

# Why a Bavinck Institute? Why at Calvin Seminary?

*John Bolt*

This is an adaptation<sup>1</sup> and expansion (with references) of remarks given at the opening launch of the Bavinck Institute Special Collection, held in the Calvin Theological Seminary auditorium, May 2, 2017, 7:30 PM. The description of this collection is stated in the Bavinck Institute’s by-laws, revised January 20, 2017:

A permanent repository of books and articles by and about Herman and J. H. Bavinck, the sources of their thought, Dutch neo-Calvinism (including Abraham Kuyper) and its legacy in The Netherlands and around the world. As time and resources permit, this collection will include important material in the history of the Christian Reformed Church’s appropriation of the neo-Calvinist tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> Most (but not all) specific comments associated only with the evening’s presentation, including asides with audience involvement, have been removed from this written essay. For example, my comment that the lecture was “not intended to be academic” is no longer accurate for this published work which includes footnote references. I have, however, retained some of the lecture’s “occasional” and oral character. This adaptation also appeared in the *Calvin Theological Journal* 52/2 (2017): 251–63. A vimeo of the evening can be seen at <https://bavinckinstitute.org/2017/06/bavinck-special-collection-grand-opening-presentation/>.

**Additional note:** This non-circulating collection of more than 1700 books is being housed in the Rare Book Room, Heritage Hall, Hekman Library of Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.



*Location of the permanent Bavinck Institute  
Special Collection*

Thank you all for coming here this evening. This evening is about embodiment because the Bavinck Institute is being transformed from a cyber reality to concrete, physical space, complete with books and filing cabinets. This was always my vision for the Bavinck Institute, having it metamorphize from a web-based means of connecting and communicating to becoming a *place*, a location for Bavinck studies, a small, toddler little sister of the Meeter Center, with a library of books, articles, easy access to important internet material, and so forth. It was a vision that came from the *fact* that the tradition of which Bavinck was the premier theologian

profoundly influenced Calvin College and Seminary and from the *conviction* that this tradition was still relevant today.<sup>2</sup>

Since the BI was established in 2009 it has been predominantly a cyber reality; we have a web-site (24,000 visits from 9 countries, including 336 from China; that's about 3500 per year or just under 10 per day); publish an electronic journal, *The Bavinck Review*; set up a database for Bavinck scholarship; and facilitate communication on an international level for those interested in the Bavinck tradition.<sup>3</sup> The Bavinck Society has 133 members from 12 different countries, including Nepal.<sup>4</sup> Our website has announced the publication of new books, conferences, lectures, featured interviews with authors, and the like, primarily through *Facebook* where we have just under 1500 followers. Our own *Twitter* hashtag—#Bavinck—has the same amount of followers and there are two independent “Herman Bavinck” *Twitter* profiles dedicated to posting Bavinck quotes”: <https://twitter.com/HermanBavinck> and [https://twitter.com/Herman\\_Bavinck](https://twitter.com/Herman_Bavinck). Between the two, there are 1497 Tweets (quotes) and a total of 7110 followers. And then, there are also online-facilitated discussion groups. The Bavinck cyber space is alive and well.

There are only two important exceptions to the overwhelming cyber character of the BI: 1. The BI coordinated the translation, editing and publication of the *J. H. Bavinck Reader*, a collection of essays by Herman Bavinck’s missiologist nephew.<sup>5</sup> 2. The translation

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<sup>2</sup> My thanks therefore to the following people who were essential instruments for helping to bring this about: From Calvin Seminary, Jul Medenblik, President; Jinny De Jong, CFOO; and Ronald Feenstra, Academic Dean; David Malone, Dean of the Hekman Library; Karin Maag, Director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies; Richard Harms, Curator of the Archives, Heritage Hall; and Paul Fields, Theological Librarian and Curator of the Meeter Center.

<sup>3</sup> These statistics were true as of May 2, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> These statistics were true as of February 1, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Johan Herman Bavinck, *The J.H. Bavinck Reader*, ed. John Bolt, James D. Bratt, and Paul Visser, trans. James A. De Jong (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

and editing of Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*, an 1100-page handwritten manuscript, consisting of Bavinck's own lecture notes prepared for his students at the Theological School in Kampen, from 1883/84 through the fall of 1902.



