

He presented it personally to Charles V, only to be imprisoned for his gift to his country and the empire. It is an amazing story of intolerance to Scripture translations during the sixteenth century that has been lost for so many years. Thankfully, in November and December of 2017, the Congreso Internacional highlighted and honored the memory and the work of this young Reformer with a special exhibit and with many presentations in Burgos, Spain, Enzinas's hometown.

Along with Enzinas, the author highlights the other well-known Spanish Lutheran (a follower of the Augsburg Confession), Cassiodoro de Reina, whose translation of the whole Bible in 1569 (revised by Cipriano Valera in 1602) is well known and used throughout our Hispanic Protestant Churches.

I believe this book is important because the divisions created by the Inquisition still linger and so do the Reformation doctrinal struggles that they sought to quash. Even to this day the Reformation has been misunderstood even by Protestant churches that do not seem to appreciate the power of those simple but profound Reformation themes, the *solas* emphasized by Luther and other Reformers: *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). At this time of world persecution against Christianity and the struggle for religious freedom, the faith of the Bible that the Reformation sought to restore is more crucial than ever.

May this book be a reminder of what can happen even to the Christian church when we diminish, destroy, and attack the sacred truths of Holy Scripture for man's power and control. But may we also remember and cherish the truth that the church is eternal, and as this book demonstrates, it will survive the most intense persecution to give glory to God. For the church is Christ's alone; he is the head (Eph 1:20–23 ESV), and salvation comes only through him (Acts 4:12), by faith (Rom 1:16–17; 3:28), and by his grace (Eph 2:8–10).

**DANIEL J. VOGEL**

Emeritus Pastor  
Amigos en Cristo Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod of Denison, Iowa

---

Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) is the most important continental and confessional theologian of modernity, and his works have captured the imagination of a plethora of Reformed scholars and pastors of late. Perhaps the most

exciting news for the Bavinck readership since the final publication of *Reformed Dogmatics* in 2008 was that, in the very same year, Dirk Van Keulen found, by happenstance, an enormous manuscript in an archive in Amsterdam that appeared to be Bavinck's handwritten lectures on Reformed ethics. These pages had never been seen by any contemporary eyes as far as can be known and had certainly never been published. In 2019, the Bavinck readership may now hold in its hands the first of three planned volumes derivative of this eleven-hundred-page manuscript. The first volume in English spans 493 pages of prose. It is important to note, however, that Bavinck decided not to publish this work, that it was never finished, and that it is from the hand of the early Bavinck during his Kampen years. While the manuscript was not in final form when found, the editor promises that these volumes are the "genuine" voice of Bavinck.

If one might summarize the entirety of this first volume, Bavinck's argument is that the ethical ideal, the Good, is the ideal of being truly human. The ideal or true human would be (apart from the pollution of sin) the norm for morality. This moral life is one in which a human both in being and becoming is exactly what they are and should be as the image of God. And the only hope for this form of life, the good life, is to be moved from the Adamic and sinful state of the broken covenant of works into the fullness of the spiritual life by the Spirit of God (20). He offers a very similar argument in his early essay "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good" and continues his life-long motif of the organic (here, the organism of the harmonious self to all its external relations).

This brief description of an ethical position dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit coincides with an unsurprising approach offered in the introduction: Bavinck sharply separates the task of Christian ethics from mere philosophical ethics. Christian ethics asks how responsible human beings use the gifts of creation, accept the gospel of grace, and are regenerated, as well as how the whole person in intellect, feeling, and volition is directed toward the fulfillment of God's law. The framework of these questions assumes the prior work of Christian dogmatics and treats Christian ethics as a work of practical theology. Christian ethics views the human being in relationship with God. Philosophical ethics finds a foundation in nature, utilitarian logic, custom, intuition, and the demands of an evolutionary view of the origins of humanity. Christian ethics is theological ethics and depends upon one foundation of knowledge: the disclosure of God's viewpoint (26) in the rule of doctrine and life, the Holy Scriptures.

