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## THE HEROISM OF THE MINISTRY IN THE HOUR OF CHRISTIANITY'S PERIL\*

The reading of the Church Fathers is not infrequently a dreary and disappointing labor. One is forced to wonder how it came that the authors of these tedious commonplaces and pious irrelevancies rose to so high a place when they were alive and achieved so imperishable a renown when dead. This is true even of him who is reputed to have been the most eloquent of them all, Chrysostom. Yet in the conclusion to his homilies on the Letter to the Romans there is a passage which sustains any reputation which Chrysostom had for eloquence, then, or in succeeding ages. He says that of all the cities he loves Rome the most because there Paul died, there his dust reposes and there he will be raised up to meet the Lord. In his enthusiasm he prays that he might be permitted to throw himself about the body of Paul and be riveted to his tomb; "to see the dust of Paul's body that sowed the Gospel everywhere; the dust of that mouth which lifted the truth on high, and through which Christ spake the great and secret things, and greater than in his own person; the dust of those hands off which the serpent fell into the fire and through which the sacred writings were written; the dust of those feet which ran through the world and were not weary; the dust of those eyes which were blinded gloriously, but which recovered their sight again for the salvation of the world; the dust of that heart which a man would not do wrong to call the heart of the world, so enlarged that it could take in cities and nations and peo-

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## HERMAN BAVINCK

The great leaders of Calvinism, in these latter days, have all been swept away in a comparatively short space of time. Gone that dour Scotsman, Dr. James Orr, who struck such mighty blows in defense of the Scriptures. Gone Dr. Kuyper, that matchless leader of men, a genius of the first rank, recognized as such the world over, and yet in his faith as simple as a little child. Gone our own unique leader, Dr. B. B. Warfield, incomparable as a teacher, tireless as a student and author, consistent in his sturdy faith, the greatest of all leaders of American Calvinism. And gone last of all, but not least, the man who was buried at Amsterdam, August 2, 1921, Dr. Herman Bavinck, whose deep researches, tireless industry, boundless horizon, wide variety of interests and stirring eloquence made him the pride of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands and a leader of world-wide Calvinism.

Of all these great scholars and leaders, Bavinck's scholarship was perhaps the broadest and technically the most perfect. But, it is impossible, at least at this distance in time, to make a comparison, in any way adequate or reliable, between Kuyper and Bavinck or Bavinck and Warfield. The law of perspective forbids it. Each had his own peculiar points of excellence and also his own peculiar limitations; none of them could have occupied the place of the other. We might be surer of our ground had Kuyper left a well worked out *opus magnum* on Theology. It was in his mind to do so, but the task was never accomplished. The same is true of Dr. Warfield and therefore the real *data comparationis* are lacking.

Kuyper and Bavinck were in the Neo-Calvinistic period in the Netherlands, what Luther and Melancthon were in the German Reformation. Each supplied what the other lacked. And both will shine with added lustre as the distance which separates them from us increases.

Herman Bavinck was my lifelong friend and it was with

the thought that this brief sketch may serve as a friend's tribute to his memory, that it has been written. We studied together in the gymnasium of Zwolle and have been separated since 1873, but the tie of friendship remained unbroken; during all these well nigh fifty years, in fact almost to the time of his death, we corresponded and repeated visits, on either side of the Atlantic, deepened our friendship. Besides this I have been a constant reader of his writings and gladly admit that he was my preceptor as well as my friend. And as I set myself to the task of writing this sketch of the life of a truly great man it seems best to etch his life with a few strokes of the pen and then make an attempt at the analysis of his character as a theologian, his personality, methods of work and variety of interests.

No one stands by himself in this life. In our veins are seething and struggling innumerable physical and intellectual traits, which were bequeathed to us by preceding generations. I will admit at once that in some respects, viewed from the standpoint of his parentage, Dr. Bavinck is a conundrum. He was so like and yet so absolutely unlike his parents. His father, Reverend Jan Bavinck, was born at Bentheim, in Hanover in 1826; his mother was Gesina Magdalena Holland of Vrieseveen, in the province of Drenthe. The older Bavinck was one of the *epigoni*, if not one of the founders, of the Free Church of Holland which separated itself from the State Church in 1834. Sent by the few persecuted and hounded Separatists of Bentheim to Holland for his theological education, he must have been a phenomenal student, and must also have enjoyed considerable earlier advantages, for in the small theological seminary at Hoozevee, where he went, he took over the classes in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. And he must have been considerable of a Latinist, for Dr. Bavinck years later committed to him the final revision of the *Synopsis Purioris* (1880); and as the son testified, his father "made many corrections."