*Hand-written manuscript — Herman Bavinck's  
Gereformeerde Ethiek*

This work languished in the Bavinck Archives at the Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism (1800 to present) at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, from the time of Bavinck's death in 1921 until it was discovered by Dirk Van Keulen in 2008.<sup>6</sup> Never published, the work has been digitally transcribed, is being translated into English, and will become a three-volume work,

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<sup>6</sup> For the story in greater detail, see Dirk Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Ethics: Some Remarks about Unpublished Manuscripts in the Libraries of Amsterdam and Kampen," *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010): 25–56.

published by Baker. Volume 1 is scheduled for publication in the fall of 2018.

The Bavinck Institute collection comprises material not in the Hekman Library including copies of archival material, and important rare books, and it will continue to collect such material. Nonetheless, where there is duplication with Hekman Library holdings, the BI is like the Meeter Center in being a non-circulating, library-use only collection, always accessible to students and scholars only in the space dedicated to it. Tonight, we inaugurate that collection which will be housed in the Rare Book Room, Heritage Hall. The Bavinck Institute is doing the reverse of “going viral,” it is entering real time and space and operating with a Director and Advisory Board.<sup>7</sup>

I can't help but reflect on the wonderful irony here. Setting all modesty aside, and paraphrasing Louis XIV, it is fair to say, that up to this point, at least the general perception was that I could confidently say, “L'institut Bavinck, c'est moi!” If it was not fully true before tonight, the independence of the collection means that after tonight it is definitely no longer true. But here's the thing: I am not a participant in all that cyber activity I just pointed to. Like in the parable of the seed growing secretly, it happened without any active involvement on my part. And now, as it becomes more embodied, the BI acquires full ontological status completely apart and independent from me. This is an irony in which I rejoice. “Exceedingly!”

## **Why a Bavinck Institute?**

Let's now move on to what you really came here for tonight, WHY? Why Bavinck? Why at CTS? For the first question, I have three reasons, one weaker and two strong.

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<sup>7</sup> Director: John Bolt; Advisory Board: Dr. Jordan Ballor, Dr. James D. Bratt, Rev. Timothy Blackmon, Dr. James A. De Jong, Dr. James P. Eglinton, Dr. George Harinck, Dr. Richard A. Muller, Dr. Adriaan Neele, Mr. Doug Vande Griend.

## **The Popularity of Bavinck**

The weaker reason is the appeal to popularity. I have already provided some of the data and now let me add a few items. The sales of the four volumes of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* in English are in the neighborhood of 15,000 sets. Quite remarkable for a serious work of Reformed theology that is 100 years old! Furthermore, since it came out in English, the *Reformed Dogmatics* has been translated into Korean (including the one-volume abridgement), Indonesian, and Portuguese, and is being translated into Mandarin.

I should add here that this popularity is not limited to the “usual suspects”: CRC, RCA, Protestant Reformed, Free Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, and Canadian Reformed folk. Over the years I have received appreciative notes from United Church of Christ and Methodist pastors as well as Reformed and Presbyterian ones. And they are not just from conservative sources. I recently received a wonderful email from a mainline Presbyterian theologian, Donald McKim. He wrote:

I want you to know how deep is my continuing appreciation for the Bavinck *Reformed Dogmatics* volumes. I literally keep your one volume abridgement “at my right hand” on my desk. Whenever I can, I add Bavinck quotations to what I write. Every time I dip into Bavinck I find understanding and nourishment for faith—that makes my heart glad. I was grateful to be an endorser of the project which I continue to regard as a very great treasure!<sup>8</sup>

McKim also noted that he included Bavinck material in a PC(USA) adult curriculum he wrote on the Apostles' Creed. This is something I could not have imagined in my wildest dreams and for which I am profoundly grateful.

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<sup>8</sup> Personal email from Donald McKim to author, April 21, 2017.

