

HET CHRISTELIJK HUISGEZIN

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

TRANSLATED BY
Nelson D. Kloosterman

HERMAN BAVINCK

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INTRODUCTION

The Christian Family in the Twenty-First Century

James Eglinton

The briefest glance at the shelves of the local Christian bookstore soon makes plain that books on the Christian family and marriage are not in short supply. Indeed, an awareness of just how many books have been written on this topic surely prompts the question as to why *this* book is worthy of translation and release in the English-speaking world. Further to that, this book was written in the early twentieth century Netherlands—a social context far removed from that of those likely to read this edition. What could Herman Bavinck’s *The Christian Family* have to say to us?

In the context of mainstream evangelicalism, we are not short of moralistic “ten-step guides” aimed at building better marriages, or promise-based programs designed to create better spouses and parent-child relationships. Thanks to the influence of Mark Driscoll on evangelical attitudes towards marriage, the more recent trend has been to shift the focus towards sex, albeit still in the form of fairly crude “how to” guides. To a cynical eye, this shift looks like the evangelical subculture aping its secular host-culture’s views on sex and relationships (the center of which being its uncritical adoption of secular society’s assumption of hypersexuality as the norm for all). As such, the gospel becomes a means to what secular values on hypersexuality tell us we should all want: more and “hotter” sex. The current evangelical preoccupation with sex, and its accompanying reinvention of the celebrity pastor as a Christian sex guru, risks creating a new kind of prosperity gospel: Christianity might not make you healthy or wealthy, the idea goes, but it is the key to a far better sex life. Its gospel promises to fulfill the carnal longings of your (essentially secular) heart.

In short, current evangelical attitudes towards sex within marriage appear less and less radically different from their contemporary secular equivalents. In their spoon-fed approach to sex, both are increasingly banal and formulaic.

Viewed against this backdrop, the translation and rerelease of Bavinck’s book on the Christian family suddenly seems more useful. This is no ten-step guide, nor is it a one-sided approach to marriage where everything is reduced to one’s moral or sexual performance. Rather, this is the fruit of a rich Christian mind. It is a Christian *theology* of marriage and the family. This is a mature handling of the origins of marriage and family life, the effects of sin thereupon, a thoughtful appraisal of various historic Christian approaches to marriage and the family, and an attempt to apply that theology to the Christian family in Bavinck’s own day.

The family is foundational in many respects. Readers will be instructed by Bavinck’s unfolding of the importance of the family for economics and work, on the one hand, and as a template for the structure and relationships within broader society, on the other. Throughout history, the family has survived and succeeded as economic entrepreneurs and producers, and has supplied training and stability for social relationships beyond the home.

Although this book is the product of a seminal Christian thinker, it is also a product of its time. There are various emphases that will strike its present-day readers as belonging to a culture very different to their own. There are also major current debates regarding the Christian concepts of marriage and family that receive scant or no attention in this book: the most obvious examples being homosexuality and the related issue of church and civil society disagreeing strongly on the

definition of marriage. That said, this book has a great deal to offer to readers at the start of the twenty-first century.

This short opening essay will attempt to open up the book by first providing a biographical sketch of its author, following which some pointers will be given to explain various emphases in this work in relation to the hallmarks of Bavinck's thought.

Biographical Sketch

Born on December 13, 1854, in the Dutch town of Hoogeveen, Herman Bavinck was the son of Jan Bavinck, a Reformed pastor originally from Bentheim on the German-Dutch border, and Gesina Magdalena Bavinck (née Holland). The second of eleven children, Herman was born into the conservative, separatist Christian Reformed Church. After completing his high school education, he enrolled as a student at the Theological School in Kampen, where his father was a professor. After one year, however, he made the daring decision to transfer to the aggressively modernist theological faculty at Leiden. The theology on offer at Leiden could scarcely have been more different to that of his father's seminary in Kampen.

Why did he make this move? Although the young Bavinck underwent something of a crisis of faith while at Leiden (from which he eventually emerged), his choice to study in Leiden should not be read as an abandonment of orthodox theology. Rather, his choice was primarily motivated by his search for a more rigorous academic training in theology than could be offered in Kampen at that time.