Wherever he went, the elder Bavinck always remained a teacher. He had a perfect *amor docendi*, and proved a most

acceptable teacher. When he went to Hooegeveen, he assisted Rev. W. A. Kok the head of the small theological school, from which he had graduated, as second docent; and when in 1854 the educational interests of the Free Church were unified, and a more pretentious institution was established, the elder Bavinck was the first to be nominated by the General Synod, as one of the professors. Was it his innate modesty, his underestimate of his own powers, that pessimistic view of things, which ever sees lions in the way, of which his illustrious son also had a share? Who can tell us? He made the lot settle the matter and declined the call.

I knew both the parents of Dr. Bavinck intimately. They were typical of their environment and cherished all the puritanical and often provincial ideas and ideals of the early Church of the Separation. Simple, almost austere in their mode of life, exhibiting something of what the Germans call *Kulturfeindlichkeit*, pious to the core, teaching their children more by example than by precept, the mother uncommonly clear-visioned in her ideas and never afraid to express them, the father diffident, aroused only with difficulty, but then evincing rare power. Such were the parents of Dr. Herman Bavinck. The pulpit was his father's throne, and there he displayed what his son once, in my hearing, described as a "healthy mysticism." He knew how to "speak comfortably" to Zion. Many of the qualities of mind and heart and intellect, which later on distinguished the great son were therefore evidently inherited from his parents. But, as I have said, in many respects he differed from them.

He received his early training in the Hasselman institute, a private training school of great celebrity. In 1870, with my brother and myself, he entered the gymnasium of Zwolle, of which Dr. E. Mehler, a converted Jew and celebrated Graecist, was the rector. After his graduation he spent a single year at the seminary of Kampen and then, obeying an irresistible impulse, despite universal and bitter opposi-

tion, he sought a regular university training. It was a daring move. Of all places he went to Leyden, where the celebrated Dr. Kuenen, one of the most influential of the Higher Critics of the 19th century, was then the leading professor. Dr. J. H. Scholten was still there, the founder of that new system of Reformed theology, of which reason, determinism and monism were the main pillars. But Scholten was beyond his prime and no longer swayed the hearts of the students, as of yore, his was a setting sun. Prins was there, the arch-enemy of the Separation, and Rauwenhoff, one of the fathers of Modernism; Tiele and Oort, de Goeje and de Vries, Pluygers the Latinist and Cobet the marvelous Greek scholar.

What an environment for a son of the Churches of the Separation! And Bavinck had been so thoroughly grounded in the old simple faith of the Reformed doctrine! But he came to seek after truth and in God's wise plan it was just this environment and this training, which was to fit him for his life task. But he had many a bitter struggle at Leyden. Kuenen especially with his "heart of gold" was his idol among his professors. I remember his letters of that period, his description of serious doubts and questionings and battles; but all these struggles only tested and purified his faith. The beloved of all his teachers, he left the University with the degree of Doctor of Theology, June 10, 1880, after writing a thesis on *The Ethics of Zwingli*. The absolute fairness and objectivity of this work explains many things in his later life. Certain it is that nowhere else in his later writings is the subconscious influence of Kuenen—not of course, his uncompromising anti-supernaturalism, but his scientific method—so palpably felt as here, both in the method of approach and in the treatment of his subject.

Most valued of all the gains that came to him in Leyden was the lifelong friendship of his fellow student Snouck Hurgronje, who later became a distinguished Semitic scholar, succeeded de Goeje as professor of Arabic in the University of Leyden in 1906 and is widely known as one of the

very few Christians, who, in disguise, have succeeded in penetrating the holy precincts of Mecca and lived to tell the tale. The two supplemented each other; through all their student days they were like David and Jonathan and the tie between them was broken only by Bavinck's recent death.

Returned to Kampen, Dr. Bavinck at once presented himself for examination by the seminary authorities. Naturally this was, because of his university training, more carefully conducted than in ordinary cases, but he passed with the highest honors. And wherever he went, till his death, he remained a loyal son of the Church of the Separation of 1834.

