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'Bavinck: A Critical Biography,' with Dr. James Eglinton

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

In this episode of Life and Books and Everything, Dr. James Eglinton joins Kevin to discuss his latest work, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*. Listen in for a fascinating look at the history of the modern Reformed tradition as told through the story of one of its greatest theologians, Herman Bavinck. Topics include Bavinck's Dutch Calvinistic context, his desire to apply Reformed orthodoxy to modern dilemmas, his association with the women's rights movement, if Bavinck was an evangelical, and his children and grandchildren's involvement in the Nazi resistance. This episode of Life and Books and Everything is brought to you by Crossway. The Crossway title we want to highlight in this episode is *Concise Theology* by J. I. Packer. Theology is important for the Christian life. And though it is marked by many complex terms and doctrines, there is yet what J. I. Packer calls "the permanent essentials of Christianity." This concise introduction to these essential doctrines distills theological truths so both scholar and layperson alike can grow to treasure the unchanging pillars of the Christian faith.

Resources mentioned:

Bavinck: A Critical Biography by James Eglinton - 40% off [HERE](#)

Reformed Dogmatics (4 Volume Set) by Herman Bavinck

The History of Scottish Theology, Volume I: Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy by David Fergusson and Mark Elliot

Transcript

Greetings and salutations, welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung. Unfortunately, I'm not joined by my good friends, Justin Taylor and Colin Hanson, who are otherwise disposed.

They're not disposed or deposed, just predisposed, but I am joined. By a new friend who will introduce in just a second, James Eglinton, and he is here. I'm very excited to talk about his new book, *A Biography on Herman Bavinck*.

But first, let me mention that today's episode is sponsored by Crossway. We're grateful, as always, for Crossway's partnership with his podcast. And we want to highlight today, J.I. Packer's book, 'Consize Theology.' As our listeners will know, Dr. Packer passed on into glory, earlier this summer, and Crossway has a wonderful treat for us.

94 chapters in this book, 'Consize Theology.' So, unfortunately, Jim Packer never, never thought to do his systematic theology, but this is a great way to get in very bite-sized nuggets, some of his insights onto the core doctrines of the faith. So check that out, J.I. Packer, 'Consize Theology.' Thank you to Crossway. Dr. Eglinton, I presume.

Nice to have you with us. James is the... Do I have this right? The Meldrum Senior Lecture in Reform Theology? That's correct. That's what we're here.

Thanks, Kevin. Yeah, at the University of Edinburgh. So thank you so much for being with us.

First of all, really, congratulations on a great book. I'm not a flatterer. I really love the book, and I've been really looking forward to talking to you about it.

I anticipate that you will have lots of opportunities to do interviews like this. I've already done a print interview on Gospel Coalition, and I know others are lined up to interview you. It's very readable.

It's well researched. It's timely. So thank you for that.

I'd love for you to... We've just gotten to know each other over email over the summer, but that's right for my own sake and for our listeners. Tell us just a little bit about your background, your family, your education, what you're doing at the esteemed University of Edinburgh these days. Sure.

So I am Scottish. I grew up in the Highlands of Scotland. Very much between two cultures.

So on one side of my family, English speaking, Lolan Scots, and on the other side of my family, Gaelic speaking, Edwardian Scots. Really? You speak Gaelic? I do, yeah. I do speak it with at home with my kids and with my wife.

So we're part of this one percent of the population who speak it, still. Yeah. I grew up in the Free Church of Scotland.

That's where I spent my formative years. So it's a Presbyterian denomination. I became really interested in theology towards the end of my high school years.

So my last year of high school, I took a religion philosophy class where I started to read all of this stuff that completely blew my mind. I started reading Calvin then in high school and never really looked back. So this class was taught by a retired pastor from my

denomination who'd become a high school religion teacher.

So he got me into engaging my mind, I guess, with serious theological sources. After that, I studied a lot at the University of Aberdeen. Oh, really? And I did that as a background to going on to seminary.

That was my plan. So in my Presbyterian tradition, if you want to go to seminary, and if you're thinking of pastoral ministry afterwards, and you're still quite young, you're encouraged to do a degree in something else first, and then go on to your theology training. So I studied law and then went from there to the Free Church College in Edinburgh, known as Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

I studied under some great theologians, Donald McLeod, teaching Systematic Theology, so that was a really formative privilege. After that, I then did my PhD at the University of Edinburgh on Hermann Bavinck. Worked for three years part-time while I was doing that for a Free Church congregation in the middle of Edinburgh.

And when that finished my PhD, we then moved to the Netherlands. So we went to go to bigger room with the Dutch thing. So I got a post-doc at Theological University in Groningen, which is a beautiful Dutch time.

It's where Hermann Bavinck spent a few decades in his life. So I spent three years there, really happily immersing myself in Dutch language and culture and books and making great friends. So I worked there for three years doing research on Bavinck and Abraham Kuiper.

I was also looking a lot at the history of connections between Scottish Reformed theology and Dutch Reformed theology. So I was just a nerd in paradise. I really, really loved my time there.

And then after that, I was appointed to the position I now have at the University of Edinburgh. So we've been back in Edinburgh for about seven years. And a lot of the fruit of those years has been the biography that we're talking about today.

That's fantastic. And I'm not the one percent who speaks Gaelic, but I may be the one percent who has all three of these volumes. Nice.

The history of Scottish theology, volume one. We'll get this in our show notes, but it's like a hundred dollars a volume. So I don't know how to fly off the shelves, but thank you.

You have a, I'm reading through volume one. You have a chapter isn't your chapter in here on... Yeah. So it's on connections.

Well, some connections between Reformed Christians in Scotland with France and with the Netherlands and the early modern period. So 16th, 17th centuries. So it was really

fun to put that together and just work out how, you know, in this particular period, the Reformed faith, especially, is just very different kind of social situations in those three countries.

And the Netherlands, it's really flourishing and they have great universities in Scotland. It's very difficult politically at that point for Reformed Christians. And lots of them are exiled to the Netherlands and write some great books while they're there.

And then the French have their own struggles that are very particular as well. With lack of toleration of Protestants and performed Christians in particular. So yeah, it's a really enjoyable chapter to write.