Between 1874 and 1880, Bavinck studied under the likes of Johannes Scholten and Abraham Kuenen—the then superstars of Dutch academic theology—at Leiden. There, he admired the scientific approach of his professors, though he often found himself in deep disagreement with their presuppositions and doctrinal conclusions. At this time, he also came under the influence of Abraham Kuyper, the rising star of a new wave of Dutch neo-Calvinism. His Christian Reformed pastor at Leiden, J. H. Donner, introduced him to Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party (a Christian political movement directed against the anti-Christian influence of the French Revolution on Dutch society). At Leiden, Bavinck wrote a doctoral thesis on the ethics of the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli, following which he sought ordination in the Christian Reformed Church. In 1881 he became the pastor of the congregation in Franeker, a small town in the northern Netherlands.

One year later, Bavinck was called to teach theology at Kampen, where he taught from 1883 to 1901. There, he wrote his most important work, the *Reformed Dogmatics*: a modern classic of systematic theology. He married Johanna Adrianna Schippers in 1891. Johanna was ten years younger than Herman. Their only child, a daughter named Johanna Geziena, was born in 1894. During his time at Kampen, Bavinck and Kuyper were the key figures in the Union of the Reformed Churches in 1892. A decade after this Union, he accepted the post of theology professor at the Free University of Amsterdam.

This period in his life was marked by a broad and thorough engagement in the fields of politics (via the Anti-Revolutionary Party), philosophy, and education. In 1920, after preaching at Synod, Bavinck suffered a heart attack. From then onwards, his health began to fail. He died on July 29, 1921.

Bavinck's "Organic" Worldview

Bavinck's work is essentially one giant effort to develop a worldview centered on the Triune God: marriage and the family included. To Augustine's earlier conviction that our hearts remain

restless until they find their rest in God, Bavinck adds that our minds remain unsatisfied until all our thoughts are brought back to the Trinity. The reality of God's glorious, eternal coexistence as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was both the beginning and end of Bavinck's theological enterprise. The Triune God is the single most important factor in Bavinck's thought: it is the reality by which all others are measured.

That commitment to a worldview focused on the Triune God gives Bavinck's theology a very particular shape. It affected how Bavinck viewed everything: the universe, human society, the church, and, in this case, marriage and the family. In short, although Bavinck believed that God's triunity (that God is Three-in-One, and as such, the supreme model of unity-in-diversity) was utterly unique and could not be replicated elsewhere, he also believed that everything created by the Triune God somehow referred back to this divine unity-in-diversity. The universe is, after all, the general revelation of its Triune Creator.

So, while we can only find the Three-in-One formula in God himself, we find pointers to God's triunity everywhere: in the vast internal diversity of the nonetheless united universe, in the rich tapestry of human culture and society, in the nature of human sexual complementarity, in the life of the family (whereby different genders, personalities, family traditions, etc., somehow become a unit), and so on.

The language favored by Bavinck when writing of this God-centered unity-in-diversity is that of the "organic." The world made by the Trinity, and the image of that Trinity (the individual human being, and collectively, the human race) found therein, are best described as organisms, or as organic in their existence. (In the background to this, it is also interesting to know that Bavinck's constant drive to talk of God as the Trinity and the creation as organic stems largely from his reaction to the teaching he received at Leiden. There, Professor Scholten stressed that the world was run along rigid, fatalistic, mechanical, deterministic lines, and because of that, the idea of God as Trinity was of little importance).

From this desire to understand all of life as somehow pointing to the Triune God, then, various emphases in Bavinck's handling of marriage and the family come to the fore. His insistence that the family should function as an organic unit (rather than as an arbitrarily connected group of individuals who have few fixed connections to each other) makes sense in this light. Similarly, his understanding of every family unit as a unique combination of histories social and biological (as opposed to the idea that the family is a generic product needing no personal space or distinctive living environment) should be understood against this backdrop. His belief that child-rearing should view each child as a unique and complex organism to be *known* and *related to* (and not as a machine that can be so controlled), rather than be shaped by mechanical programming, is a similarly organic concern.

The organic ideas found throughout Bavinck's perspective on the Christian family should all be read as part of Bavinck's effort to see the world in the light of its Triune Creator. For Bavinck, an organic view of marriage and the family is a godly one.

Grace Restores Nature

Following this, readers of this book should also be aware of Bavinck's belief that grace restores nature. The basic structure of Bavinck's worldview is that the Triune God creates a good world, that creation then falls into sin, following which the Triune God redeems in grace. God's work in redemption is that of restoring things to their original (good) state: God's grace does not introduce new elements into the creation, or remove things that were originally present before the fall. Grace does not elevate nature, as though God's original work of creation was somehow

insufficient and still needs improvement. Rather, it restores nature. It takes things back to how they were before sin had its awful way with the creation. Grace returns us to what God, in the prefall world, saw as “very good.”