For a brief interval of two years he became pastor of the Church of Franeker, a mere episode in his life. Twice in succession he declined the call to the recently founded Free University of Amsterdam, because he had decided to identify himself fully with the hated "Seceders." The two years spent at Franeker were golden years. He there acquired a full mastery of the art of preaching, and learned to understand the viewpoint of the common people, and to appreciate the practical side of the ministry. The church was always crowded to the doors, for people came from great distances to hear him. Small wonder for he was indeed a princely preacher; with wonderful depth of analysis and the profoundest reverence for God's holy Word, he spoke with rare simplicity and a thrilling eloquence all his own.

In 1882, the General Synod called Dr. Bavinck to the vacant chair of Dogmatics in the Seminary at Kampen. He accepted and began his work, January 10, 1883, with an oration on *The Science of Sacred Theology* defining its principle, content and aim. This address was heard with breathless attention. It struck a new note in the history of the Seminary and of the Church. It heralded the dawn of a new day. And every eye was fixed on him as the coming man. Said Dr. Kuyper in *De Heraut* (January 21, 1883): "Now this is really scientific Reformed Theology. Here the first principles are again correctly set forth, here a road

is staked out which may lead to an excellent development." "I have hardly ever read a treatise with such undivided attention, from start to finish, as this inaugural." And the great leader did not exaggerate nor miscalculate the future. For the next twenty years Dr. Bavinck was the soul of the Seminary. Kuenen once said of Leyden, "Leyden is Scholten," and for these two decades "Bavinck was Kampen," its pulsing heart, its irresistible dynamic, lifting the whole plane of teaching from the mediocre and ultra-practical into the academic sphere of scientific idealism. Every teacher felt this influence, all later-comers modelled as much as possible after the new pattern, the whole school was lifted on the shoulders of this Atlas. What Kampen is to-day it owes, under God, to his presence and influence.

Bavinck was naturally the hero of the students. Before me as I write lies a sheaf of testimonies, too long to quote, to his rare ability and inspiring power as a teacher, all written by students who sat under him in these glorious days. He was only thirty-five years old when he began his work at Kampen, but he carried an old head on young shoulders. He had read deeply and widely to an astonishing degree, as all his published works testify. In those fruitful Kampen years he wrote and published the first edition of his opus magnum *Reformed Dogmatics*, in four volumes, later expanded and republished in the Amsterdam period of his labors. His life knew no waste moments. A steady stream of brochures on various subjects was written as he staggered along under an almost insupportable burden of occupations. One does not wonder that at last he sank under the load; but rather that he held out so long.

His university training had lifted him out of the narrow groove in which nearly the entire ministry of his Church, as well as the mass of its members were moving. Their *Weltanschauung* was practically that of the old Dutch Anabaptists, who sought their strength in separation from the world, in its cultural, social and philosophical aspects. And Dr. Bavinck was a white raven among them. He dressed

differently, spoke differently, taught differently—he was a man apart. And that very thing attracted his students, and made him so mighty a factor in the cultural advance of the Church he loved and for which he labored so assiduously for the next two decades.

He had a thoroughly disciplined mind, with the heart of a child. God's holiness on the one side, man's sin on the other; and between these forever the mystery of the cross. All his teaching, all his preaching, all his writing was shot through and through with the richness of divine grace as revealed in Christ. Says one of his disciples—"He never preached a sermon in which Christ was not glorified." As a preacher he was a constant pattern for his students, both as to form and substance. Dr. W. H. Gispen, one of the foremost preachers of the Church of the Secession and one of its choicest spirits, has said of the preaching of Dr. Bavinck: "That which unspeakably enthralls and attracts in Bavinck's preaching is the simplicity, the clearness, the sharp definition of ideas and the logical progress of his reasoning. . . . his thorough apprehension of his subject in its fundamental aspects and content enable him to speak about it so easily and intelligibly to others."