For Bavinck, the essence of humanity is the image of God. This is the most important point of the first six chapters ("Humanity before Conversion"),

which provide the dogmatic structure for the rest of his construction. Moral obligation arises because human beings are created to display God, to display his communicable attributes. It is in fulfilling the task of being what a human being is—while being unable to do exactly so because of the total corruption of the self—that feelings of unmet duty, obligation, and therefore guilt arise. It is only the Christian religion that can determine the essence of the moral obligation, because that obligation is birthed in a theology of creation and then fall from the Triune God. From creation, and even after the fall, because of the common grace of God poured out to all, three domains of obligation exist based upon the three relations in which all humans exist: the self to other humans, the self to nature, and the self to God. In the summary of the moral law, the Decalogue, God offers this fact in brief in the very structure of the tablets: first, obligation in relation to God and second, moral obligation in relation to Creation. The first table delineates the demands of true religion and the second of morality. While morality, as obligation towards nature and neighbor, is apparent and obliged of all of humanity, only the truly religious can perform actions that are not merely in agreement with the moral law, but that are properly “good works.” This is so because good works as defined by Scripture are those actions worked in the people of God by the Holy Spirit (69).

Perhaps the most helpful moment of this work is Bavinck’s taxonomy (or “phenomenology,” as he puts it) of sin found at the conclusion of part one. The organizing principle of all sin, according to Bavinck, is egoism, or self-divination, or idolatrous self-love. One of his most prophetic moments is his claim that the sin of his contemporary culture is respect for oneself, self-esteem, which births a terrible subjectivism, a vanity, and destroys the possibility of objectivity (133). This section is one of the most meticulous modern accountings for the vast domain of possible sins. At its end, Bavinck addresses the question of natural law, a topic much deliberated in contemporary Reformed theology and even in Bavinck scholarship. His approach here is to affirm the reality of natural law but to locate its source not *first* in the possibility of human reason (hence, its moral demands are not first discovered by the intellect), but in an immediate revelation of God to the human conscience, to the feeling aspect of knowing (see his *Foundations of Psychology* in *The Bavinck Review* 9 [August 23, 2019], [https://bavinck-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BR9\\_Foundations.pdf](https://bavinck-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BR9_Foundations.pdf)) and as a gift of God’s common grace (220–35) Provoking the reader to deep conviction, part two turns (and just in time) to the hope of life in the Spirit.

His work in book two, “Converted Humanity,” accomplishes one pivotal goal: to turn the modern Christian back to the historic emphasis on the

imitation of Christ. The spiritual life of converted humanity calls the self to imitate Christ. Christ is truly human, possessing a “completely harmonious character, the masculine and the feminine, the lion and the lamb” (337). Jesus Christ is, therefore, first the turning point of history and the means of salvation and also *the* exemplar of the spiritual life for the whole of humanity, men and women alike.

As is typical of a Bavinck work, the reader cannot help but be impressed by the scale of scholarly interaction with the Greeks, the patristic fathers, the theology of Roman Catholicism in the Middle Ages, the Protestant fathers and their Reformed scholastic progeny, and especially the German, Dutch, and French scholarship of the nineteenth century. Bavinck does indeed reveal some of his own cultural moment in several sweeping statements that would be most unwelcome to the twenty-first century ear: that the sin of the Germanic peoples is drunkenness (119), of the Greeks the lust of the eyes, and of the Romans the pride of life; he also has a somewhat absolute approach to the nature of women and men as, respectively, emotional and reasonable (419). But these moments are brief. One of the most significant benefits of this work is its devotional quality, as well as its service as an aid to the preacher looking for guidance on ethics and application.

Thanks are due to Dirk Van Keulen, John Bolt, and others, for their work translating and editing this significant volume. Besides some editorial oddities in this English edition (like citing Wikipedia on occasion), one of the best decisions was to include the significant original Greek, Hebrew, Latin, German, and Dutch terms in the footnotes. This adds immense scholarly possibility to an exclusively English edition and is an addition not present in the *Reformed Dogmatics* in English. The significance of this work is hard to measure. It in a way fills out *Reformed Dogmatics* to bring Bavinck’s theological reflection closer to completion.

**CORY C. BROCK**

First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS  
Belhaven University

---

### John Murray’s *Principles of Conduct*—Some Personal Reflections

I deeply appreciate the invitation from the editors of *Unio Cum Christo* to contribute some brief reflections on John Murray’s book *Principles of Conduct*. It has now been in print for over sixty years. But given the intervening exponential growth in Evangelical publishing (not least *academic* publishing—how impoverished theological students of the 1950s were by comparison!), it is possible that a generation has arisen that “knows not Murray.”