That's really interesting. I remember when I was doing my research on Witherspoon, I think it was Phil Reiken in one of his chapters on Protestant's Galacticism. Of course, he did his doctor work on Boston, but he said for much of the early Scottish history, they were importers rather than exporters of the Reformed theology.

Do you think that's true? I mean, I think early Reformed theology in Europe is just a melting pot. And it was very normal for quite a long time that when you went to study, you weren't just at one city in one country for the whole of your education. It was called Peregrine Nation.

So you moved around Germany and Switzerland and France and the Netherlands. So there are lots of moving pieces to that puzzle, but yeah, a lot of Reformed theology was imported into Scotland. But also made into its own thing as well, to this distinct Scottish Reformed tradition.

So how did you get interested in Herman Bawink? Sure. So when I was a student at Seminary, that was just around the time that the English translations of Babbink's performed of Maddox were being released. And he was this new figure on the horizon.

And Donald McLeod, my systematic professor, would quote him quite a lot and occasionally would drop things into lectures like people should start thinking about doing EHDs on Babbink. And a few people who were quite formative in my life at that point also made that suggestion independently. I knew Carl Truman quite well from my undergrad days in Aberdeen because we went to this in church.

So he was a professor at the university. He also suggested to me, why do you think about working on Babbink? And David Ferguson at the University of Edinburgh, who ended up doing my PhD under, also suggested it independently. So providentially, it's really that Babbink found me, I guess.

He was coming at me from every angle. And just when I discovered his works, it's just great theology. It's so rich.

He's so profound in his reflections on scripture and so committed to the Bible, but also so rich in his understanding of historical theology and his ability to give you this big picture of the history of any particular idea in Christian theology and how it developed in the Patristic period, the medieval era, what happens to the information? What are the big challenges that enlightenment and secularization pose to that particular doctrine? And how do you articulate that doctrine today? Babbink is just incredible. He's like a hawk who flies above the forest of Christian theology. You can see every tree and you can see the whole forest that can zoom in and see the tiny mouse running underneath the leaves as well.

Just the way that he does all of this was really blew my mind. It's just fantastic stuff to discover. And so I did my PhD on him on his understanding of how the trinity is revealed in the world and the general revelation of God in a way that still keeps the trinity, this three in one way of being for the persons of the Godhead that still keeps that unique to God, but nonetheless is revealed even in the world in which we live.

So he has a really interesting, creative account of that. So I got into his theology like that and the biographical interest grew out of that as well. So when I started reading not just Babbink, but also what other people had written about him, I found that for a lot of the 20th century, people have written not about one herm and Babbink, but about two.

Yeah, it's a big theme in your book. What are the two Babbinkes and why are you disappointed with or trying to critique that historiography? Yeah, so the two Babbinkes idea is that when you look at his life, and you find what I think is a really fascinating figure, you find someone who is thoroughly committed to his own theologically conservative, orthodox, Calvinist tradition, but who also is a really enthusiastic, involved participants in modern culture and in modern science, modern scholarship, modern politics, modern journalism. And a lot of people who read Babbink in the 20th century thought that that combination was unusual and that there's no way that one person could be going in those two directions intentionally.

So a lot of people who read Babbink across the 20th century spoke about two Babbinkes, one being the orthodox Babbink and the other being the modern Babbink. And he was portrayed for quite a long time as a Jekyll and Hyde figure in reform theology. And as someone who's just pushed and pulled between two opposing desires and can never choose which one he really wants to be, whether he wants to run with the modern crowd or go back to the 17th century with all the solidly reformed people.

So the more I read Babbink, the more I thought this just doesn't stack up. When you really get into the details of his thoughts, he has ways of wanting to be an orthodox Calvinist in the modern world. And he understood orthodoxy as something that is expressed and that carries on throughout history and that develops and that actually needs to be expressed and articulated in each new phase of history and as culture

develops as well, you have to keep on pushing orthodoxy forward into it.

So I started to see that really the two Babbinkes approach to reading him and trying to make sense of his thought just doesn't work. So my first book pushed back pretty hard against that. But the first book wasn't really on his life.

So what does it look like for one person to try and live that kind of a life where you're an orthodox Calvinist, but you've got a finger in every pie, you're trying to engage with everything around you. It was more about the workings of his theology that allowed him to want to be theologically who he was. But within that there's this biographical claim that was in my first book that grew out of the PhD thesis, which is that there's only one harm in Babbink rather than two.

So that set up the need for there to be a follow-up which would really have to be a biography. So we've done Babbink and the theology. What do we have to say in that light about Babbink, the theologian or Babbink, the human being? What is a life that's trying to do this look like? So how was it? Because your training is, now, systematics and historical theology and history, they intermingle, but you're a lecturer in systematic theology.

That's your expertise and you're doing history very well. So what was the process like and did you have to learn new skills or you were pretty well into the sources and knew what you were doing from your PhD work? Yeah, that's a really observant question as well. So I think a few things really helped me take on this project.

One was actually, I go back into my own biography a bit, doing a law degree as my preparation for a theology degree. Because part of why I chose that subject, and in Scotland you don't have to do pre-law and then go on to do your JD. In Scotland you go straight into law, like 18 years old and really get cracking on it very early.

But part of why I chose the degree itself as a subject was that it was almost like a liberal arts degree. If you study law, you do legal philosophy, jurisprudence, and that's a good training for something like systematic theology. You do a lot of legal history and that trains you in historical research.

You pick up at some pieces of Latin, so you do all these things that are actually very useful. You do public speaking, which for me that was a really useful thing in thinking about going on the seminary. So I had this training in history in the first place that I acquired through my theology degree.

And then going through seminary, I did lots of church history and lots of historical theology anyway. My PhD was somewhere in that amorphous zone between systematic theology and historical theology. So the way that my supervisor encouraged me to think about doing a doctorate, and I do this with all of my own PhD students, is to view doing a

historical theology PhD as a stepping stone onto doing your own systematics, your own constructive theology at a later stage.

But before you do that, step into a master's workshop and spend three years just trying to learn how they craft what they do. So take a few years and become an expert interpreter of someone who has all of these skills in a fully developed way, and just learn to think their thoughts after them, learn how their minds worked, and the kind of context that they worked in, and how all of those factors come together. So for me that kind of training was systematic theology, and that I was tracing out having an approach to doing theology in a systematic way, and also trying to say something constructive on that basis.