At Kampen he lectured on Dogmatics, Ethics, the History of Philosophy, Encyclopedia, Psychology, Rhetoric, Logic and Aesthetics. The undermanned condition of the seminary was responsible for this multiplicity of labors, and variety of subjects. One marvels how he found time in this period of his life to prosecute his studies and to write as voluminously as he did. Meanwhile God had given him a wife and helpmeet in Johanna A. Schippers, daughter of a typical representative of the Dutch higher middle class, well educated and fully able to stand by his side, who shared his triumphs and trials to the end. He was now in the full flush of mature manhood, an acknowledged authority in his chosen field, known far and wide through his writings and, with the single exception of Dr. Kuyper, the most widely

recognized leader of the Free Churches of the Netherlands. And now came the greatest crisis of his life.

Under the leadership of Dr. Kuyper, in 1886, a new secession from the State Church had occurred. They called themselves *Doleerenden*—a Church under the Cross—and they sought *rapprochement* with the Free Churches of 1834. The training for the ministry proved the crux of the whole question. Was that training to be free or was it to be under the control of the Church. To us the answer seems easy; not so for university trained Dutchmen. Bavinck's position on this question was predetermined by his own experience. He loved the freedom of scientific study and doubted the right of the churches to make a demand, of which the founders of the Church, in the days of the Reformation had never dreamed; but he also loved his own Church and thus was placed in a most difficult position. I have neither time nor space to enter into a full discussion of this crisis. Suffice it to say that it was decisive for his later career. Together with his colleague and bosom friend, Biesterveld, he was called to the Free University of Amsterdam and both accepted. Thus he left the Kampen seminary, where he had passed the best years of his life, to begin his labors in an entirely new field.

During these twenty years he had been ceaselessly at work. His doctoral thesis on *The Ethics of Zwingli* had been followed the same year by the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*. In 1883 appeared his *Science of Sacred Theology*; in 1884 *The Theology of Dr. Chantepie de la Saussaye*; in 1888 *The Catholicity of Christianity and of the Church*; in 1889 *Eloquence*, a treatise on the art of speaking; in 1894 *Common Grace*; in 1895 his *Reformed Dogmatics* (now in its third edition); in 1897 *Principles of Psychology*; in 1901 *The Sacrifice of Prayer*, a practical and experimental treatise on the Christian life, and in 1901 *Creation or Evolution*. Besides this he had written a mass of ephemeral literature, had for a time edited *de Bazuin (The Clarion)*, the denominational paper, and had with Dr. Kuyper and Dr.

Rutgers prepared a revised edition of the Bible, which purified and modernized its diction. As he removed from Kampen he carried with him the sweetest memories of what had been, as one of his friends describes it, "the glory period of his life."

In the Free University he succeeded Dr. Kuyper, and great as Dr. Bavinck was, he was able to hold his own only by reason of the total dissimilarity of his talents from those of his great predecessor. Again, let me say, it is practically impossible to compare these two great leaders. It may be done later on, or it may forever be out of the question. Only this may be said, though with great hesitation. I have read the writings of both for years, I admire them equally and I feel deeply indebted to both of them in many ways. But it seems to me that in breadth of accurate scholarship Dr. Bavinck may have excelled Dr. Kuyper, while Dr. Kuyper excelled Dr. Bavinck in definiteness of conclusion and in daring of utterance. The one gently tries to untie Gordian knots, the other cuts them through with mighty blows of his keen sword. Says one competent to judge: "Bavinck was an Aristotelean, Kuyper a Platonic spirit. Bavinck the man of clear conception, Kuyper the man of the glittering idea. Bavinck built on historical data; Kuyper speculated with intuitively conceived ideas. Bavinck was in his thinking principally inductive, Kuyper deductive."

What a wonderful pair they were! Rarely has God given to an institution two such men to teach sacred theology. But so much is certain—the task of Dr. Bavinck, in entering the Free University of Amsterdam in 1902 was a far greater test of his capabilities than his entrance of the Kampen Seminary in 1882; and with it the second great period of his life begins.

Do I imagine that after 1902 a different note was sounded in his letters? Did he ever regret the change? In leaving Kampen he had to rend in twain bonds of love which had been growing ever stronger with the passing years. In one way he gained much by the change, in another he lost some-

thing. At Kampen he had stood forth preeminent; at Amsterdam he was one of many unquestionably erudite teachers, all of whom had enjoyed the same advantages that he had. But at Amsterdam his position was more commanding, his sphere of influence wider, his words carried farther. "Give me a fulcrum" said Archimedes "and I will move the world." How true it is!

