

Editorial

John Bolt

For twenty-five years after his death in 1920, doctoral level research and writing about Herman Bavinck's thought focused almost entirely on his work in psychology and pedagogy.¹ Former Calvin Theological Seminary professor Anthony Hoekema deserves credit for writing the first doctoral dissertation on Bavinck as a theologian with his 1953 Princeton Theological Seminary thesis on Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant.² What is not so well known is that this was the second dissertation Hoekema wrote on Herman Bavinck. He submitted the first one, "The Centrality of the Heart: A Study in Christian Anthropology with Special Reference to the Psychology of Herman Bavinck," to the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary on February 28, 1948. We are publishing it in this issue of the *Bavinck Review*. There is a story behind these two dissertations.

In his acknowledgments to the first work, Hoekema indicates his "indebtedness to Dr. John E. Kuizenga, under whom this investigation was begun." John E. Kuizenga (1895–1949) was originally a minister in the Reformed Church in America who taught at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary before becoming a professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1930 until his retirement in 1947. He then moved back to Holland, Michigan,

¹ Fr. S. Rombouts, *Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck, Gids bij de studie van zijn paedagogische werken* (Antwerp: Malmberg, 1922); J. Brederveld, *Hoofdpijnen der paedagogiek van dr. Herman Bavinck, met critische beschouwing* (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1927); ET: *Christian Education: A Summary and Critical Discussion of Bavinck's Pedagogical Principles* (Grand Rapids: Smitter, 1928); L. van der Zweep, *De paedagogiek van Bavinck* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1935); Cornelius Jaarsma, *The Educational Philosophy of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1935); and L. Van Klinken, *Bavinck's paedagogische beginselen* (Meppel: Boom, 1937).

² Anthony A. Hoekema, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant" (ThD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953).

where he died in 1949.³ With Kuizenga's departure from Princeton, Hoekema ran into difficulties to complete the defense of the dissertation he submitted in 1948. According to his son David, "The evaluator or committee (I'm not sure which) did not reject the dissertation but suggested a great many revisions. They were numerous and substantive enough to induce my dad to put that entire project behind him and start afresh on Bavinck's covenantal theology."⁴ This new dissertation was presented and successfully defended in 1953. During the time he was working on the first dissertation, Hoekema served as the pastor of the Twelfth Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids (from 1944 to 1950), and he expresses gratitude in his acknowledgments "for their exceptional co-operation, which included a four-month leave of absence." From 1950 to 1954 he served as the pastor of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, New Jersey, and acknowledges their support in the 1953 dissertation.

We decided to publish this dissertation because it is important as a piece of transitional Bavinck scholarship, serving as a bridge between the earlier scholarship on Bavinck's pedagogy and psychology and the scholarship on Bavinck's theology that began in the 1950s and to which Hoekema made the first significant contribution with his study of the covenant in Bavinck's thought. Now that the definitive critical English translation of Bavinck's own seminal work, *Foundations of Psychology*, is available,⁵ scholarly work on Bavinck's psychology deserves a fresh start and Hoekema's pioneering work is the necessary starting point.

Hoekema's study is valuable because in addition to his historical overview (Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin; chapters 3 to 6) and Scriptural assessment (chapter 7), Hoekema becomes one of the first Reformed theologians in North America (alongside Cornelius Van Til) to engage the "Reformational" philosophical work of D. H. Th. Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd.⁶ What

³Western Theological Seminary, "W88-0067. Kuizenga, John E. (1876–1949). Papers, 1895–1949. 0.50 linear ft." (2013). *Collection Registers and Abstracts*. Paper 526. https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/collection_registers/526

⁴David Hoekema, email message to the author, July 17, 2020.

⁵See *Bavinck Review* 9 (2018).

⁶See footnote 10.

is also noteworthy is Hoekema's efforts in chapter 9 to take into his purview the results of "recent" research in psychology.⁷

A few words are in order about our editorial decisions. We sought to keep Hoekema's original manuscript intact, making only minor changes in the text and keeping our editorial notes (clearly indicated) to a minimum. We left intact foreign language passages that Hoekema did not translate (notably Latin and German) and retained Hoekema's free and dynamic equivalent translations of Bavinck's Dutch original even in cases where a published English translation is available. For passages left untranslated in the text, such as Augustine's Latin texts, we added available English translations in the notes; we also added to the notes ET references for now-published Bavinck works.