But it's also deeply historical at the same time. So I think I was blessed to have kind of training that I want to pass on to other students that set me up pretty well to do the kind of historical work that I've done with biography. I also had a very good mentor in all of this in George Harry from the the Free University of Amsterdam and also the Theological University in Campan.

So I got to know him pretty well when I was doing my PhD, and he's become a really valued mentor and friend. He is the Netherlands top historian of neo-Calvinism, Baving and Kuiper and that whole tradition. So when I went to Campan to do my postdoc, it was to spend three years working with George, which was also in lots of ways like being an apprentice in a master's workshop.

It was just it was a huge privilege to learn from him and to spend three years talking about how to think historically, how to write history. So that was a really wonderful, enjoyable experience that has I think equipped me and gave me these skills. Well, that's fantastic.

Yeah, maybe I'm not. There's also lots of other stuff in terms of, I have a aspect of your question. How do you do a work like this? So in those three years in the Netherlands, I spent lots of time in the Baving Archives and reading and papers and your done stuff.

Excellent by now or already was because of the PhD. Did you enjoy that? Get your fingernails dirty into these old archival sources? Yeah, it was it was just a labor of love. It was so fascinating.

It was like having another world to escape into. You could just step into this room and open up these old handwritten journals and letters and then you've got the newspaper next to you from the day that that was written and you are just transported into the 19th century and to and such a fascinating historical period as well. So in a way, I felt really sad to finish the book, although I was glad to get it done and I'm really excited about it getting out now so people can read it.

But I loved in my imagination, I guess, inhabiting that world in that period. It was so immensely enjoyable just to follow so many interesting developments in Western society and politics and the academy and to follow it all through one historical actor and such an interesting person and how his life develops in that context. Yeah, it's really fascinating.

I'll jump into the biography. I have way more, I have 26 questions. We won't get through all of these.

But you say early on that in the early 20th century, this is early in your biography, 20th century Netherlands. Boving was a household name. Now we use that expression sometimes and it's often not really true.

I mean, John Piper or Tim Keller, our household name, well, in certain very specific kinds of households. But I get the sense he really was a household name in the Netherlands. So is that true? And I assume it is, you said it.

Why? How could that be the case? Not just, you know, nerdy theology guys, but everyone knew Herman Boving of him? Yeah, he was a household name in his own context. And his name still has recognition even outside of theological circles in the Netherlands today. In a way that even surprised me when I first moved there.

So I was once getting a haircut in the Netherlands. This is a completely true story. And the barber asked me, "Oh, so you're Scottish, but you've learned Dutch.

Why did you learn this language?" And I just assumed this guy's probably not going to care about this theologian that I didn't create on. So I told him, I did doctoral work in a Dutch theologian, I moved here to do more research. But you know, he probably won a part of him.

And he said, "Oh, so what was his name?" So I told him, "Head him on Boving." And he said, "Oh, yeah, I know a Boving's name. There's a Boving Street that's just a couple of streets away from where I live." And I actually went to a Dr. H. Boving School that was named after him. So this guy said, you know, I don't really know much about him, but I know that he was really important in his day.

There are lots of things named after him. So there are Boving streets and various Dutch cities. There are lots of primary schools across the country that are named after him.

Still, so there's still a name recognition even by people who probably don't read theology. So the traces of impact from his life are still there. But in his own day, so we think of Boving, at least, I hope the biography will change this in the English-speaking world, but we know Boving as the dog-matician, as the guy who wrote these four huge volumes of theology.

And there's such huge tones of theology, and they're amazing, but you know, you try

and imagine how much time it would take to produce this. And you would probably imagine that you don't really have much time left over for anything else in your life. So it's your magnum opus, and it's really what you spend all day every day working on, and you've left something remarkable behind.

But that was all you did. You were a theologian, and nothing beyond that. But actually, what's so fascinating about Boving's life is that he wrote these volumes of theology, but also did so many other things.

So what I've tried to rescue in the biography is the reality that, although Boving was this exception of theologian, and I think the best of his generation in the Netherlands, and one of the best by far in the 20th century more broadly, but as well as that, he was really a polymath, an intentionally Christian polymath. He tried to live a life that was extending in so many different directions all at once, and that made him a household name. So he was a national newspaper editor for a couple of years.

He was a member of parliament for the last decade of his life, where you would read his speeches across all the daily newspapers. He was a celebrated biographer. You were a brilliant biography of a poet called Willem Bilderdijk that was praised by non-Christians as well, and by skeptics.

It was a great piece of work on a famous Dutch poet. He really reshaped how Dutch education was set up. For example, he played a very important role in women being given the right to votes.

So he's doing all of these things all at the same time. He was a pioneer in new developments in psychology. I mean, just doing so much stuff, he was a celebrated travel writer.

So I think we maybe don't have a good sense of, because our context is so different, even in the Netherlands, it's so different now. But a hundred years ago, that one bavinck was young, for example, when he went to university, he was one of a tiny number of university students in the entire country. So you have, I think when he went to university, maybe around 3.3 million people in the Netherlands, of whom you have fewer than 1,500 university students.

So almost nobody does this. So if you're at university, you're already a person of national interest. So you're just getting access that you have to the corridor, so power.

Things are reported in the press, even who's past switch exams, all that kind of stuff. So people really know and care about this, because these are the movers and the shakers at university at that point. And the kind of people that you would come into contact with as a student are going to be this elite set of politicians, newspaper editors, professors, theologians.

So they all know each other anyway. And that means that you're incredibly well connected from the beginning. And you just get used to being the public eye from quite young.

So that's very much his life. And they really did make a my soul name. So Bob Think was undoubtedly brilliant, a polymath, as you said.

If I have the dates right from your biography, he began gathering materials for the Reform Dogmatics 1884. So he's 30 years old. I had in my mind, I guess I just didn't put the math together.

I was thinking of Hodge, who that was his magnum opus in later years put together his lectures. But he's already thinking about this from very early on as a professor. And the first volume appears in 1895.

So he's he's he's my age. I'm going to guess your age. Ish 1897 98 1901 is four volumes and then revise significantly and finally all out in 1911.