Although this point sounds slightly abstract at first, its practical consequences are considerable. In terms of our view of the world, its major implication is that the world—as God first made it—was inherently good. As this still sinless nature did not need to be later improved by grace (as is the case according to much Roman Catholic thought), it stands to reason that things found in that as-yet-unfallen world should be affirmed and celebrated. This is the basis by which Bavinck affirms that the physical world—as God’s creation—is in essence good, rather than neutral or bad. While they are now affected by sin, things like food and drink, marriage, procreation, and human culture are not evil in and of themselves. Christianity would not have us focus on our souls whilst ignoring our bodies or the physical world around us. The “grace restores nature” idea is, at its core, an affirmation of nature. In the postfall world, grace does not remove our physicality, nor does it require us to live ascetic lives or disdain marriage. Rather, grace works to restore all of those things to their prefall beauty and holiness.

Bavinck’s book recognizes that the Christian church has never gone as far as denouncing marriage outright. That said, he is critical of the Roman Catholic tradition (which rests on the belief that grace elevates, rather than simply restores, nature) in its tendency to regard married people as second-rate, in terms of holiness, to the celibate. The understanding of “grace restores nature” upon which this book is founded is crucial to Bavinck’s support of marriage and celibacy as distinct callings, both of which can honor the Creator.

God’s grace does not somehow elevate nature, but neither does it exist outside of and distant from our world. In restoring nature, grace makes its presence known in our midst. It confronts us with our need of redemption in grace. This is a helpful insight that gives Bavinck’s handling of marriage and family life a gritty realism. Often, Bavinck writes, you—as a sinner—will be the main cross your spouse is called to bear. In this fallen world, there are no promises that marriage, for all its capacity to be beautiful and enriching, will be a lifelong series of ever increasing physical delights. In reality, a healthy marriage will probably lean more on the Sermon on the Mount than on the Song of Solomon. And in that respect, Bavinck’s insights on marriage (all of which grow out of the various consequences of his “grace restores nature” insight) provide a helpful corrective to much imbalance in contemporary evangelical thinking on marriage.

The Family, the Individual, and Society

The movement within which Bavinck rose to prominence, neo-Calvinism, found much of its initial momentum as a rebellion against the influence of the French Revolution across Europe. This struggle to counter the impact of the Revolution exerts a defining influence upon much of Bavinck’s thought on Christianity and culture. Many emphases in Bavinck’s thought on the family should be understood within this context.

The Revolution was an attempt to cast aside all the old distinctions of class and power: *liberty, equality and fraternity* were the new values. Gone were concepts like monarchy, social class, and theism. The new de facto deity, reason, was set in direct opposition to divine revelation. The change attempted in Revolutionary France was highly ambitious: it was a movement of re-creation, an upheaval instigated to change every aspect of French life. The nineteenth-century Revolutionary intellectual Edgar Quinet recognized that such a sudden break with an entire social system could only happen if the preexisting sense of social interconnectedness between citizens was broken: those who have, until now, existed primarily in

relationship to each other within a common culture must suddenly think of themselves primarily as individuals. Quinet recognized this as central not just to the French Revolution, but to all revolutionary movements. Thus, in order to change an entire society, all the old social connections had to disappear, and the “individual” had to take their place.

The great irony perceived by the likes of Bavinck and Kuyper was that although revolutionaries were told of their new-found individuality, in reality they became far more homogenous than in the pre-Revolutionary world. Revolutionary France was a place where all were pressured to dress and speak alike, where human worth did not exist beyond one’s social standing (hence the drive for a homogenized society), and where institutions like Christian theism, as pro-social diversity, were seen as obstacles to those goals.

Having seen these ideals taking hold of France, Bavinck was motivated to combat their influence in Dutch culture. That context sets the scene for his thoughts on the family as a united social entity. His argument was that the family is not an arbitrary collective of individuals, who may or may not have much in common by way of belief. Rather, he argues in favor of the family as an organism made up of distinct but complementary people who together form the building blocks of society.

There are certainly aspects of Bavinck’s vision of the organic family that are hard to maintain in the present day. For a large part of his political career, for example, Bavinck fought against individual suffrage and was against women having the right to vote (instead, Bavinck, typical of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, believed in suffrage being granted to fathers as the heads of families, with those families voting as units). His opinion later changed, eventually leading him to vote for individual male and female suffrage, despite being opposed to Revolutionary individualism in principle.