So then, Bavinck is popular; in fact, he has become an icon of pop culture. If you Google “Herman Bavinck shirts” you will find Herman Bavinck short sleeve T-shirts, long sleeve Tees, Crewneck Sweaters, Ladies’ Tees, and even Hoodies.<sup>9</sup>



*Herman Bavinck Tee*

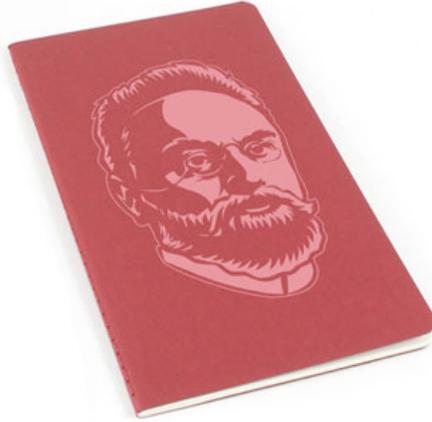


*Herman Bavinck Hoodie*

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<sup>9</sup> At <https://www.missionalwear.com/products/?filter=Herman%20Bavinck>.

The same site offers Herman Bavinck Laser Etched Moleskine Journals in five different colors.



*Herman Bavinck Laser Etched Moleskine Journal (also available in Black, Navy, Forest, and Espresso)*

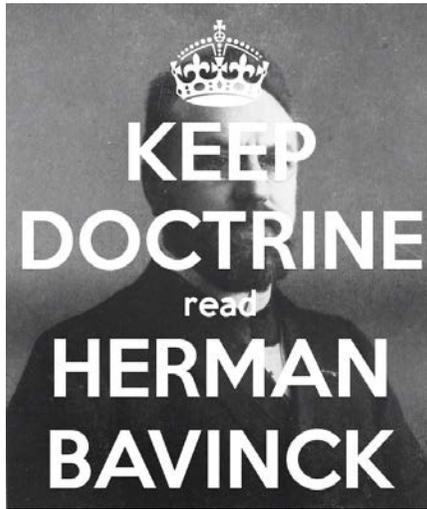
I also found a “Keep Calm and Herman Bavinck” coffee mug on the Internet.<sup>10</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> Although I purchased this mug in April 2017, on February 1, 2018 I am only able to find numerous images of the slogan; simply type “Keep Calm and Herman Bavinck” into your search engine.

The slogan also seems to have generated similar posters such as this one:



And to top it off, a Herman Bavinck tattoo!<sup>11</sup>



*Herman Bavinck tattoo*

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<sup>11</sup> Just type "Herman Bavinck, tattoo" in a Google search box.

Popular culture is not my forté; this is also “something I could not have imagined in my wildest dreams” and still astounds me. Lest we lose ourselves in the “world,” let’s recall what we are asking: “WHY? Why Bavinck? Why at CTS?” Let me now move to the stronger reasons.

### **Today’s Theological Priorities**

Different eras during the church’s 2000-year history have each had their own distinct pressure points and challenges requiring theologians to be nimble as they speak to their own age without accommodating to it. What are the challenges to the gospel, to the church and Christian theology today? Very quickly, five come to mind: An erosion of biblical authority; the denial that we can truly *know* God; exaltation of human autonomy; the fact and claim of religious pluralism; and a degree of evangelical indifference to church confession and tradition. A brief word on each.

1. *Erosion of biblical authority.* As the church today in the west is losing its anchor in Scripture and the accumulated wisdom gained over two millennia, the Bible is treated as “just another book.” Therefore, a credible and effective theologian today must be committed to Scripture’s authority and to interpreting it in the light of the history of the church’s reading of the Bible. Retrieval, recovery, and renewal are the first task of theology today. Our colleague Todd Billings, who holds the Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology chair at Western Theological Seminary, has said this well:

In a time when churches are pressured to become pragmatic and self-centered in the face of many challenges, Christian theology can mediate

a rich theological heritage that is deep enough to nourish the church and dynamic enough to be open to God's ongoing work.<sup>12</sup>

*2. Denial that we can truly know God.* At the same time the Bible was being brought “down to earth,” God was being removed from this world. Philosophers said that we can't KNOW God because knowledge comes from our senses and deals with facts; true knowledge is empirical and scientific. Faith, then, is not about knowledge but about something else, either “feeling” or “morality.” Today's theologians must say a loud and definite NEIN! to this and insist that we don't just “feel” the truth of Easter (“he lives within my heart”), we KNOW “He is Risen” as certainly as we know that  $2\text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2 \text{H}_2\text{O}$ .<sup>13</sup> The Bible does not just address our souls but the totality of our experience, including our minds. And, therefore, what the Bible teaches has to be connected with the rest of our knowledge. Bavinck himself put forward a case for a philosophy of revelation that “seeks to correlate the wisdom which it finds in revelation with that which is furnished by the world at large.” He protests against theologians who have “with more or less hesitation abandoned the entire world to modern science, provided only somewhere, in the person of Christ, or in the inner soul of man, a place . . . reserved for divine revelation.” He calls this a retreat of “weakness” and concludes:

Revelation, while having its centre in the Person of Christ, in its periphery extends to the uttermost ends of creation. It does not stand isolated in nature and history, does not resemble an island in the ocean, nor a drop of oil upon water. With the whole of nature, with the whole

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<sup>12</sup> Taken from Western Theological Seminary website  
<https://www.westernsem.edu/faculty/j-todd-billings/>.