So I mean, he is absolutely brilliant. One of the things I remember from your biography, some early biographer sort of painted it as well. He wasn't a very good student and initially and it seemed like you were saying, I'm not sure he was probably pretty brilliant from the get go.

Did people recognize early on? This guy is really, really smart. So it's actually something that I try and push back on in the biography in the first place. How we think about the search for a brilliant child.

So there's a very romanticized notion of genius that develops. That wasn't really prominent when Babbin himself was young because I think in that phase of Dutch history, people just weren't all that attuned to childhood behavior and how significant it was. So people thought at that point that their childhood was important formatively for what they became.

But they were less concerned with then following childhood behavior very carefully and searching for a diamond on the rough or something like that. But something that develops after this is a romantic search for the first time that someone saw that this genius that we all know of was truly a genius. And it's almost the right of passage that's constructed.

He's really a genius when when was he first spotted? He was the first person who heard this great singer sing when they were in a church choir or you need that part of the story that sets up the genius that's discovered at a certain point. And that's so that's something that Babbin's earliest Dutch biographer put into his biography that when he was young, his dad moved to pastor a church that was near a very good school. And then there was a teacher from the school who went to meet the two Babbin boys

because Babbin's dad thought the Babbin's other brother was the genius.

Herman was very smart and then the teacher is the one who spots the Herman is really a genius. So this is in the first long Dutch biography. But the problem with that historically, as well as knowing whether that conversation ever took place because it's very word of mouth by word of mouth, recorded decades and decades and decades after.

But the problem, the really big problem is that having didn't have a brother at that stage. So the whole story, the more you start to push it a little bit, it's really problematic and it falls apart. What we don't find, I think more significantly than was having obviously a genius when he was you know, three years old.

What's far more significant is that his parents were extremely ambitious for their children with what they could achieve in life. And also ambitious for them as Christians as well as quite conservative Calvinist Christians. But their children would go on to have lots of opportunities in life and really bring their own Christian tradition and their church into the center of Dutch society.

And I think again, we don't really rest the significance of that in the English speaking world because we don't really know much about 19th century Dutch church history. But it's a really interesting history. Because until 1848, so for the first half of that century, the Netherlands wasn't a democracy.

And you don't have basic social freedoms like freedom of religion. And in any kind of absolute sense, it's very limited freedom of assembly. Instead, you have a monarch who is an authoritarian ruler.

And if you were reformed, you legally, you were required to be part of the mainline state Dutch reform church that the king approves of and that the king has a lot of control of financially. There's a government office that tries to say what you're going to sing on Sundays that produces some books that are very patriotic and theologically liberal and all that kind of stuff. So Bavin came from a church that had seceded from that.

And then that before that you were allowed to do that. So their pastors would regularly be imprisoned and beaten and find if you were from that church and he had kids, you know, there was this glass ceiling that really wasn't very far above your head at all for what your kids could achieve because you were really pariahs in Dutch society. And that all changes a few years before Herman Bavin gets born because there's a democratic revolution and then the you know, the king loses all of his powers.

And all of a sudden the power moves to the people who can who've got freedom all of a sudden, freedom of religion, freedom of expression. And the press becomes opened up so anyone can write what they think. So you have this brand new kind of culture that

these parents, this pastor, Jan Bavin and his wife, are then bring up their kids in.

And they really want their kids to take all of these opportunities that are available to them. You know, so the four Bavin sons who live into adulthood, you know, one trains to be a pastor, the other three, you know, one becomes a medical doctor, he does a PhD in medicine, one is Herman Bavin, this great theologian, another died when he was in the middle of his PhD work in law. So you have these really ambitious parents whose sons all go on to be really high achievers actually.

I'm coming from a background where, you know, these people had their own schools before 1848 that were clandestine, that were illegal, that pretty low, you know, educational standards as well because they had no resources. The story is actually really fascinating but one family goes from, you know, state sponsored oppression to producing a bunch of sons, actually, not disturbing Bavin, but who go on to excel in law medicine and theology as a church is really interesting. James, I have so many things I want to ask you.

Let's, you already talked about his parents, which are Jan, that's how you would say it? Jan? Yes. And how do you pronounce his mom's name? Jazina? Jazina? So I should know that being a d'young and learning a little bit of Dutch here and there, but I'd love to just do lightning round here and go through a few family and friends, key people in his biography and you just, you give a few sentences. So you talked already about his parents say a little bit about Henry Dosker and I'm interested in Henry Dosker, a good friend of his and you pull from a lot of letters.

I think I mentioned to you over email that I went to Hope College in Holland, Michigan, which shows up several times in the biography and I had friends who lived in Dosker cottage. So there's, yes, there's buildings named after him and I may ask you later about Van Ralte because he's certainly a big deal and I can, I could take you to the statue of Van Ralte in Centennial Park in Holland, Michigan. So a lot of these people are still, at least their names are known and the part of the world where I'm from.

So tell us Henry Dosker, who was he? Why is he important to Bauvink? Yeah, so he was Bauvink's teenage best friend. So from the Netherlands as well and Dosker's dad was Bauvink's pastor when Bauvink became a professing member of the church and this was when Bauvink was living away from home as a teenager to go to a classical high school and then Dosker moved to the States when his father became a pastor in Grand Rapids and they kept in touch throughout the rest of their lives. I think that they, that Dosker thought that they were maybe closer than Bauvink thought they were.

So it's a slightly awkward kind of friendship friendship and Dosker, Bauvink's life developed in all kinds of fascinating ways, you know, with his theological development in ways that Dosker didn't really understand. Just, you know, he was on another continent and it was quite far from, you know, the mother country but Dosker mediated Bauvink

for quite a while to America especially because, you know, he was bilingual, English and Dutch and was a close personal friend and I think something I've tried to challenge a bit in the biography is reading Bauvink too much through Dosker because you can see quite clearly from their letters that Dosker didn't always get what Bauvink was doing and I don't think Bauvink was completely maybe just open and a kind of close friend way in his letters with Dosker. Dosker really pours himself into his letters and Bauvink's responses are just always a bit shorter about less personal but Dosker complains, you know, I've told you all this stuff about me, come on, what's going on in your life? So he's throughout the biography and really interesting as well but maybe not as close to Bauvink as he thought he was.