That Bavinck (seven years after the publication of this book) was willing to accept a greater degree of individualistic social participation is a useful reminder that this book, while helpful, is also limited in applicability to Western cultures one century later. The opposition to individualism undergirding the organic family unit ideals in this book is very strong. However, within a few short years Bavinck himself came to recognize that Western society was becoming increasingly individualistic. He saw this as inevitable, and later admitted that Scripture gives no clear guidance on whether families or individuals should enjoy voting rights.

Bavinck’s own application of the core theological principles at hand changed following the publication of this book, which should serve as a useful reminder of the need for a careful contemporary reading of Bavinck’s practical applications on the family. If we, as readers in a yet further removed cultural context, expect simply to maintain the entirety of Bavinck’s practical guidance given a century before, we will be disappointed. Our task, as Christians in 2012, is not to maintain practices given in 1912 that Bavinck himself could no longer maintain by 1919. Indeed, those who so read the cultural applications in this book surely miss this book’s significance: it is an excellent example of a thoughtful Christian attempting to understand marriage and the family in the light of Scripture and Christian tradition, and on that basis, who tries to articulate a Christian model of marriage for the Netherlands in his day. Our social contexts are different, and those striving for a Christian concept of marriage and the family in 2012 face challenges that Bavinck did not. However, in giving us a clear presentation of the Bible’s teaching, of the reception thereof in the church’s history, and further to that, a model of Christian theology applied to his own context, Bavinck has done us a great service.

In that regard, this book is an example to follow.

PREFACE
TO THE SECOND EDITION

Sooner than expected a second edition of this work about the Christian family has become necessary. The author felt no need to introduce important changes into this second edition. The alterations are therefore limited to a few linguistic improvements and to a clearer indication in the text of those places where we are moving to another topic within the chapters. In connection with the latter, the table of contents has been expanded.*

May this volume enjoy a favorable reception in many homes, and may it contribute to a greater appreciation of marriage and family life!

H. BAVINCK
Amsterdam, May 1912

* Ed. note: In the original Dutch, intentional blank line spaces within the chapters correlate to headings Bavinck added to the table of contents for the second edition. This older style has been updated in this English translation in that the headings from the table of contents now appear as regular headings within the chapters.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY

The Creation of Humanity, of Man and of Woman, in God's Image

The history of the human race begins with a wedding.

After God had created heaven and earth in the beginning, he conducted a six-day work project to prepare this creation to be humanity's home. For the heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to the children of men. That earth, however, had first existed in an unformed condition; it was untamed and empty. Through various separations or differentiations—between light and darkness, between the waters below and the waters above the firmament, between land and sea, between day and night, between months and years—God ended its wildness. And by populating land and sea, heaven and earth with a multitude of living creatures, plants and animals, fish and birds, God filled the creation and made its emptiness vanish.

This emptiness was fully overcome, however, only when God then proceeded to create humanity and the human race. For he did not create the earth so that it would remain empty, but he formed it so that people would inhabit the earth (Isa. 45:18). So he created this humanity after a special consultation; he created humanity according to his own image and likeness; he created humanity immediately as distinct sexes, as man and as woman. And when he had created them, he blessed them and gave them the whole earth as their territory.

Within these few features lies embedded everything we need to know about the origin, the essence, and the destiny of humanity. They contain a wisdom that far surpasses the understanding of the erudite. What Scripture furnishes us in the subsequent course of revelation, even already in the second chapter of the Bible, is mere expansion and explanation of what is told us crisply and briefly in the first chapter.

God first created man, his body coming from the dust of the earth, his soul created by the breath of life breathed in from above. The animals came into existence differently; at the powerful word of God they were brought forth through and from the earth. The angels also came into existence differently, for they were all created together, at once, perfect, in their full number. But man, related to both animals and angels, is nevertheless different from them. With the body, man stands in fellowship with the earth; with the spirit, which is from above, man is related to heaven. Both body and spirit are so intimately united within the human person that the human person possesses a unique nature and a unique position among all creatures. In a special sense a human person is a product of God; a person is his image and -likeness, his child and his race.

The first human being, furthermore, was created immediately as a man, neither neuter nor androgynous, but with a specific sex. This came to expression in the fact that although he had been placed in the garden and had abundant provision of everything he needed for living, he nevertheless felt lonely. God created him this way; God says both to himself and from himself that it was not good that the man was alone. Immediately at creation God implanted within the man's soul the yearning for loving someone who would be like him. That yearning was not satisfied by the animals, whose essence he perceived, whose kinds he distinguished, and whose names he invented. They were strong and great, noble and magnificent, but they did not share his likeness. The creation of the woman was preceded by the sense of need, which the first man

discovered in his own heart amid all his abundance; even having been created in God's image could not satisfy that need. So the woman is the answer to the question that flowed from the man's heart and across his lips. She is the answer to his prayer, the gift God so richly and lovingly bestowed upon him.

