

(e.g., it promotes gratitude and strengthens worship).

The combination of depth and breadth offered by the contributors of this volume in defense of definite atonement is a superb achievement. Rigor and clarity of expression are sustained throughout the book, and, moreover, the promise to do so in a humble, irenic manner is fulfilled. Both old and new opponents of definite atonement are dealt with fairly and answered evenly and with precision. Also, it is made clear that such figures as Amyraut, while rejecting definite atonement, were still within the pale of Reformed orthodoxy. Of course, as with any multiauthor volume, there are occasional points of difference among the contributors, but this strengthens rather than weakens the overall case presented.

Two weaknesses ought to be mentioned. First, there was a certain amount of repetitiveness as one progressed through the volume, but this is inevitable given that it is a seven-hundred-page treatment of a particular doctrine from four different perspectives. Second, the pastoral perspective was the least developed of the four levels and was at times strongly reminiscent of the prior theological perspective, especially since the former, like the latter, was characterized by thorough engagement with opponents of definite atonement. It seems possible that other areas of the volume could have been trimmed down to afford more space to develop this perspective.

Despite these weaknesses, this is essential reading on the oft-misunderstood and oft-contested doctrine of definite atonement and, as such, cannot be recommended enough. The opponent or doubter of definite atonement would be amiss if they failed to consult this volume, and the friend of the doctrine will gain much benefit by perusing its pages. This volume will likely be a standard defense of definite atonement for generations to come.

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*Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers.* Translated and edited by James P. Eglinton. Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 2017.

In the English-speaking world, it is only in the last fifteen years that Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) has emerged from the shadow of Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920) and been more widely appreciated. Outside of the Dutch-American community, he has remained in relative obscurity. A hitherto too-small number of non-Netherlanders have been familiar with his work in English translation: his Stone Lectures on *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1909); the translation by the New Testament commentator William

Hendriksen of part of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, published as *The Doctrine of God* (1951); Henry Zylstra's translation of his superb and beautiful *Magnalia Dei* (1956); and a handful of other pieces. They have eagerly devoured whatever they could find of Bavinck. All that began to change in 2003 with the publication in English of the whole of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (*Reformed Dogmatics*, four volumes, 2003–2008)—justice, at last, for one of the truly great systematic theologians of the Reformed church. Now, in this slim volume, James Eglinton—who has made his own signal contribution to Bavinck studies—has selected and translated several shorter pieces from the theologian's pen, intriguingly around the theme of preaching.

The book consists of an "Introduction" to Bavinck followed by four chapters plus an appendix and copious endnotes. In the second of these selections, "The Sermon and the Service," Bavinck strikes several significant notes. For him, worship is a high calling and sacred privilege. In our church gatherings, "we are placed in community with the heavenly congregation and are joined with it in *one* work, for which reason the angels, as a sign of this unity, are present both in our gatherings and in the heavenly gathering" (60). Thus, "the preacher's calling is ... to teach people the meaning of the church service" (61)—that is to say, through the preaching of the word to impress on the congregation that worship is the *raison d'être* of the gathering of the people. But, alas, he argues, "we can safely say that preaching is at present, out of touch with the time and does not meet its needs" (63). If that was true then, it is surely true now. But what is the solution? Bavinck's answer is reminiscent of Paul's counsel for any "time ... when people will not endure sound teaching ... and will turn away from listening to the truth" (2 Tim 4:3–4):

If the pulpit is to become a mighty force once again, this situation must be remedied, and that will happen when we return to searching the holy Scriptures. That is the lack of contemporary preaching: it is not drawn out of the Scriptures; it is not baptized in their spirit. (63)

*In nuce*, "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season" (2 Tim 4:2).

By way of illustration, Eglinton has included in his selection Bavinck's only published sermon (on 1 John 5:2, preached in Kampen in 1901 on the occasion of a visit of Paul Kruger, President of the South African Republic; this was also the text of the first sermon Bavinck ever preached).

The final chapter is an intriguing piece entitled "On Preaching in America," which readers may well find simultaneously both amusing and devastating. Bavinck's view of American church life is that

the churches have much that is better than ours: they are cozy (*gezellig*), welcoming, warmed in winter, without a pulpit, but it is also the case that they could be used as theaters without a single alteration. Light in color, with red carpets, lighthearted, lively, clear, fresh—precisely the opposite of that solemn, dignified, somber, serious [character] found in our European churches. And as the church is, so is the religion. Religion there is an amusement.

American preaching, he writes, is

short, varied, lively, theatrical ... spirited but shallow, enjoyable, peppered with humor ... interspersed with songs, with choirs, with solos, with vocal and instrumental music ... what American religious life lacks in depth, it wins in breadth. (85)

All this in 1908! And yet Bavinck also notes “so much that is good” (88). One is reminded of words from Robert Burns’s poem *To a Louse—On seeing one in a lady’s bonnet at church*:

O wad some Power the gift tae gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,  
An foolish notion.

Bavinck was certainly not slow to help us to “see ourselves as others see us”! It would be interesting to read a contemporaneous mirror-image account from a Connecticut Yankee visiting Prime Minister Kuyper’s church!

A five-page appendix “On Language” and its relationship to thought forms the final piece. There are nineteen pages of endnotes, a three-page bibliography, plus name and subject indices.