So one of his other close friends who's on the different side of the spectrum from Dosker is Snook, Hergonzi? -Sznk, Hergonzi? -Hergonzi, that's the tough one, Hergonzi. So he is one of the most fascinating people in the biography, he's probably the most unusual in the biography by quite some way so he was an aristocrat whose dad was a pastor but who in context very controversially abandoned his wife and fled to London with another woman and so Snook, Hergonzi is the product of that union so he was a pastor, kind of liberal pastor in the mainstream of phone church. So Snook, Hergonzi was an aristocrat so he bore that kind of a burden but also was scandalized by his family associations.

So he studied at Leidun University at the same time as Bauvink did and they were both outsiders in the university in different kinds of ways but struck up a friendship as people who were opposites in most regards in almost every regard but they both really valued having a critical friend who didn't think like they did. So they became friends and then stayed friends for life and that became a Muslim sort of... -So Snook became, that's part of why Snook is really famous as well in his own way because he was one of the first people to enter Mecca during the Hajj and take photographs and not propelled him to an international stardom in his own day because he had these pictures and had these experiences but to do that he had to convert to Islam. And he's far more of a Jacqueline and Hyde character than Herman Bauvink actually.

Herman Bauvink is one consistent identity but Snook Rakhronya when he's in the Netherlands is Kristian Snook Rakhronya doesn't regard himself as a Muslim, dresses in western clothes, all that kind of stuff and when he's in the Muslim world he becomes Abdul Khafar, the Haji, this guy who married a Muslim teenager living on Java. -Had multiple wives? -Yeah and had Muslim kids as well but then he left behind there thinking that he'd done the right thing by them in terms of Islamic law but then moved back to the Netherlands, marries a Dutch woman and I think lots of this kind of double life actually was quite unknown to Bauvink. So Snook is this riddle to Bauvink but Bauvink tries really hard to engage with him throughout his life as a Christian as well.

And so like Bauvink's book Philosophy and Revelation, really fantastic book based on lectures that Bauvink gave in Princeton and all about it's apologetics basically it's why is

it reasonable to believe in revelation that God reveals himself and actually if you don't believe in revelation how is it hard to make a kind of consistent coherent compelling account of how to live in the world? So it's really apologetics but Bauvink's dialogue partner as he's writing this is his close, unbelieving friend Snooker Kronia. So Snooker Kronia is fascinating, he's really odd, really weird but just having a figure like that who flipped seven out of this lamb and a Muslim identity as a constant figure in Bauvink's life is really interesting too. -Yeah I didn't know any of that at all and the other well there's lots of things I didn't know but I was also fascinated by Amelia Dindecker and the role that she played in Bauvink's life his well I don't know if it's unrequited love you do a good job of saying well was this her hiding behind her father or was it really her father but say a little bit about Amelia because they never married and she never married in her whole long life but Herman was head over heels in love with her writing Latin you know mystery code in his journal about her but it never worked out who was she why didn't they ever get married? -Yeah so he first got to know her when he was a teenager in the time that he grew up in so they were Dindecker's this girl's family Amelia were from the next town along so and she was she was a few years older than him as well I think four or five years older and he was really besotted with her as a teenager some of his earliest diary entries are about her and as you say they're coded in Latin for secrecy I mean he was so many people want to do it in our journal I'm always coding in Latin so you know what Bauvink does is a deeper level of code still sometimes is when he's writing about his friends as a student if something controversial happens he will write the first name in Arabic letters the surname in Hebrew so yeah he was the master of coding he was like a spy in his old sense but so Amelia he really wanted to marry her we in in his journals we have I mean that's the tearjerker part of the biography at the this goes on from when he's a teenager to the age of 31 but he still hopes to marry her but wasn't allowed to because her father wouldn't give consent and in the Netherlands before you could get married you had to pursue parental permission three times and only when you'd exhausted those options could you get married without parental permission but it was very controversial socially and you know you have to be kind of well into your mature adult life before you're allowed to get married without parental permission so Bauvink's young you know teenage years in his 20s even into his early 30s he's really dependent on this this woman's father giving him permission and the father never would but we have a lot of interesting details really sad details in his in his diaries and they also come across in some of his letters as well that he hopes to marry her so and he ends up being pretty unhappy as when he put these single and it's an annoying thing about Dusker's letters I think for Bauvink that Dusker thinks that Bauvink is single in principle and he almost says you know you're like a caprician you're a kind of monk who doesn't want to get married and Bauvink really really did wanted to marry Amelia initially but the single of us then frees him up to become much more buchish and produced the dogmatics will marry you.

One of the things I just read this paragraph to my past room industry class here last

week and it's from the year and a half where he's Bauvink is a pastor and he's was it I don't remember if it was Dusker or if it was Snook who was writing do you have more time for your studies and he said I'm preaching twice I'm catechizing four times what do you think of course I don't have any time and then he writes this very plaintiff paragraph about how lonely he was how it was taxing on his soul spiritually to kind of be the holy man and even it seemed like it could be too far to say he was he was doubting his faith but he was just feeling this pressure to be the confident spokesman for the faith at every turn at every moment and compounded as you said that he was single and as you point out so well you know in that time a single man like that wouldn't have been expected to live on his own and do his cooking and cleaning when he was in university would have someone do that for him but now he was living with an older couple from the church and so literally to have any time by himself he had to go into his room so he's kind of the worst of both worlds he was always on as a pastor and yet he never he didn't have the the companionship that he was he was longing for at that time what did you make of that I'll get back to his the woman he did marry in just a moment but that year and a half in past real ministry was was bawink was he a fish out of water was he not fit well for that or was it just the time and in life where things came together and made for a difficult season I think for him it was a huge adjustment to make he'd gone from an elite university a very privileged existence but also very carefree existence as well as a student and all of a sudden had been thrust into this small town you know culturally conservative where people had a very particular set of social expectations about the minister and you know where you would never address a minister informally or see see your pastor as someone that could be your friend you know that you could go and you know play around a gulf with he's the dominees yeah he's the dominees so you have to treat him ultra formally and that's where he I think noticed immediately you know I really wish that I were married and that I had someone who could see me as just Herman rather than always being you know dominee bawink and that was that was a really huge shift to make overnight the constant production of sermons as well was quite hard for him because he preached maybe like 50 or so times before he was ordained but almost always on the same two texts so all of a sudden you have to write a different text a different sermon a different text every sunday and you know do all these other things you know what he wondered I mean just projecting myself into these situations where I don't really know these people but all of a sudden I'm mourning within the leading a funeral and then I'm celebrating with people who've just had a baby and I'm trying to work out you know how do I do this as myself so is this all a bit fake am I just an actor who's learning how to act in all these different circumstances they really believe this and are really sincere so the questions they ask of themselves are actually really instructive for new variants not just new pastors but any pastors I think and the challenges of being a minister so it was hard but I think he grew into the role and I think that he didn't realize just how much he grew into it until his birthday the only birthday that came around when he was a pastor when all these people from his church come to his house with really thoughtful gifts and there's this outpouring of love and you can tell from the gifts that