On Wednesday, December 17, 1902 he began his work at Amsterdam with an oration on *Religion and Theology*, a model of its kind, which gives the reader some conception of the vastness of his learning. Yet he was deeply conscious that he was to sit in a chair, as he said on that occasion, "which these many years had been filled by the most richly talented and most many-sided man, whom God, in the last half century, has given to the professors of His name in these lands." It was a heavy task that was laid on his shoulders.

At Amsterdam Dr. Bavinck taught Dogmatics, Philosophy and Ethics. His mind had now attained its full maturity. The experience of Kampen was repeated here in the deep impression he made on his students and colleagues. He was greatly respected by an increasingly growing circle of men of standing in the community and in the whole country, and his ripe scholarship was recognized on all hands. And as he grew in power, he also grew in modesty, at least his letters seem to indicate it; and what is more, his faith grew ever more simple. Perhaps the greatest thing he ever said was the simple statement, made at the close of an address of congratulation in his own home, on the occasion of his silver jubilee as professor of theology—*I have kept the faith*. That was great! To have drunk deeply at every fountain, to have weighed all the evidence to a degree possible only to a mind as acutely trained as was his, to have scanned the whole horizon of philosophical and theological debate and then at the end of years, to be able to say these simple words! And thus he remained to the end. About this time he wrote me, "As I grow older my mind turns

more and more away from dogmatic to philosophical studies and from these to their application to the practical needs of the world about me."

In the same year in which he entered the University, his *Hedendaagsche Moraal*, a study in contemporary ethics, appeared; two years later came his *Christian View of the World*, and his *Science from the Christian Standpoint*. In this period also his interest in Christian education, always one of the foundation stones of the Free Church movement, began to deepen. He published in 1904 his *Pedagogic Principles* and soon gained the front rank among the promoters of this cause and became an unquestioned authority on pedagogy. In 1907 his dispassionate discussion of Evolution—*Pro et Contra*—attracted wide attention. Besides all these smaller works, he published in 1907 his second major work *Magnalia Dei*, and a year later his Stone lectures on the *Philosophy of Revelation*. His interest in educational matters continued unbroken to the last, as is witnessed by his *Manual for Training in the Christian Religion* (1913), his *Training of the Teacher* (1914), his *Education of Adolescents* (1916) and his *New Education* (1917). And in the very last year of his active life he published a volume on *Biblical and Religious Psychology* (1920). Thus he was engaged in the Master's business till the end.

The war sorely tried him. In 1918 he wrote a letter which reads like a sob. Said he, "Our modern civilisation is dead. It will take a century before it regains its poise." New problems arose on every hand. In the face of the strongest opposition, he had the courage to publish in 1918 a volume on *Woman in the Modern World* in which he unequivocally defended woman suffrage. He was forever at work teaching, writing, lecturing, preaching, in all parts of the country. Wherever an educational convention met, he was sure to be among the leaders; at the General Synod his advice carried the utmost weight. And at one of these meetings came the beginning of the end. At the Synod in

Leeuwarden in 1920, at the close of a masterly address, he sank down in his chair and was compelled to leave the meeting. His work was finished. It was the touch of death. For months he struggled against the deadly heart attack, but neither love nor medical skill was able to avert the inevitable. He fell on sleep in Christ July 29, 1921. When questioned whether he feared to die, he said, "My dogmatics avail me nothing, nor my knowledge, but I have my faith, and in this I have all." And another time—"I have one wish, but it cannot be fulfilled; and it is this that when I have entered the heavenly glory, I might be permitted for a moment to return to this world to testify before all God's people and even before the world to that glory." He died as he had lived, a simple child of God. Now he rests from his long and arduous labors and many of the riddles which staggered him here below are clear and illumined by the light of the throne of God.

Physically Dr. Bavinck was an imposing figure. As I remember him as a youth, he was tall and slender with wavy, light hair and clear, friendly gray-blue eyes. Even then there was something aristocratic in his appearance, wholly apart from what his parentage and early training could have suggested. As he grew older, he grew portly which gave him a still more impressive appearance. Physically, mentally and temperamentally he stood in a class by himself. One of his friends, I think, expressed things correctly when he said: "Dr. Kuyper was the man of the common folks (*de kleine luiden*) who from day to day, in his *Standaard* articles and asterisked paragraphs, quickened the interest of the common people. Bavinck was the aristocrat of the spirit, who from time to time, in masterly orations, alike chaste in form and rich in content threw his searchlight on the big things of life. Kuyper was always at the head of his hosts; Bavinck fought an independent battle."