For although she was desired by the man, she was not created by him, but by God. The woman, just like the man, is a special creation of God, bearing his image and likeness. Even when the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:7, calls the man the image and the glory of God, and the woman the glory of the man, he is certainly not thereby denying to the woman her creation in the image and likeness of God. For there he is not discussing the man and the woman as human beings in general, but rather the relationship of marriage within which they interact. Within married life and within the family, it is the husband as the head who in his appearance and glory radiates the image and glory of God; and the wife has the calling, in obedience to her husband, to display his glory. But this in no way contradicts the truth that the woman herself, seen as a human being, bears the image and likeness of God fully as much as the man does.

The creation story in Genesis shows this clearly in the fact that both together are said to have been created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). Not merely one of them, but both, and not the one separate from the other, but man and woman together, in mutual relation, each created in his or her own manner and each in a special dimension created in God's image and together displaying God's likeness. For this reason the Lord compares himself not only to a Father who takes pity on his children (Ps. 103:13), but also to a mother who cannot forget her nursing child (Isa. 49:15). He chastens like a father (Heb. 12:6), but he also comforts like a mother (Isa. 66:13), and replenishes for the loss of both (Ps. 27:10).

Each with His or Her Own Sex, Nature, and Position

Yet, even though the woman was not created *by* the man, she was nonetheless created *from* the man. Adam was made first, and then Eve. Both in time and in order, the man preceded the woman. The woman was created not merely *after* the man, but she was also brought forth *out of* the man. Just as the earth supplied the material for the man's body, so the man's body in turn supplied the material from which God formed the woman. The manner in which the man was created fixed an unbreakable bond between the human being and the earth; the manner in which the woman received her existence served to place her in the kind of relationship to the man such that she is inseparably bound to him, and thereby the unity of the human race is completely preserved. The woman was created not to be self-sufficient, nor to be independent of the man, nor apart from his mediation; she is not a unique principal and head of the human race, but she herself was formed out of the man, out of his flesh and blood. The human race is one entity, a body with one head, a building with one cornerstone.

In this reality the man finds no basis for pride, for he received the woman, whom he desired, entirely apart from his own effort, apart from his own knowledge and volition, while in a deep sleep, which God had placed upon his soul and body. Though the woman is indeed *from* the man, she did not come into being *through* him; her existence is due not to man, but just like man's existence, her existence is due entirely to God. In an absolute sense, then, she is a gift of God, the greatest gift that God could give to the man who had been created in his image—a gift that the man must therefore receive and value as given from the Lord's own hand.

This is also how Eve was greeted by Adam. As soon as he saw her, he recognized her; his recognition was a knowledge born of love. He saw in her no alien being, but a being just like himself; she possessed the same nature that he had; she displayed the same image of God that

had been bestowed upon him; and yet she was different from him, with her own sex, character, and vocation. Like a whoop of joy, like a wedding song, the words came forth from his lips: This is now finally flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone; people will call her *manninne*,¹ because she came forth out of *man*!

Even as the man was created instantaneously, so too the woman was created instantaneously. Not only as a human being, but also as a woman, she found her origin in God. God is the Creator of the human being, and simultaneously also the Inaugurator of sex and of sexual difference. This difference did not result from sin; it existed from the very beginning, it has its basis in creation, it is a revelation of God's will and sovereignty, and is therefore wise and holy and good. Therefore, no one may misconstrue or despise this sexual difference, either within one's own identity or in that of another person. It has been willed by God and grounded in nature. It was then, and still is, willed by God; he is the sovereign Designer of sex; man and woman have God to thank not only for their human nature, but also for their different sexes and natures. Both are good, even as they both come forth from God's hand. Together in mutual fellowship they bear the divine image. God himself is the Creator of duality-in-unity.