Those additional references are the major changes in the manuscript; we also standardized the footnotes using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Hoekema's end of chapter bibliographies were converted to a single bibliography that now appears after the final chapter. An index to Hoekema's text was added after this consolidated bibliography. We did not change Hoekema's own translations of Biblical texts. Hoekema began by typing Hebrew and Greek terms in their respective scripts and then switched to transliteration. We are using original language script throughout for all Biblical terms, except when Hoekema cites passages where Bavinck himself uses transliterations and Hoekema follows suit.⁸ Where Hoekema left lengthier quotations in Latin or German untranslated and English translations are readily available (e.g. Augustine), we have added them to the footnotes for the benefit of readers. We did not feel any need to double-check all of Hoekema's footnotes for accuracy; he was a scrupulously careful

⁷This remained a lifelong interest of Professor Hoekema, most clearly apparent in his book *The Christian Looks at Himself* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) where his concern is Christian "self-image." He also devotes an entire chapter (6) to this question in his *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

⁸Such as his discussion of Bavinck's treatment of the Pauline understanding of *nous* (νοῦς) in his *Bijbelsche en religieuze psychologie*, 68–70 (see *Centrality of the Heart*, 13n42). On occasion, Hoekema supplies the original language even when it is missing in Bavinck. See *Centrality of the Heart*, 14n47: "Bavinck himself does not give the Greek words here, but I have supplied them after a study of the passage cited." The Greek terms are βούλομαι and θέλω, and Hoekema appears to have Rom. 7:19 in mind.

scholar and proved to be correct in the instances we used his references to find the ET. The original pagination is indicated in the text within square brackets [].

My comments about the content of the thesis will focus on what I judge to be its important contributions to scholarship. First, Hoekema's chapters, comparing Bavinck with Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin (3–6) carefully situate Bavinck solidly within the small "c" catholic tradition of Christian theology. They affirm the success of Bavinck's own expressed intention to be such a catholic theologian.⁹ Then, in the second chapter, "The Position of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd," he unwittingly but accurately refutes a key argument of the Calvinist philosophy movement's¹⁰ critique of Bavinck. According to Hoekema, "It is extremely significant to note that a contemporary movement among Reformed Christians in the Netherlands [to construct a distinctive Christian philosophy] takes exactly the same position with respect to the heart that Bavinck takes."¹¹ On the question of "what is fundamental or primary in man . . . these men are in perfect agreement with Bavinck, though differing from him on other matters." Hoekema goes on to recall that "according to Bavinck, the heart is the source and center of all man's physical and mental life. In Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd we find this same view, only in slightly different language. The heart is called the concentration-point of all temporal functions."¹² Even the Scriptural defense of this point in both cases appeals to the same text: Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (KJV).

Interestingly, this is not how Dooyeweerd himself saw matters. In a 1939 essay,¹³ Dooyeweerd carefully distinguishes and separates two streams of thought

⁹ See Herman Bavinck, trans. John Bolt, "Foreword to the First Edition (Volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 9–10.

¹⁰ Also known as "Reformational philosophy," the self-designated term preferred by followers of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Hoekema uses the shorthand "Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" (philosophy of the law-idea) to capture the movement as a whole, though it refers only to Dooyeweerd's philosophy and not Vollenhoven's (*Centrality of the Heart*, 53).

¹¹ Hoekema, *Centrality of the Heart*, 53.

¹² Hoekema, *Centrality of the Heart*, 54.

¹³ Herman Dooyeweerd, "Kuypers wetenschapsleer," *Philosophia Reformata* 4 (1939): 193–232; ET: Herman Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," in Steve Bishop

in Kuyper's anthropology, a "Biblical reformational starting point," where the heart is considered the concentration-point of the person, and the more traditional, scholastic, dualistic body-soul anthropology.¹⁴ Dooyeweerd then claims Kuyper's "reformational" view as his own and contends that Kuyper's view of the heart's key role was unique to him:

It was only Kuyper who accomplished here the tremendous grasp which, with one stroke, radically turned around in a Scriptural sense, the anthropological perspective. Neither in the mentioned writing of [Kuyper's neo-Calvinist colleague] Woltjer nor in Bavinck's *Beginselen der psychologie* (Principles of Psychology) is this conception found.¹⁵

Hoekema's innocence with respect to this contention of Dooyeweerd was a great advantage here; standing outside the Reformational movement left him free to make an unfettered judgment based on good historical and textual research. Since his dissertation remained unknown for all these years it also kept Hoekema away from the movement's legacy of rancorous infighting; thankfully he did not become their target.¹⁶

Dooyeweerd's claim is simply wrong on several levels.¹⁷ Hoekema convincingly demonstrates that the centrality of the heart is central to Bavinck's anthropology, even, contra Dooyeweerd, in his *Beginselen der psychologie*. In addition, by including comparisons between Bavinck and Augustine, Bavinck and Aquinas, Bavinck and Luther, as well as Bavinck and Calvin in his study, Hoekema thoroughly unmasks the unwarranted *Entdeckungsfreude* — "no one thought of this

and John H. Kok, eds., *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work, and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2013), 153–78.

¹⁴ Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," 155, 167.

¹⁵ Dooyeweerd, "Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," 165.

¹⁶ It is true, of course, that Hoekema's favorable comments about the Reformational philosophy at the conclusion of chapter 8 — in criticism of Bavinck! — would have shielded him from some of the critique coming from that quarter.