<sup>13</sup> As a Calvin College chemistry major I try to never miss a chance to use a chemistry example I can still handle.

of history, with the whole of humanity, with the family and society, with science and art it is intimately connected.”<sup>14</sup>

3. *Exaltation of human autonomy.* A passion for human autonomy accompanies all this; to be modern is to reject all heteronomy; we submit ourselves to no one and to nothing. We think we are our own boss!

4. *Awareness of religious pluralism.* And then, we are also challenged by our improved awareness and knowledge of the world’s religions. Followers of the world’s religions are no longer limited to “Greenland’s icy mountains” or “India’s coral strand”; they are our neighbors. Embarrassed about colonialism and imperialism, we are instinctively drawn to a kinder, gentler pluralistic view. Therefore, credible and effective theologians today must acknowledge the modern inclination to individual autonomy and religious pluralism and provide arguments for our dependence upon God and the finality of Jesus Christ as God’s revelation. They need to incorporate critical knowledge of the world’s non-Christian religions in each topic of theology.

5. *Evangelical indifference to church confession and tradition.* Theologians who do all this will then be able to contend with the general indifference (sometimes outright hostility) to church confession and tradition among fellow evangelicals by challenging the church’s temptation to be “relevant” and instead urging her to go deeper. They will also be working from a *missional* perspective which I understand as theology that “assists the church in effectively fulfilling the Great Commission in our day.” Reformed theology is superbly suited for this because in Reformed understanding:

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<sup>14</sup> Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 26–27.

- God is present to all people and reveals himself to them (general revelation)
- The world's religions are a *response* to this *general revelation* (idolatry).
- To communicate the gospel, the *special revelation* of God's saving work in Israel and definitively in Jesus Christ must be connected to what people already know and believe about God and the world.

A good missional theology, therefore, must relate the knowledge of God that is given in Scripture to the rest of our knowledge and relate biblical truth to universal human experience.

It will not surprise you that I have just given you a rather precise portrait of Herman Bavinck. It is true of course that I am indebted to Bavinck for this profile of a credible and effective theologian. However, Bavinck's own profile matches that of claims made by contemporary theologians about *today's* important theological priorities.<sup>15</sup> It is this match or correlation between need and person that is my point here. It also helps to explain *why* Bavinck has become so popular.

### **Why at Calvin Seminary?**

And now to our second question: Why should there be a Bavinck Institute *at Calvin Seminary*? I have two basic points: 1. He's OUR guy. 2. The BI is one way for CTS to bless the world-wide church, especially the younger churches in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

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<sup>15</sup> This is exactly the point driven home by Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain in their manifesto, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), and reinforced in their *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