It is, however, the first and longest chapter in the book that forms its centerpiece. “Eloquence” is the published version of a lecture delivered in Kampen in 1889 by the young Professor Bavinck, and in it, he practices the quality he teaches. No doubt enthusiasts will welcome it simply because it comes from Bavinck. Theologians will also find his reflections of interest. But since most readers of books on preaching are themselves *preachers*, will this be of any more than antiquarian interest to them? Should they expect to find anything to clarify their thinking and stir their preaching blood in a lecture on eloquence delivered in a Dutch theological seminary more than a century ago? After all, the passing of the years has seen a marked change in the role of eloquence and rhetoric in public life in general, never mind in preaching. Gone are the days when a Robert L. Dabney could lecture on “Sacred Rhetoric,” or when it could be assumed that entering seminary students would already have taken courses in rhetoric or have much interest in it.

One only needs to read a sermon preached by a Benjamin Morgan Palmer or even by a B. B. Warfield to recognize that there have been significant changes in the genre of preaching since the late nineteenth century. The value of eloquence and the importance of rhetoric have largely vanished. Contemporary concerns may seem a diameter removed from those of this lecture. Today's seminaries and training institutions and organizations are more focused on hermeneutics and modes of communication than on eloquence in preaching. Here the focus may be on training students to preach Christ from the Old Testament; there it may be on communicating to a posttruth society. But in any event, the old styles and emphases—not to mention the pulpits—are largely gone. Faculty members who teach preaching to today's seminarians apparently often find that rather than thirsting for instruction in speech, or feeling the need for rhetoric and eloquence, or demanding help with voice training, many incoming students are confident that the one thing they can do is *speak well*. (Why else would they think they were called to preach and go to seminary?) Whose voice needs to be trained when there are microphones? Who today has any interest in principles of *rhetoric* and in becoming an *eloquent* preacher?

Bavinck sought to place some weighty considerations before his hearers (and later, readers). Being *able to talk* is one thing, *speaking well* is another. But speaking well is a biblical duty for all Christians (e.g., Col 4:6).

Speaking well is an adornment ... for the Christian man ... it is an exquisite virtue .... More than we often think, the Holy Scripture places a strong accent on the dutiful, holy use of the tongue and speech .... Speaking well is not only a requirement in the pulpit ... but also in daily life .... This ... is to be distinguished from verbosity [Bavinck's *welbespraaktheid* sounds much more expressive!]. (21)

Eloquence in the pulpit is simply an extension of this. The point is important, for eloquence has substance and weight only if it is the expression of a whole life. Doubtless, some have been guilty of a false and superficial oratory in preaching where the vocabulary or the voice employed fails to express weighty and profound thoughts or the stirrings of a Christ-adoring soul. Such preaching could never be described as portraying Christ crucified before the eyes of the hearers (Gal 3:1). But for Bavinck eloquence is never a matter of artifice, but of truth grasped by a humble mind and felt deeply within the soul, coming to expression in a way that accurately expresses and graciously adorns it.

To speak well is a theological responsibility, since “the word is the first-born of all creatures” (23). So, in the preacher, “deep, inner feeling is the principle of oratory” (28). Bavinck is very clear on this, alluding to Pascal:

“Real eloquence mocks eloquence.” (Mere artifice for its own sake constitutes “the sophisticated hawking of words.”) True eloquence therefore is “the gift developed by the art, the power of the word to convince the mind, touching the conscience and persuasively affecting the will of the people” (32).

Such genuine eloquence is multifeatured. It requires, first, a sound knowledge of the subject matter (32–36). But in addition, it has a poetic quality: “The orator must make us perceive what he is saying” (37) if he is to touch our conscience. And eloquence goes one step further, for thirdly, “it tries to go through the intellect and heart in order to move the will of the person. The orator may not be satisfied until his hearers think, feel, and act as he does.” An important implication is that “real eloquence is ... inconceivable without mastery of the language” (42).

These comments raise all kinds of ancillary issues for today’s preachers, such as the breadth, depth, and facility of our vocabulary (and therefore of our reading habits), the sanctified use of the imagination, and the discipline (indeed discipling) of the tongue and the voice as an expression of the heart reaching out to the hearers’ thinking, feeling, and acting.

In this connection, Bavinck himself briefly addresses such practical matters as the use of the voice, gesticulations, and other issues we moderns often belittle. Why should any student regard attending a *speech* class as a *sine qua non* of seminary education? (I write to my own shame!) Yet to employ the right words, to manifest feeling, and to express his experience of the power of the truth in his soul is the very essence of the preacher’s task, for his voice and the words it produces are the chief instruments of his life. Listen to an orthodox but dull preacher, and as you do, transpose his words into the voice of someone whose preaching has left its mark on you. How is it that the whole character of the sermon can immediately change? Now it has life, feeling, force. For Bavinck eloquence is, simply put, the ability to capture the significance of and express in speech the living power of the Word of God in a way that captures the mind, imagination, affection, and will of the hearer. The voice is the instrument by which this takes place; it is *that* important.

Herman Bavinck on *Preaching and Preachers* stimulates such reflections and much more. It is a *multum in parvo* indeed, and an eloquent one too. Thoughtfully and honestly read, Bavinck can raise important questions for us and strike some raw nerves in us. Bavinck has not given us a textbook on preaching, but whenever he speaks, it is worth listening.

We owe a debt to Eglinton for his labor of love in rescuing these pieces from obscurity. Preachers who have turned increasingly to Bavinck for

theological instruction and stimulation will feel that it is a bonus to know that he was a genuine fellow pilgrim in the long and arduous journey of growing as a preacher. In turn, it can only enhance our estimation of him as a theologian to know that he was sufficiently concerned to employ his exceptional gifts to helping others in the great task of preaching. Preachers at every age and stage should find these pages a pleasure to read and a stimulus to fulfill the apostolic desideratum that everyone should be able to see we are making progress in our ability to preach the word (1 Tim 4:15).

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