¹⁷ I contradicted Dooyeweerd's claim in my "Doubting Reformational Anti-Thomism," in Manfred Svensson and David VanDrunen, eds., *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 133–35. I regret not consulting Hoekema when I wrote this essay; it would have strengthened my case and given appropriate credit to Professor Hoekema's sound scholarship.

before Abraham Kuyper and we follow him in this newness”—that has characterized the Reformational movement and frequently alienated those outside it.¹⁸ In hindsight, I include myself among the many whose intellectual journeys would have been greatly helped by awareness of what Hoekema accomplished in this work.¹⁹ However, I have no regrets; I am pleased that we can now honor my teacher and that others can benefit.

Second, Hoekema’s portrait of Bavinck as a Biblical theologian is another important contribution to scholarship. In his seventh chapter on the Scriptural conception of the heart, Hoekema summarizes a number of works on Biblical psychology, some of which Bavinck himself consulted: Johann T. Beck, Franz Delitzsch, Hans H. Wendt, Gustav F. Oehler, John Laidlaw, and Theodor Simon;²⁰ others which could have been available to Bavinck though he does not appear to have consulted them: William P. Dickson, Ernst Wörner, Herman Schultz, H. Wheeler Robinson, M. Scott Fletcher;²¹ and, finally, two scholars published after Bavinck’s death: Johannes Pedersen and Walter Eichrodt. After considering them all, Hoekema concludes that Bavinck’s understanding of heart comports fully with the best Biblical scholarship on the question.

This is significant for Bavinck scholarship in two ways: First, it demonstrates that Bavinck’s dogmatic work is closely linked to Biblical scholarship and that

¹⁸ I found it refreshing that for all his appreciation of Bavinck’s understanding of the heart, Hoekema is studiously careful to not ascribe such a newness to him (see *Centrality of the Heart*, 196). All he will say is the modest claim that “as far as I can judge” Bavinck’s integration of “heart” into his theology “was somewhat new” (*Centrality of the Heart*, 196). Hoekema attributes this to Bavinck’s awareness of “depth psychology.”

¹⁹ Knowledge of this dissertation might have prevented the unproductive stream of scholarship that underscored “two Bavincks.”

²⁰ See Hoekema’s own discussion of Bavinck’s dependence on these studies, *Centrality of the Heart*, 179–80 [246–47].

²¹ In fairness, it should be noted that Wheeler Robinson’s book was published in 1911 and Fletcher’s second edition in 1912; Bavinck may have consulted them and it is possible that the voluminous notes that Valentijn Hepp consulted for his revision of *Beginnselen der psychologie* included material from either or both. Hepp did not include references to either in his revision. See Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, Index, *Bavinck Review* 9 (2018): 245–52.

Bavinck was a careful student and exegete of Scripture.²² This is underscored by Hoekema's examination of key Biblical lexicons that follows. Second, by broadening his search beyond authors and texts used by Bavinck himself, Hoekema emphasizes and provides further evidence of Bavinck's quality of work as a Biblical scholar and points to its continuing relevance. I would also observe that this careful attention to Biblical exegesis and Biblical theology is also a hallmark of Hoekema's own work as a systematic theologian.²³

Finally, chapter 8 where Hoekema evaluates Bavinck's psychology denotes the specific area where further scholarly attention is needed. Hoekema subjects Bavinck's faculty psychology to critique, using thinkers such as John Locke, George F. Stout, and the Dutch neo-Calvinist pedagogue, Jakob Brederveld,²⁴ and observes that if this critique is correct, "then there can of course be no primacy of the intellect in the sense that the intellect is sovereign over the other powers of man."²⁵ I am personally less convinced than Hoekema that we need to discard faculty psychology, but believe that the topic does deserve fresh attention from Bavinck scholars and Hoekema did break important ground with his own treatment of Bavinck. Specifically, is Hoekema correct in his judgment that Bavinck retained vestiges of unbiblical dualism in his anthropology? We invite submissions on this topic or other matters of Bavinck scholarship.²⁶

I sincerely hope that our work in bringing this fine study to the wider audience of scholars will spur on new examinations of Christian anthropology and psychology.

²² Which ought not to come as a surprise since Bavinck completed his Leiden theology (*kandidaats*) degree with a concentration in Semitic languages and was even offered a professorate in Semitic Languages at the Vrije Universiteit when it opened its doors in 1880.

²³ This is evident in all the theological monographs he published after his retirement; a noteworthy example is the essay "Recent Trends in Eschatology," included as an appendix in Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 288–317.

²⁴ In addition to his *De leer der zielsvermogens* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, [1925]) to which Hoekema refers, Brederveld also wrote one of the early summaries and assessments of Bavinck's pedagogy; see note 1, above.

²⁵ *Centrality of the Heart*, 189; also see note 5 in chapter 8.

²⁶ Please send manuscripts and proposals for submission to the *Bavinck Review's* managing editor, Antoine Theron, at antoine.theron@calvinseminary.edu.