they know him you know they give him cigars they give him you know eig books they give him you know furniture for his office and they give him things that are that really show that they have gotten to know their pastor as a person and you know you see around that time when what he writes about his time in a framework here in this time is pastor that he actually realizes he loves it here and he has a couple of people in his church an elder and his wife who look out for him and get him out of the town quite often to go and visit other people who aren't part of his flock and that really helps him as well I think and yes you know good family and friends who come to visit him regularly to just be a lifeline but he was really sad when he left actually to go and teach theology although he felt a bit somber when he began and wasn't really relishing it you know so I pastored for two years in Orange City, Iowa which is named after William of Orange and I did take note in his his travel you know talking about Journey to America I put this on Twitter last week that he said the mission Michigan was great in terms of virtue Pella was better and best of all was Orange City, Iowa you know I was there I don't know if it's changed since I was there 15 years ago but they called me Domini I was still even as an associate pastor I was Domini Deung and it was a small town and a much reverence for the Domini I can only imagine what that must have been like in the Netherlands a hundred years or 130 40 years prior you know Orange City, Iowa is so Dutch they didn't you know in America we're always asking where are you from where are you from and what's your background in and there they didn't even ask if you were Dutch they just assumed you were and so they just said well what province are you from you just skip all of the formulas just go right to province so I found the book obviously I love Bob Vink have read Reform Dogmatics I didn't know a whole lot about his biography so I found it fascinating in that way and also as Deung as a Dutch if you ain't Dutch you ain't much we always go up. That's a Scottish obviously because it's the only thing that's better. Well the accent perhaps so I'll give you that so I'm your Scottish and you studied Dutch I'm Dutch and I studied John Witherspoon a scoth so I was I loved reading about the connections he had with Dutch America which I know more about and with these people that oh I never knew that that person had any connection to Herman Boffing in the names of these buildings and these places in the back of the book it's fascinating especially for Americans his 10 or 15 pages on his first journey to America I know that one place where he's saying how great everything is he says except for the pillows so I'm not sure what was wrong with the yeah he said they disappoints.

The pillow is just a point he also said I think in two places there are few handsome men but more and more beautiful women so so there you go. He made the point that you brought out as well that he felt like as much as he he raved about America in some ways and he's maybe being over polite but he thought that Americans were too strong in their personality to be Calvinists. What did he mean by that and he I think he reflected on that more in his second trip as well that he really thought Calvinism didn't have you know there were these pockets of Dutch reform Calvinism for sure and he was warmly welcome there but across the country as a whole you got the sense he felt like

Arminianism was winning and going to win the day because American temperament just wasn't suited for Calvinism.

Is that an accurate read and why did he think that? Yeah it is an accurate read and it's a great question so when he made that trip to America he was sent almost as a missionary for the kind of Calvinism that had been transforming Dutch culture for the previous couple of decades the Calvinism of Abraham Kuiper the Calvinism that says do you despair of the society that you live in as it secularizes and falls apart and as we don't really know what we have to you know what kind of future we have to look forward to you do you despair of the century that we've just lived through in Europe of famine and war and revolution? Well here's how to think Christianly about all of life and a way they can see hope for the future so Calvinism in Europe at that point is tremendously compelling because it tells you how to look to the future how to rebuild things how to be saved how to piece with God you know so in a context where 19th century Europeans are really traumatized by the just by the century that they've lived through Calvinism there was a tremendously hopeful message for the future but it predisposes or presupposes a kind of like despondency or a pretty bleak view of you know where your culture is going without Calvinism so you have terms that that crop up in Europe and that develop in that period like in Germany you would talk about *Weltschmerz* I kind of just being sick of the world being fatigued by the world that you live on or in French they would talk about the *mal de siècle* that they're kind of like the sickness of the century where you know you're sick of the century and so in that kind of context the kind of Kiparian Calvinism that Bavinck was committed to was so compelling and people were buying into it and it was gaining mass popular support in the Netherlands but then Bavinck went to America and find well these people are you know they're they're buffered by the Atlantic and they're not scarred by the century that Europeans have been scarred by in America people have enough to eat in America you know their jobs for everyone because you're having to create a whole new country and infrastructure and society and people are really optimistic and moralistic the religion is fundamentally deistic and you know they're all about pulling themselves up by their bootstraps so how much harder will it be for them to hear what Calvinism has to say about God and about the human the human being that you can't save yourself you can't pull yourself up by your bootstraps before God you contribute nothing and instead you receive and then you live in gratitude to respond that's a very un-American message having thoughts and whereas the I guess you could say an Armenian expression of Christianity that says yeah actually you know you choose you choose God you know you've got lots to do you've got to strive for your own put your back into it you know entrepreneurial yes put your shoulder to the wheel beyond trip and real create stuff you know you take the initiative that was much more palatable I think so or at least he thought so in an American context so he'd been sent as as I said in the book as an emissary for the Dutch Calvinism of the day and there were newspapers in the Netherlands following his journey and that we're really concerned with telling the public in the Netherlands what did the Americans think