## I. Bavinck is *Our* Guy

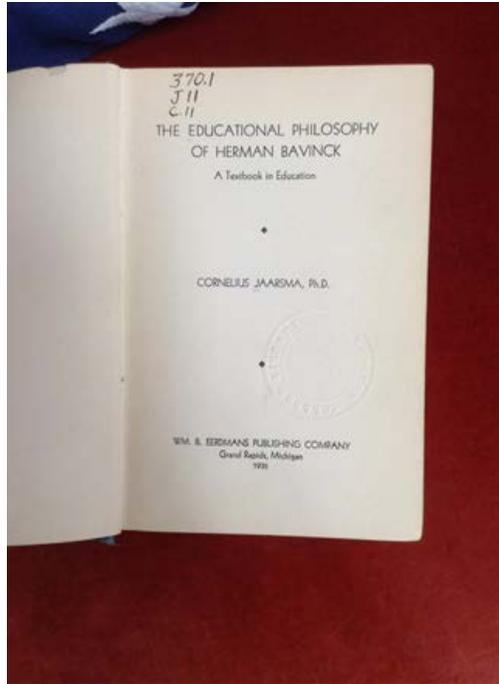
Calvin Seminary can say of Bavinck that he is *our* guy! Now comes a surprise. Bavinck's initial impact on the CRC community broadly and Calvin College and Seminary more particularly did not come through his *Reformed Dogmatics* and theology but by way of his work as a thinker about psychology, education and pedagogy. Former Calvin education professor Peter De Boer pointed to this in a booklet on Christian education: "Among many of the older leaders of the Christian school movement in America there was an acquaintance with the work of the eminent Dutch theologian and philosopher Herman Bavinck, including his *Pedagogical Principles* (1904) . . . To keep that tradition alive in the wake of Americanization, several members of the Calvin faculty (including W. Harry Jellema) translated the book, *Distinctive Features of the Christian School* by T. Van der Kooy."<sup>16</sup> In addition, three years later, two members of the Calvin College faculty also translated J. Brederveld, *Christian Education: A summary and Critical Discussion of Bavinck's Pedagogical Principles*.<sup>17</sup> For the first half of the twentieth century, Herman Bavinck was the primary shaper of Reformed Christian education philosophy in North America.

I don't have the time to provide the full story; let me summarize things by giving two names: Cornelius Jaarsma (1897–1966) and Jan Waterink (1890–1966).

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<sup>16</sup> Peter P. De Boer, *Shifts in Curricular Theory for Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Monograph, 1983), 10; available online at <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/education/news/archive/publications/monoweb/deboer.htm>. Reference is to T. Van der Kooy, *The Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, translated by Three Members of the Faculty of Calvin College (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1925).

<sup>17</sup> J. Brederveld, *Christian Education: A Summary and Critical Discussion of Bavinck's Pedagogical Principles*, translated by Two Members of the Faculty of Calvin College (Grand Rapids: Smitten Book Company, 1928). Neither in this volume nor in the Van der Kooy volume mentioned in the previous note are the translators named.



*Cornelius Jaarsma's doctoral dissertation on Bavinck's educational philosophy, published in 1935 by Eerdmans, as "A Textbook in Education"*

In the 1930's, as Cornelius Jaarsma wrestled with the need to provide a Christian alternative to what he called the "pragmatic and experimental philosophy" of people like John Dewey and Charles Hubbard Judd, he "found the works of Bavinck very enlightening." He then took on this task: "Both to crystallize his own thinking in the philosophy of education and to give others [notably those who could not read Dutch] an opportunity to profit from Bavinck's contribution to the field of education, the author set himself the task of giving an exposition of the educational philosophy of Herman Bavinck and a

brief evaluation of it in the light of modern thought.”<sup>18</sup> The result was a New York University doctoral dissertation, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck*, about which a contemporary blogger focused on Calvinist day school education says: “This is one of my more prized pieces in my library, not only because of its content, but also because of its rarity. If you happen to come across this book, I would highly recommend purchasing it . . . they are hard to find!”<sup>19</sup>

Professor Jaarsma came from Wheaton College to Calvin’s education department in 1947<sup>20</sup> and was an influential leader in what usually gets referred to as the “progressive” stream in Reformed Christian education in North America.<sup>21</sup> In the volume by T. Van der Kooy, this theme is summarized as follows:

[It is] the fashioning of the whole man . . . Heart, intellect and will, with an eye to the whole of a man’s life. Education is concerned with more than mere knowledge; the heart, too has its rights . . . the ultimate purpose in all education must be true piety. But this piety must not remain isolated . . . but be bound up with wisdom, with genuine and thorough knowledge of affairs.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Cornelius Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935), “Preface.”

<sup>19</sup> At <https://calvinistdayschool.wordpress.com/the-book-list/jaarsma-the-educational-philosophy-of-herman-bavinck/>; accessed May 5, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> This was also the year that philosophy professor W. Harry Jellema returned to Calvin from Indiana University (De Boer, *Shifts*, 9).

<sup>21</sup> De Boer, *Shifts*, 9–14.

<sup>22</sup> T. Van der Kooy, *Distinctive Features of the Christian School*, 39.

Here I need to introduce Jan Waterink.