Within that unity, they are and remain two. Each of the two has a unique nature, character, and vocation. Before the woman was created, the man had already been stationed in the garden and had been called to a particular task and vocation. As head of the human race, to him was given the probationary command, so that in keeping this command he would demonstrate his complete obedience to God. At the same time along with this command he received the task to cultivate and preserve the garden; the first included the obligation to develop all the treasures that God had deposited in the earth; and the second involved the calling to protect the entire creation against every hostile power seeking to ruin the creation, and to preserve it from the tyranny of destructive forces. This twofold task—that of complete obedience to God, and that of cultivating and protecting the garden—was integrally related. A human being can be lord of the earth only when living as servant and child of God; only when the latter is true will a human being be able more and more to exercise dominion in the earth. The image of God unfolds in world lordship; the meek—those who perform God's will in obedience—inheriting the earth.

If this is the calling of the image-bearer of God, however—namely, to fill the earth and to subdue it and exercise lordship in the earth—then the single individual person, even though he may be a man and a son of God, is not capable of exercising that calling. For that, he needs a helper; a woman, who does not stand above him to dominate him, nor beneath him as one degraded to the status of a tool for pleasure, but one who stands alongside him, stationed at his side and therefore formed from his side.

Man and woman are both human beings, and yet they are distinct in terms of physical build and psychological strength. So, even though they both receive the same calling, within that one calling each nevertheless receives a different task and activity. The man is called to subjugate under his feet the whole earth, in obedience to God's will; he must develop the earth in terms of its goals; through knowledge and art, through farming and animal husbandry, through industry and trade, he must bring forth from the earth all the riches of thought and power, of fruitfulness and life, which God has hidden within the earth according to his inscrutable goodness. And in voluntary obedience and dependent cooperation, the woman must assist in performing this task. Assist in the fullest and broadest sense, physically and spiritually, with her wisdom and love, with her head and her heart. Assist in procreating the human race, in nurturing children in the fear of the Lord, in fostering a kingdom of rational and moral citizens, and thereby assist in bringing the earth into subjection to the human race that comes forth from her.

Laboring Together in One Divine Task

For only in the human race is the image of God unfolded, and only in its dominion over the whole earth does the human race achieve its vocation and purpose. It is God himself who subdues the earth under his feet through the human race, and it is God himself who desires to display his own glory in the discovery of all of creation's treasures. Both—man and woman—stand thus with their distinct gifts in a united sacred service, both fulfill a shared precious calling, and labor at a single divine work. But they are able to respond to this their exalted vocation only when together they continue to obey the divine command, before everything else, to continue respecting the image of God in themselves and in each other, and as a consequence, keep living in the most intimate mutual fellowship. In order to make such unity, fellowship, and cooperation in soul and body both possible and real, God created the woman *from* the man and *for* the man (1 Cor. 11:8–9), but also simultaneously *unto* the man, even as he created the man *unto* the woman. God made two out of one, so that he could then make the two into one, one soul and one flesh. This kind of fellowship is possible only between two. From the very beginning, marriage was and is by virtue of its essential nature monogamous, an essential bond between one man and one woman, and therefore also a lifelong covenant, indissoluble by human authority; therefore what God has joined together, let not man put asunder (Matt. 19:6, 8). A man separates from his parents, forsakes father and mother, and cleaves to his wife; but he never abandons his wife! Love for parents is surpassed in both intensity and extent by love for one's wife. Such love is stronger than death. No other love resembles God's love so closely, or reaches such height.

Upon this fellowship of love, then, God has bestowed his blessing in a special way. He is the Creator of man and of woman, the Inaugurator of marriage, and the Sanctifier of matrimony. Each child born is the fruit of fellowship, and as such is also the fruit of divine blessing. The two-in-oneness of husband and wife expands with a child into a three-in-oneness. Father, mother, and child are one soul and one flesh, expanding and unfolding the one image of God, united within threefold diversity and diverse within harmonic unity.

This three-in-oneness of relationships and functions, of qualities and gifts, constitutes the foundation of all of civilized society. The authority of the father, the love of the mother, and the obedience of the child form in their unity the threefold cord that binds together and sustains all relationships within human society. Within the psychological life of every integrated personality this triple cord forms the motif and melody. No man is complete without some feminine qualities, no woman is complete without some masculine qualities, and to both man and woman, the child is held up as an example (Matt. 18:3). These three characteristics and gifts are always needed in every society and in every civilization, in the church and in the state. Authority, love, and obedience are the pillars of all human society.

Somewhere a poet has celebrated the eternal-feminine. His poem could just as well have celebrated the eternal-masculine and the eternal-filial. For every good and perfect gift in man, woman, and child comes down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom there is no shadow or variation due to change (James 1:17). Every human being has been created—as a human being, but also as man or woman or child, each a self and yet in mutual -fellowship—in the image of God.