of having Calvinism this has been followed in the national news and then he came back and told them sorry guys you know I've got disappointing news about these natives that you sent me to be a mission to like they don't respond to our message but what was so surprising then is that and Bhavir gave lots of public lectures of the people paid to go to to hear his thoughts on America but he told that his Dutch audience you know this isn't going to stop the spread of the gospel that God will have his way in America and with Americans even if it's not through Calvinism the gates of hell won't prevail against the church and but then he ended these lectures by saying and after all Calvinism is not the only yes I was going to read that right here having seen so much that is good one shrinks back from critique may American Christianity develop according to its own law God has entrusted America with its own high and great calling may America strive for it in its own way Calvinism after all is not the only truth that's a mic drop and people were shocked yes they must have been shocked I kind of agree with it and I'm not sure I like it either yeah what he mean but was he trying to be a little provocative yeah very much so he was but I think you know when you look at the things he writes about Calvinism around those years he believed that Calvinism was the best expression of Christianity and you know he himself I mean he spent his whole life trying to advance Calvinism right but at the same time he argued very clearly that Calvinism is not not an expression yeah well not that it's not going expression I mean you know that's obvious and demonstrable you just look at the world around you there are Christians who don't say the Calvinists but he said that Calvinism is not co-extensive with Christianity so it's even the best expression of Christianity can't cover the whole thing and you know the Christian faith is a Catholic faith that spreads in context that Calvinism hasn't developed and yet so and there can be authentic you know gospel faith in context that haven't been touched by Calvinism for example and even if Calvinism you know falls apart then you know the gates of hell will not prevail against the church and the Christian faith will continue to spread because it depends on God rather than us and that's a really for babbened to be a very Calvinistic way to think about Calvinism because you know the Calvinists also aren't pulling the world up by their own rootstraps they're writing on God so but you know he was that's part of why he's so interesting that he says provoture things that make people think it does so I'm not even off the first page of my questions want to make sure yeah we say something about his wife Joanna Skippers and then their daughter Hany and and really her remarkable life so say a little bit about why he married the woman that he did when Amelia didn't work out and then his wife was a remarkable person in her own right and then their daughter and grandkids were in the anti-Nazi resistance you just hit on that a little bit at the very end of the biography so say a little bit about his wife and his daughter yeah so his wife was was a really fascinating character in her own rights she was the daughter of a wealthy ship owner so she had a pretty privileged upbringing she learned English and French going up she was a lifelong anglophile she she loved London for example looks like that was her favorite city and they used to travel there quite a bit and she traveled with him to America as well on his on their second trip to America in 1908 so she was a very cultured person and an

intelligent person as well so she went to hear him give theological lectures before they were engaged she had her own thoughts on some of his theological debates so she went she was she was younger than he was as well and I lived him by some way and babbin himself died when he was still quite young when he was 66 but with the babbinks with Herman and Johanna after World War I they very much perceived that they couldn't really miss this because it was all around them but you have a generation of young men who have died at the same time and they're not there for the young woman that they would have otherwise married to you know form family units with so society has changed and it has to become individualistic in a way that it wasn't before in Dutch culture or has to facilitate individuals to act within society and you know for a woman to have her own career for example whereas if you look at you know there the decades before that Dutch culture is very much a culture of families and you know you don't have women going to university and women don't have the right to vote all those kinds of things so babbin can Johanna together really apply themselves and thinking and writing but also in all kinds of practical ways to rethinking Dutch society in Christian terms so what should the role of women be in this changed society that is nice or different because of the war and so Johanna was really fascinating in a lot of the stuff she did there and from after Herman died she carried on with this work so she co-founded a journal called Christianity in the women's movement where they got lots of really significant thinkers from their day and also women writers as well to write lots of issues on helping people think and also wrestle with Herman's own writings on this so to help people think about Christianity and the place of women in changing society she was also really influential in the promotion of Calvinism and quite conspicuous ways as a woman and a very you know male-dominated academy in that period so she was really trying hard to keep his work going and thought a lot about drinking a published in English and in German. Hani, their daughter, they only had one child as you said she had a fascinating and really tragic life as well so she married a lawyer who'd studied at the free university were babbin top for a couple of decades and they had three sons so in World War II the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazis and there was an under-run resistance movement so Hani and her family well Hani and her husband were part of this we know explicitly that two of the three sons were involved as well in resistance activities one of them you know taking photos of or gathering detail on you know where Nazis were stationed throughout the country and that kind of stuff but they're also both involved with an underground newspaper headpattrol which is now a daily adoption newspaper but it was started as an underground anti-Nazi newspaper so they were both two of these two of their sons were arrested captured by Nazis betrayed and so on and ended up being executed you know facing the firing squad and the third son was at home with his parents and when Nazis came to their house and this third son survived by hiding in the attic and wasn't found by the parents so Babbin's daughter and her husband were arrested Babbin's son-in-law Hani's husband was as I said a lawyer so he was he would help Jews a Jewish property be transferred discreetly out of so wouldn't fall into Nazi hands and be taken by Nazis and they also helped people in hiding all that kind of stuff

that went along with being in the resistance so having son-in-law was sentenced to death but then eventually that was lessened and he was taken to a concentration camp and then he was being transported from the concentration camp to a prisoner of war camp when he died of dysentery so in a very short space of time Babbink's daughter Hani loses her husband who has been taken away to a concentration camp two of her sons are you know they died facing a firing squad and then she only has this one son Theo who's left so they have a really tragic heartbreaking story but also a story of faith as well and hope so that was in some ways the hardest part of writing the biography because it's just a story of unimaginable human tragedy and loss and also faith and in a way hope as well in the midst of that and it's not a story that's been told in English before but it's there in the postscript of the biography with what happened to Johanna what happened to their family so it was a very moving thing to come across in my research and it felt like a real privilege and an honor to share their story with them. I had no idea and it was it was really sobering and heroic to read that now you have a hard stop in just about five minutes because you are a good dad and you getting kids from school.

I have so many questions and we hardly talked about Abraham Kuiper who's such a looms large in this history of the Netherlands and in Babbink's biography but I want to try to ask some big picture type of questions as we wrap up. Let me ask the question then I'll give you the my thought behind it was Babbink and Evangelical. Now here's my thought behind that you know you talk about him Orthodox and modern and certainly you say later he preferred the term Calvinist to some other markers and I was struck and maybe it's just what you were trying to use in moving the narrative forward that some of what I would associate with the Dutch second Reformation that kind of piety and there was that strand of the secession movement that was really that Dutch piety.