*Professor Jan Waterink  
(1890–1966)*

Waterink was extraordinary professor of pedagogy in the humanities faculty and extraordinary professor of catechesis in the theology faculty at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Waterink picked up the torch passed on by Bavinck, in particular developing the psychological study of children being educated.<sup>23</sup> Waterink was very influential in the Dutch Reformed community (its Dr. Spock),<sup>24</sup> but he also came to Calvin College in the school year 1953–54, and delivered the Calvin Foundation Lecture for 1954, *Basic Concepts in Pedagogy*,<sup>25</sup> which was used in North American Christian school circles for a number of years. The key Bavinckian element here is once again the emphasis on the “whole child.”

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<sup>23</sup> De Boer, *Shifts*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> References to Professor Waterink were not uncommon in my childhood home and community; to the extent that any “expert” played a role in my own upbringing, it would have been Waterink.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Waterink, *Basic Concepts in Pedagogy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954).

According to Professor De Boer, “It was, in part, this Reformed Christian tradition—begun with the Dutch schoolmasters [Van der Kooy and Brederveld] on through Waterink—that Cornelius Jaarsma attempted to revive in the 1950s.”

Jaarsma was concerned about the trend in “secular educational theory and practice to launch out independent of both theology and philosophy,” pointing to John Dewey as the prime example and architect of this trend. As someone who did take psychology seriously, Bavinck provided a meaning and modern antidote to this trend:

It was Herman Bavinck who recognized that Christian education “could not remain indifferent to . . . the contributions of psychological research to education.” Consequently, wrote Jaarsma, Bavinck, near the end of his life, “set himself . . . to give the maturing science (of education) the guidance . . . it needed.” Jan Waterink built on the foundation of Bavinck, suggested Jaarsma, bringing Christian education to the point where “it is a field of research and practice which must be allowed the privilege of maturity if it is going to do for our Christian schools what needs to be done.”<sup>26</sup>

Bavinck’s pedagogy has not been the focus of my own research but every Sunday morning in church my wife and I sit in front of two retired teachers, one of whom reminds me frequently of the role that Bavinck’s pedagogy played in his training and continuing education. In conclusion, Herman Bavinck was the single most significant shaper, in the first half of the twentieth century, of educational philosophy and pedagogy in the Christian education circles associated with the CRC (Calvin College education department, National Union of Christian Schools, now Christian Schools

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<sup>26</sup> De Boer, *Shifts*, 11; internal quotes are from Cornelius Jaarsma, “Must We Rethink Christian Education,” *Calvin Forum* 21 (1955): 36–40; 54–59.

International). And Bavinck is still being taken seriously as an educational thinker.<sup>27</sup>

Bavinck is also “*our* guy” when it comes to theology, but this influence is more indirect. At least initially. There are three phases to this influence which I will summarize using the names of three CTS professors of systematic theology: Louis Berkhof, Anthony A. Hoekema, and John Bolt.



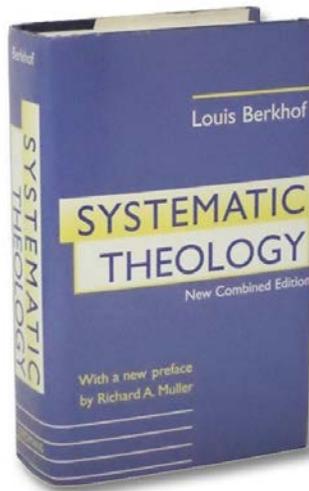
*Professor Louis Berkhof*  
(1873–1957)

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<sup>27</sup> In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Christian Studies Degree at Calvin College in 1981, Jack Vanden Born translated Bavinck’s *Foundations of Psychology*. *The Bavinck Review* will publish this translation in 2019. For a more recent indicator, see Hanniel Strebel, *Eine Theologie des Lernens: Systematisch-theologische Beiträge aus dem Werk von Herman Bavinck* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2014); idem., “Proposal for a Theological Prolegomena of Education: Lessons from Herman Bavinck’s Legacy,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39/2 (2015).

*Phase 1:*

There was an effort to translate Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* into English in the 1930's. William Hendriksen translated the *Doctrine of God* section but did not get it published until 1951. Nonetheless, CTS students were *indirectly* introduced to Bavinck's dogmatic work through the work of Louis Berkhof. Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* has, after its first publication in 1932, also been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Portuguese. It remains one of the most influential textbooks on Reformed theology ever produced and served CTS students and CRC pastors for some three generations. Berkhof, however, did not present his own original theology; it was for the most part, in structure and content, the theology of Herman Bavinck, as my own teacher and colleague Henry Zwaanstra has observed.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, for me and many other CTS graduates, our first introduction to Herman Bavinck



*Louis Berkhof's "Big Book"*  
(1935+)

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<sup>28</sup> Henry Zwaanstra, "Louis Berkhof," in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 166–67.

was *indirect*, mediated through Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*.