The outstanding characteristic of Dr. Bavinck was his modesty. He utterly forgot himself. He hated fulsome praise. All the silly mouthings, so often bestowed upon

popular favorites, were abhorrent to him. He was modest, as all truly great men are, because he knew full well that with all his attainments, he had only lifted the tip of the veil of the great truth he was searching out. His was the glory of infinite pains. He was a tenacious friend. Once let a man enter his heart and he would never show him the door. Yet his temperament forbade him to be too lavish with his gifts, and he had many friends and but few intimates. The greatest among the latter undoubtedly were Snouck Hurgronje and Biesterveld, whose early death he bitterly lamented. He was retiring by nature, almost to shyness. His fund of small talk was limited and drawing-room affairs easily bored him. While his pulpit or platform vocabulary was limitless, he seemed to be lacking in words on trivial occasions. His true life was that of the study, his books were his best friends. And yet modest and retiring and self-contained as he was, there were fires burning underneath the outward calm, which at times burst into bright flame. Take what happened on the day when he had successfully passed his candidate's examination. Under the new law of April 28, 1876, the old "grades" were abolished, the successful student receiving a simple certificate. But the theological faculty was still permitted, in exceptional cases, to give a "cum laude." Snouck Hurgronje was examined the day before Bavinck and received his certificate, while Bavinck's brilliant examination, the next day, brought the exceptional "cum laude." Believing an injustice had been done his friend, Bavinck, when the diploma was handed him, threw it on the table and asked the professors either to strike out the "cum laude" or to tear up the whole paper, after which he left the room abruptly. Fortunately the professors, who loved and admired him, saw what was wrong, and advised him to take a long rest before he resumed his work. But the "cum laude" remained, one of the few cases in which a Leyden student has been so honored.

His mentality was marvelous. Few men have a mind as adaptable as his. He might have excelled in almost any

branch of study. A wonderful linguist, a leading star in the field of dogmatics, great as a philosopher, an authority in pedagogy, wonderfully human in his contact with every day life, and tenderly moving when he touched the Christian experience—he was indeed gifted above ten thousands.

His absolute fairness to an opponent sometimes created the impression of indecision, but those who accused him of this weakness were utterly mistaken. Read his *Reformed Dogmatics* and you stand amazed at the wealth of information here displayed and at the breadth of horizon of the author. It is a history of dogmatics as well as a dogmatics itself. Every tendency and every error which has appeared in the long history of the Church is put to the touchstone of the truth. If there is a ray of light, an atom of truth, it is gladly recognised; for Bavinck becomes dogmatic only when he has penetrated to the very foundations of a truth and speaks from the standpoint of a clear vision. He never makes the mistake of placing an exclamation point where he sees, however faintly, an interrogation mark. That made him hesitate sometimes where others were enthusiastically confident, but it was the hallmark of his true greatness. Those who criticised this apparent indecision, did not know him. He was honest with the truth as he was honest with himself; and because he loved it so, he searched for it so diligently and expounded it in so far as he had clearly apprehended it.

In his later years, as has been indicated, Dr. Bavinck paid marked attention to philosophical studies, to educational matters and to social questions; and it seemed to some as if the new love was crowding out the old one. But he lived and will live preëminently in the field of Dogmatics. Calvinism or rather Neo-Calvinism has lost in him one of its greatest leaders and as it looks today no one can fill his place. He was a Calvinist both by training and deepest conviction and taught its fundamental principles, with incomparable clearness and power. The formal principle of the Reformation, the absolute authority of the Holy Scrip-

tures, was the cornerstone of all his theology. How wonderful is that chapter in his *Dogmatics* on the "principium externum," how sharp his distinction between religion and revealed religion—in the one man seeks God, in the other God seeks man. And it is that seeking which makes revelation necessary. Dr. Bavinck strenuously upholds the central and organic conception of revelation. It occupies a definitely teleological position; it reveals to us the coming of God to humanity, forever to dwell with it. How sharp are his definitions, how keen his antitheses! Frequently his style is epigrammatic, vivid and picturesque. As has been said he places himself foursquare on the doctrine of inspiration. But he is unafraid of all critical attacks on the Scriptures. These are to be expected "because the writings of prophets and apostles originated *in* not *outside* the sphere of history" "In entering into a man the Holy Spirit entered into his style and language and intellectual equipment." Hence the diversity but also the organic oneness of the Scriptures. Striking in Bavinck's theology is the comparison between the incarnation of the Logos in the flesh and that of the Holy Spirit in the word.