THE DISRUPTION OF THE FAMILY

Sin and Its Consequences for Woman and for Man

The sin for which man, shortly after his creation, rendered himself culpable, affected the family in no small measure. The third chapter of Genesis tells us that the woman was tempted first. From this fact, together with the fact that Eve was created after Adam, Paul drew the conclusion that the woman may not serve as a teacher within the church and may not rule over the man (1 Tim. 2:12–14; cf. 1 Cor. 14:34). Naturally, the apostle does not mean to suggest thereby that Adam did not sin and was not culpable. For in Romans 5:12 he states that the one man, Adam, was responsible for all the sin and death in the world; in him and through him the entire human race fell; all people died in Adam on account of his sin (1 Cor. 15:22)

Paul did intend to say, however, that it was the woman who, at the very beginning, was the first to be tempted by the serpent, the first to fall personally, for herself; she was the first to become guilty of unbelief toward God and her husband, of gullibility toward the tempter. And her husband weakened in his faith and trust, because his wife tempted him and related to him as a teacher. Adam did not fall in the same way that Eve fell. Eve fell in terms of covetousness; she fell because she believed that eating the fruit would make her like God. Adam fell, however, because his love for his wife surpassed his love for God.

The first sin thus immediately involved a reversal within the family order. Rather than following her husband, the wife took the lead. Rather than being obedient, she took charge. Rather than being a helpmeet for him, she assumed the roles of mistress and regent. Adam and Eve sinned not only as individuals, as persons, but they sinned also as husband and wife, as father and mother; they were playing with their own destiny, with the destiny of their family, and with the destiny of the entire human race.

That became manifest immediately in the terrible consequences of their sin. The first manifestation of guilt came to expression in a sense of shame. Their eyes were opened at that point, and they became aware that they were naked. Shame is a sense of discomfort, a feeling of uneasiness, which consists particularly in fear of loss, something that overtakes us when we have done, or suppose we have done, something immodest. That immodesty can pertain to various things. A person is ashamed about something that should have remained behind the curtain of modesty and purity, something that has nevertheless been observed by others. A person is ashamed about something committed in violation of mores, customs, and forms of decency. A young person is frequently ashamed in front of friends on account of the good impulses arising from conscience. The “wise” and “understanding” are ashamed about the folly of the cross. The pious are ashamed before God and others on account of the sins they have committed.

In the third chapter of Genesis, however, we are told that Adam and Eve were ashamed because they were naked. Nakedness could not have been the deepest source of their shame, however, for they had been naked before their sin and had not been ashamed of it. Their sense of guilt did indeed come to focus on their nakedness, in that they acquired a sense of uneasiness, an uncomfortable feeling, but this did not originate in nakedness itself. It had a deeper source. They had transgressed God’s command, and were no longer innocent—neither toward God nor toward

each other. Their eyes were opened; they no longer dared to look each other in the eye; they read one another's guilt on the other's face and they heard its echo all around them in all of nature. A terrible change had occurred in the condition of their souls, and so they viewed everything differently—themselves, each other, the world around them, and especially God. They did not dare to see him, they fled from his face, and hid among the trees of the garden. Their eyes had indeed been opened, but in a different sense than the tempter had promised.

Yet, that shame is also a blessing. An animal knows no shame, and the devil even less. Shame is unique to humanity, to fallen humanity disobedient to God's command, something that humanity also senses and recognizes. Shame is a sign of an awakened conscience, that human capacity which pronounces a person guilty and condemns him. Through the function of conscience a person retains something that disapproves of sin, something that stands as a judge over and against a person, something that removes the peace, rest, and contentment on account of the transgression that has been committed. That person is doubly wounded who silences his conscience, who hardens and sears his conscience, which leads ultimately to living without a conscience and without shame! Even though our conscience pains us and condemns us, conscience binds us to the world of unseen things and restrains us from sinking into bestiality. And what the conscience does for us inwardly in the soul, shame performs for us outwardly in the body. Shame has been described, not without cause, as the body's conscience. Both conscience and shame demonstrate the brokenness and disintegration of human existence, the disharmony of human life, the distance between what a person ought to be and what a person really is. Both point back to that disruptive event at the beginning of history, when humanity fell from the height occupied at creation, and descended from the vocation to which humanity had been called.

