It is the historic revelation and the reality of God’s promises as experienced in history that truly breaks through the “circularity” of faith’s knowledge and makes credible the autopistic testimony of Scripture and the Spirit. When faith is understood as informed trust in God’s promises, promises that are given in Scripture and testified to by the church’s experience of God’s grace, we are a long way from the polarities of subjectivism and objectivism and placed squarely in the middle of a narrative of promise and fulfillment.

Van den Belt’s work is a solid foundation of fine scholarship combined with deep piety that does Bavinck proud, and my concluding suggestions are given as an appreciative invitation to go a further step in our understanding and theological practice today.

—John Bolt

**Hans Burger, *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008. 632 pp. \$55.00. ISBN 9781556358401.**

Reviewed by Gijsbert van den Brink, Extraordinary Professor in the History of Reformed Protestantism for the Gereformeerde Bond in the Protestant Church of the Netherlands at the University of Leiden and University Professor of Systematic Theology in the Theology Faculty at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. Translated by John Bolt. The Dutch version appeared in the Vrije Universiteit journal, *Radix* 35/4 (2009): 316–19.

This book is as theological as theological can be. Its goal is to think through and account for the Christian message of salvation as the church proclaims it. This is accomplished by paying attention to an aspect of that message that often appears to be snowed under in the church, namely, the significance of Jesus Christ for believers today. Orthodox believers often close Jesus up in the past. We believe that on Golgotha he atoned for our guilt, and then we believe that the Spirit and/or we ourselves take matters over for ourselves. In liberal circles even the atoning significance of Jesus' suffering is doubted so that his unique significance for us is obscured. The New Testament declares in many places that we are "in Christ" and that "being" is a ongoing present, a "now" that points to an continuing situation or relation. But what exactly does this mean? That's what this book is all about: What does it mean when the New Testament describes Christian believers as "being in Christ"?

Now one might think that the answer to this question could be provided simply by studying the New Testament. Even though Burger considers this very important, even "decisive," he is also convinced that this answer is far too simple. We read the Bible with certain lenses that are ground by the tradition in which we stand. It is, therefore, vitally important that we become self-conscious of our own tendency to one-sidedness. Burger begins his investigation, therefore, by acknowledging what it is that his own Reformed tradition has to own up to with respect to believers' union with Christ.

Obviously no exhaustive examination would be possible, so Burger directs his attention to two key figures for whom the ongoing relationship between Christ and believers was of great importance: the Puritan John Owen and the neo-Calvinist Herman Bavinck. He does not provide a lengthy rationale for his choice, but it would seem that one good reason was the manageable amount of recent secondary literature to which he needed to attend. Nothing wrong with that. (One would love to see a similar treatment of Calvin, but the literature that one would have to wade through appears to have no end in sight.) In any case, the analysis of Owen and Bavinck provides a fair representative portrait of what classic Reformed theology did with the notion of “being in Christ.”

Burger provides a provisional balance in his fourth chapter. Apparently, there is much that is good to report: the unity of the believer with Christ is rooted in the trinitarian love of the Father for the Son in the Spirit and is expressed in warm-mystical language. At the same time there are several problematic areas. “Being in Christ” is coupled to an immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer and in this way is set loose from the direct address and promise of the Gospel that comes to us in preaching. Above all, it appears that some biblical images are abstracted into theological concepts (justification, regeneration) and then function largely as corrective lenses by which the Bible is read while others (e.g., “drawn by Christ”) are downplayed. There was also a tendency to view “being in Christ” as something substantial, as a new principle of life that is infused into us. Is it not preferable to express this in relational terms from the vantage point of a direct participation of the believer in Christ?

All the more reason, therefore, in a second round, to move from out of the tradition back to Scripture. Here too Burger restricts himself to two voices, but now he truly picks the two most important: those of Paul and John. The former frequently uses the expression “in Christ,” the latter, “in me.” In a catch-basin (chapter 7.3) burger picks up the left over biblical material: the Old Testament, the synoptics, and the Petrine epistles. Apparently not all are singing from the same page. Paul and John are not saying exactly the same thing.