How he makes all doctrine to live! In reading his *Dogmatics* one can easily see how his students must have been carried away by his lectures. Theology was to Bavinck more than a science, more than a full concept of the teachings of the Scriptures, systematically arranged and philosophically expounded. The grace of God, a living faith in the Scriptures as principium, a hearty assent to their truth—all this was a prerequisite to its teaching and exploration. And every page of the *Reformed Dogmatics* indicates how true the great teacher was to his own principles. Of him as of Paul, it might well be said, he brought every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. This explains his uncompromising attitude to rationalism. The latter, we are told, "must inevitably end in the bankruptcy of theology." In these days of rationalistic exploitation of the truth, we hear a great deal of "a static theology" and we are looked

upon as examples of arrested development. How Dr. Bavinck lashes that idea! He views theology as an organism always expanding, so long as the fullness of the Word is not exhausted. *God* and not *Religion*, is the object of theology. Forgetting this, men have lost themselves in mazes of what is called the science of Comparative Religion and they have cut themselves loose from Christian Theology. And this theology has for its only object to learn more and ever more of Him, whom it possesses by faith. The service of God, both with heart and intellect, is the aim of all true Christian theology.

We are frequently told in these days that science is exact and built on facts, while the theologian builds his science on faith. Dr. Bavinck admits that God belongs to the invisible world and as such may be unknowable to science, but he warns the scientist against the maxim "all the invisible is unknown." Accept this maxim, and what remains of ethics, psychology, philosophy, nay natural science itself? Every science ultimately rests on and demands faith. The claim that Christian theology is unscientific is therefore absolutely denied.

I wish I had time and space to follow Dr. Bavinck through his *Reformed Dogmatics*. He is always the man of highest culture and sweetest spirit, always recognizing what is good in an opponent, lucid in treatment of doctrine, careful in definition, sparing of denunciation, clear in conclusions. As I said before, he never rants, there are no vehement explosions, no bitter attacks in his system. He is ever the man of endless erudition, new and old, and he uses his information in the most judicious way.

Conservative? Absolutely so. But how? Listen: "Theology is truly conservative, she accepts the inheritance of past generations, yet not to scatter it but to hand it over, if possible increased and still more 'reformed,' to the generations that follow. She receives these acquired treasures, not to cast them again and again into the melting pot of criticism, but to hand them over to us to see whether we

also, as mightily as in former days, may experience their truth and beauty in our own souls. It is a mere illusion always to try to find something new in the field of theology. The glittering results of nature studies may have led many theologians to try to find novelties in the theological field, but such curiosity has always been punished by disappointment. But at the same time she is a progressive science. Reverencing the past she builds upwards on the foundations that are laid, till she herself is complete and has attained her final object. She does not rest at Chalcedon or Dordt. Hers is the conviction that it will please God to cast ever more light on the Holy Scriptures in days to come, on what till now was dark or nebulous in them. Till then she has not completed her task or attained her object."

Such was the theology of Dr. Bavinck! It is deeply to be regretted that his *Dogmatics* was not translated into English, but the task is herculean, and only very few men have the idiomatic knowledge of both tongues to make it a success, and *no translation is far better than a poor one.*

Great honors were heaped upon him. The queen of Holland knighted him with the Order of the Dutch Lion; he was made a member of the First Chamber of the States General, a member of several scientific societies and was sought after everywhere and always as a public speaker. He appeared where no member of his Church or faculty would have been invited. Thus he addressed the "Scientific Society," July 7, 1915, on the "Doctrine of the Unconscious," and again delivered an oration before the eighth "Dutch Philological Congress" on "The Conquest of the Soul." Some timid souls saw in this universality of interest a sign of weakness, an attempt to hold out a hand to the common foe. In reality it was a mark of his true greatness. His was a Johannine soul. When he died he left no enemies. Friend and foe alike mourned him when he was taken home.

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