Conscience and shame together drive a person to cover himself and to conceal himself. Nakedness began to be a hindrance, because people had lost their innocence. Losing the garment of righteousness made clothes necessary as covering. For human beings, conscience, shame, and clothing are intimately related. Together they serve to remind us of our God-created beginning and of our deepest fall; they presuppose our guilt and preserve our humanness; they simultaneously oppress us and liberate us. All three distinguish human beings from angels and animals, and provide human beings a unique position in creation. They proclaim humanity's need for—and capacity for—salvation. They create for humanity a domain between hell and heaven; they preserve human beings outside Paradise for atonement through the cross.

The Punishment of Sin for Each, and the Related Blessing

The punishment pronounced upon humanity after their transgression points in this same direction. This is true not only of the punishment given to the serpent, which established a division between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, which broke apart the covenant between mankind and Satan and brought about in its place God's covenant with humanity. This is true as well of the particular punishments placed upon the woman and the man, punishments related to the nature and calling of each, punishments that had very serious consequences for the history of the family.

Eve was punished not only as a human being, but particularly as mother and as wife—something that reveals a divine ordinance. God punished the first human beings in terms of their respective sins. The woman had abused her calling to be a helper suited to her husband, by tempting him and leading him to fall. So she is punished in terms of this her calling. She is punished as *mother*, since that which was to have been a wife's greatest delight would become

her greatest pain. From this time forward, she cannot fulfill her calling apart from leading a life of continual physical and spiritual pain. And yet she can neither desert this calling nor liberate herself from it, for she remains *woman*; despite the pain-filled life that will be her portion in marriage, all the desires of her soul move her to fulfill her calling; she remains bound to her husband, and longs to be joined with him.

The man was punished already in this punishment of the woman. For even as she with respect to him, so he with respect to her has lost his freedom, his independence, his self-direction. Slave of his longings, he becomes slave to the woman, in order thereafter to avenge his humiliation and self-debasement in angry tyranny. Driven to the man through her own desire, the woman seeks with her wiles to enchant him, or she bows like a slave under his feet. Slavery and tyranny are the sins to which the mutual relationship of man and woman have been consigned and exposed since the violation of God's ordinances.

In addition to this, however, the man receives his own punishment, which affects him in his particular calling, namely, working in the sweat of his brow. On account of man, the ground is cursed, so that by itself it brings forth only thorns and thistles; the creation is subjected to vanity, not for its own sake but for the sake of him who subjected it; and all of nature is changed into a power that opposes humanity with a hostility that oppresses human existence and human living. When humanity breaks its bond with God, its harmony with the world is broken. Thus the man must go forth to subdue the earth along the path of continual wrestling; he must engage in contending against the frightening powers of nature, the raging elements, the mauling animals, the inhospitable terrain, against wind and weather, cold and heat, rock and dirt. He must work with head and hand, full of pain and trouble, each day, his entire life. He must conquer the world and render nature serviceable one foot at a time, one step at a time. Only in this way, by the sweat of his brow, can the man keep himself alive, along with his family and the entire human race. From now on, hunger and love drive him restlessly onward.

This punishment is also a blessing, however, for the individual man, for the family, and for all of society. For it includes, first, that the man will continue living, that he will not immediately fall prey to death, as he had deserved, that he would be fruitful, would multiply, and would fill the earth with his race. With that expectation, the first man changed the name of his wife. She had earlier been called *Manninne*, because she was taken from the man and was given to him as a helpmeet. Now she will bear the name of *Eve*, mother of the living, because the woman gives way to the mother, and her assistance to the man is now rendered as the one who bears and nurtures children.

Furthermore, humanity retains the task entrusted to it at the beginning of creation. Humanity continues to be called to fill the earth, to subdue it, and to exercise dominion. Even though humanity can answer this calling in no other way than partially and through fearsome struggle, this trouble-filled labor is in itself a blessing, because it maintains humanity in its exaltedness above nature, and preserves humanity in the face of spiritual and moral defeat. Finally, there lies embedded within these punishments also the promise that God will accompany humanity along its difficult journey and will strengthen and support humanity in fulfilling its calling. For Eve is the mother of life, she carries life in her womb, the life of humanity, the life of the seed of the woman. The woman will be saved through bearing children; in her womanly and motherly calling she will display her most beautiful and most elegant virtues, not only, but Mary, the one blessed among women, will also repair Eve's offense. In the Son born from her, the woman and the man once again attain to their calling; for in Christ, the servant of the Lord, not only does the labor of his soul restore the truth and achieve reconciliation, but also overcomes the world.

To Adam and Eve with their offspring, the holy family of Joseph, Mary, and the child form the divine counterpart.