Paul understands “being in Christ” to refer particularly to believers spiritually participating in the history in which Jesus represents God to them. John thinks of Christ and the believer dwelling in each other. The two notions cannot simply and neatly be woven together, and Burger resists the temptation to do so. At the same time he also makes it clear that the two views are not mutually exclusive; Paul and John complement each other.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that Burger needs a number of complicated maneuvers to make this point clear. From the outset he makes use of four concepts (he also calls them “moments”) that, taken together, form a hypothesis by which all the material will be evaluated. In Burger’s judgment the systematic-theological development of the “being in Christ” concept must do justice to the ideas of representation and participation, and then beyond that, to the ideas of substitution and union.

To the degree that the general methodological approach of this work is first rate, so the more specific and detailed examination is equally cryptic and complex. The meager two pages devoted to it (26–27) call forth many questions. Why only these four concepts? The author does not provide convincing explanation for why this is the useful group. And, what really is the difference between participation and union? Why not give the four concepts equal status (as the four coordinate points of a field) rather than use substitution and union as the standard by which to test the validity of the other notions? In addition, why is “substitution” further divided into “work-substitution” and “person-substitution” with the latter term given little attention so as to suggest that there is barely any substitution therein? Fortunately, matters are clarified as we go along (though the notion of “person substitution” remains bothersome to me), but I believe the author could have utilized his analytic skills more at this point and should not have contented himself with these brief hermeneutic observations.

However this may be, Burger ends his extensive biblical-theological journey by concluding that Paul and John utilize all four ideas whenever they deal with the ongoing relation between Christ and the believer. To be sure Paul accents representation (Christ in our

place) while John emphasizes substitution (the Lamb of God who takes away our sin) and union (“we in him and he in us”). Therefore Burger could not resolve matters with the concepts of representation and participation alone; matters turned out to be more complicated than his initial hypothesis had suggested. Nonetheless, he does show that Paul is aware of substitution and union and, conversely, that John has an eye for representation and participation (e.g., the Johannine image of the vine and the branches). Though the two cannot be harmonized they are not mutually exclusive.

Following this foundational biblical-theological analysis Burger moves somewhat abruptly to the third and last round. One might think that if the biblical witness is normative and that, above all, it is not a cauldron full of contradictions, that we would now, after 400 pages, know what “being in Christ” means. Nevertheless, correctly, Burger does not put down a period. Instead he works over the biblical-theological material in some sort of overarching systematic theological vision. Good theology, after all, is more than simply an orderly compilation of biblical texts. In order to help the biblical message be understood in the thought patterns of our own day, Burger engages contemporary voices in order to present his own proposal. He considers two contemporary theologians outside of the Reformed tradition: the Lutheran Ingof Dalferth and the Anglican Oliver O’Donovan. Thereby Burger honors the adage of Ephesians 3 that we “together with all the saints” might be able to “grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” He engages them in an exemplary manner—listening, learning, but occasionally disagreeing—in order to be able to weave all the threads together. In the last chapter Burger evenhandedly weighs the shortcomings he encounters in the tradition and in the contemporary theologians he considered and presents his own proposal as a way to overcome them.

All things considered I found this an impressive book. It is not often that someone demonstrates his mastery of the field of dogmatics in his dissertation (for the most part dogmatic theologians write dissertations on historical theological subjects). Burger knows to link the various discourses of historical theology, biblical theo-



logy, and contemporary science (i.e., ontology) in a thoughtful and creative manner. He has plowed through an enormous amount of literature and concentrated on a central theme of the faith: the communion of believers and Christ. I began this review by saying that Being in Christ was as theological as theological can be. I conclude by pointing out that the book's import and significance is as practical and community enhancing as theology can possibly be.

—Gijsbert van den Brink