I saw less of that in in the biography of Babbink in maybe Evangelical I'm sure there's a you know it was first a German word so I know there's a Dutch word as well but would he have found affinity with the Anglo-American Evangelical movement would he have used that term would he have you know saw himself as you know an academic who's still proud to be of the Whitfield and Edwards line of things was Babbink and Evangelical. What a fantastic question. So you do find the piety aspects in the biography I think I mean you see this in you know the chapter on his father he would cast rights to know the will of God.

I never found Herman himself casting lots but you know if you read through his journals his letters as I tried to show in the biography he really agonizes over knowing the will of God and whether he thinks what he's chosen for his life is what God wants for him. So there's a great little book called Just Do Something that I wrote that he should have he should have just read there. He should have read the gift of foresight but in terms of the Evangelical question I mean we can say fairly concrete things about this from his own interactions with American gospel centric Protestantism because he engaged with that

as well and he was really struck by some aspects of it especially in his second trips in North America where he really kind of got wind of the global missions movements.

Yes right that comes true. He writes that about how profoundly affected him as well and then he comes back to the Netherlands and all of a sudden it's all about missiology and giving chairs and mission established at the free university and in camping and developing the thought and supporting missionaries but also in promoting the evangelization of the Dutch themselves and realizing that lots of them are now functionally pagan. They've been decrystinized or un-christianized.

I think where his main critique of even kind of generically Evangelicalism and the English-speaking world would remain the same today as it was in his own day is the extent of what the gospel entails and what the gospel is a message for. So one of the appendices that I've included in the book so there has travel writings on America but there's another one in the appendices which is like a series of points about evangelization which I think are some of the clearest articulation of what the gospel means for babic and the gospel it does mean telling people they must be saved. They must you know believe in Christ and trust in him and you know they have to go on living lives that are bearing fruit that show sanctification but as well as that the gospel for babic is you know it's not just a message for your soul but it's also good news for your body it's good news for the whole of the creation that God is going to recreate when Christ returns.

So the gospel is good news for art and for science it's good news for your business it's good news for your school it's good news for politics it's good news for journalism and all of those things are part of the proclamation of the gospel and actually what Baving says is properly the work of evangelization. So the gospel isn't just you know a decision for Christ that never gets followed up on and it's not just a series of you know private devotional practices it's not just although this is at the center of it for Baving it's not just you know what happens in church on a Sunday in terms of public worship for the Christian community but it's also something that extends out beyond all of that and as the gospel is a message that tells people how to live for the glory of God and you know from like Monday to Saturday as well as Sunday and in every sphere of their lives every sphere of human existence Christ is Lord of all and therefore the gospel has something to say to all of that so the gospel is I think Baving would say is much more holistic than you know a century on a lot of evangelical's have made it out to be where he would say it's quite a one-dimensional gospel I think. So he sympathies he would sympathize massively with evangelicalism but he thought that he had a lot to add to it.

Last question whatever time you have what you hear you talking there a little bit about maybe some lessons to draw but you can talk more about that or answer this what surprised you what surprised you about Herman Bopig what did you learn about your own faith what weren't you expecting in doing this historical theological labor of

love? Yeah wow great question again I was surprised by just how human he was and now that I went into thinking you know I wasn't trying to do high geography this is critical historical scholarship but I don't think I appreciated just how much he could be both incredibly bookish but also you know be someone who could be head over heels in love and then end up being a pretty crushed by that experience or you know just someone who even on his death bed having his fascinating because you know one breath he saying that he wants to enter heaven and see the glory of God but then be allowed to come back to tell the church and the world that it's true but then also say that he doesn't know what to make of dying on his death bed that living is strange and dying is strange still so someone who has so many answers and who so profound that articulating the Christian faith also has such I guess humility and what he can say so and all kinds of vulnerabilities in his own life experience and story so that was really fascinating I think the other major lesson that I learned which is I don't really have time to develop in this answer in the time we have left but his his ability to recognize that in some ways his grand picture of how the world was going to go was was actually wrong and that he got a lot of things wrong and his expectations of you know how the gospel would progress through Dutch culture and then what you know how you foresee the way that the next few decades will go so in the in his in his 20s and 30s he really thought that the Netherlands as a culture was set up for you know a kind of mass re-embracing of Calvinism that although there are kinds of new atheism's around and secularizing forces it was all going to run out of steam quite quickly and the people themselves would flock back towards their Calvinistic history and that there was going to be this you know great new phase for that that was the case and then that didn't happen at all and he realized that I think in the last two decades of his life and then he goes on promoting Calvinism but also in those decades he also spends so much of his time promoting Christianity defending a kind of generic Christian faith alongside its reformer expression and you know promoting evangelism and so on just because he got so much of his take on Dutch culture run for a couple of decades and have the humility to do that I mean he didn't you know tweet about it saying I got a lot of this wrong but there is a clear shift in direction when he realizes I have gone in the wrong the wrong direction of them and my strategy even for what I'm trying to do within my own culture and you know to realize that someone like Herman Bavik could get something so fundamental wrong and realize that and then be very thoughtful about how to shift direction it was for me a real surprise heartening but also instructive as well and making me think as a Christian about how I interact with the world around me have I got it right time I got it wrong That's fascinating I would love to ask a dozen more questions and you've been very generous with your time and I know you have kids to get and our lawnmowers here will come back at some point it's an excellent book so congratulations on that and Baker academic did a great job in putting it together and the drawing on the front is by Oliver Crisp is that right yeah yeah an original portrait very kindly by Oliver Riese oh wow I didn't know that great to be a legendary great artist yeah that's a I love the the cover to it so Bavik a critical biography everyone should get it and I'll give you the last word by reading by quoting

you as you talk about his death and gathering around the gravestone and it's a very simple gravestone but you say much might be added to it here lies a dogmatician an ethicist an educational reformer a pioneer in Christian psychology a politician a biographer a journalist a bible translator a campaigner for women's education and eventually the father father-in-law and grandfather of heroes and martyrs in the anti-Nazi resistance movement under that heavy slab lie the earthly remains of Herman Bavink an Orthodox Calvinist a modern European and a man of science excellent conclusion Dr. James Egglinton thank you so much for being with us I hope that you're over here in the states or I'm over there in the UK sometime and we can be properly introduced over a drink that would be great thank you thanks thank you for having me it was a real pleasure it's great to talk [Silence]