*Phase 2:*

Speaking of my teachers, the second phase of Bavinck's *indirect* appearance at Calvin Seminary, came through my professor in systematic theology, Anthony A. Hoekema, who taught at CTS from 1955 to 1978.

Professor Hoekema, like his theological mentor, was deeply interested in psychology, earning a Master's Degree in the field from



*Professor Anthony A.  
Hoekema (1913–1988)*

the University of Michigan. He regularly referred to Bavinck in the classroom, even providing us with his own translation of a section on the wideness of God's mercy from Bavinck's eschatology. No wonder. Professor Hoekema completed TWO dissertations on Bavinck's theology for his Th.D. Degree from Princeton Seminary,

the first on the centrality of the heart in Bavinck, and the second on Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant for which he was awarded his doctorate.<sup>29</sup> If you are in doubt about Bavinck's importance for Hoekema, check out his post-retirement works and the footnotes to Bavinck.<sup>30</sup>

*Phase 3:*

I am not going to spend any time tonight on the third phase which is more direct. It is the phase in which I am directly involved as the editor of the *Reformed Dogmatics* that helped make Bavinck available to all English-speaking students, including those at CTS. Bavinck can now be used by those who cannot read Dutch but do have facility in English.

It is easy to make the case that Bavinck has been and remains a significant player in the development of Calvin College and Seminary. He's *our* guy!

## **II. A Way for CTS to Bless the World-wide Church**

In conclusion, I want to say a few words about my second answer to the question: "Why at Calvin Seminary?" The Bavinck Institute is one way for CTS to bless the world-wide church (especially the younger churches in Asia, Latin America, and Africa). For starters, the project of translating and using Bavinck has already lived at Calvin Seminary for more than twenty years; it is therefore in keeping with CTS's own tradition and identity that its library and

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart: A Study in Christian Anthropology, with Special Reference to the Psychology of Herman Bavinck," a thesis submitted to the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Theology, February 18, 1948. This dissertation was submitted but not defended; it will be published as a special edition of *The Bavinck Review* in 2018/19. The second dissertation, successfully defended in 1953 was, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant."

<sup>30</sup> *The Bible and the Future* (Eerdmans, 1979); *Created in God's Image* (Eerdmans, 1986); *Saved by Grace* (Eerdmans, 1989).

Heritage Hall host a space known as the Bavinck Institute that serves as a working station for research by CTS graduate students and potential visiting scholars.

For Bavinck is popular among CTS graduate students, especially our international students. In the years that I have taught one of the two Bavinck seminars, a total of [hold your breath; this is a mystical number] 144 students have been enrolled. This includes students from Western Theological Seminary, the Protestant Reformed Theological School, and Puritan Reformed Seminary.

Let me tell you about the dedication of our international students, most of whom are Korean. It was persistent requests from our Korean students that got the project of translating the *Reformed Dogmatics* underway in the early 1990s. And today I am so encouraged by their work. Remember, English is their second language! And every semester I have Korean students who compare the English translation with the original Dutch and raise questions/challenges to my editorial work. This goes far beyond the requirements for the course and I love it; in addition, *most* of the time they are right. And these students raise such fascinating questions, like: is there any evidence Bavinck was good at arithmetic? Answer: Yes; we have evidence that he was very careful with money.

Twenty-five of these students have done additional independent studies, major research paper, or Th.M. thesis on Bavinck. There is one completed Ph.D. CTS dissertation that deals with Bavinck, another in progress, and four potential ones pending. Our doctoral program began in the 1990s with a particular vision and mission to develop Reformed leadership for the younger churches around the world. It's already happening.

I rest my case: “Why Herman Bavinck? Why at CTS?” Because Bavinck’s theology, in its content but perhaps even more importantly in its method, remains relevant for today. That is my testimony to which I could add that of thousands more. He’s our guy and one of our most valuable resources for CTS to bless the worldwide church. He is already doing it.