

# Editorial

## Introducing *The Bavinck Review*

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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.