

## The Christian Family Chapter 1 Outline

1. The six days of creation were God's work project to make creation humanity's home.
  - a. The earth was first untamed and empty.
  - b. God separated light/dark, water/land, day/night, month/years, then filled the earth.
  - c. The earth was formed by God to be inhabited (**Isa. 45:18**).
  - d. God created humanity as distinct sexes, man & woman, to inhabit/rule the whole earth.
  - e. This alone (in **Gen. 1**) tells us the origin, essence, & destiny of humanity; the rest builds on this.
2. Humanity is body & soul/spirit; body like the earth, soul like heaven, together a unique creature.
  - a. Mankind is the image/likeness of God, His child and race, as male and female.
  - b. Man/male/Adam was *designed* lonely, even with God's presence, and this was "not good".
  - c. So, God gave man a desire for woman, then made woman who was like him/met his desires.
  - d. Woman was made by God, not man, and so likewise is made in the image/likeness of God (**Gen. 1:27**), while also being the "glory" of the man/husband she is married to (**I Cor. 11:7**).
  - e. Man/Husband is the head of the home, radiating the glory/image of God there, and the woman/wife is called by God to display her husband's glory in the home.
  - f. B/C male & female bear God's image, God describes Himself as a chastening father (**Heb. 12:6**) and a comforting mother (**Isa. 66:13**). God is masculine, but His nature reflects male & female.
3. Woman was created not only after the man, but from the man. As man was formed from the ground & had a bond to work it, woman was formed from the man with a bond/helper to man as her head.
  - a. Man is the head, woman the body, but man cannot boast, for man did not make woman, God did.
  - b. Thus woman is the greatest gift God gives to man, & man must value her as from the Lord.
  - c. Adam receives Eve/woman with joy, as "bone of my bones", & the sexual difference between male & female is good, coming from God's hand & purpose, so no one may reject their sex.
4. Through the marriage bond of man and woman, God creates duality in unity.
  - a. Within that unity, they remain two persons, with a unique nature, character, and vocation.
  - b. Man was already called to maintain and cultivate the garden, and not eat the forbidden fruit.
  - c. The cultural call was for man to develop the earth's potential that God had laden it with; the call to preserve the garden/all creation meant man must defend it from all hostile/destructive evil.
  - d. Only those obedient to the Lord will rightly exercise dominion over the earth.
5. The call to "fill the earth & subdue it" (**Gn. 1:28**) can't be done by man alone; woman must help.
  - a. As man subdues, woman helps him in obedient/dependent co-operation, with her wisdom and love, head and heart, procreating the human race, nurturing children in the fear of the Lord, fostering a kingdom of rational and moral citizens of the human race that comes forth from her.
  - b. Only through this man and woman/husband and wife dominion over the whole earth is the image of God unfolded and the human race accomplishes/achieves its vocation and purpose.
  - c. Man & woman thus labor together in ONE divine task in TWO distinct but related ways, woman as the body made *from* the man & *for* the man/head (**I Cor. 11:8-9**), yet *unto* each other.
  - d. "God made two out of one, so that He could then make the two into one" & so marriage is monogamous, and a love bond deeper than any other human bond (including parents/children).
  - e. Each child is thus born as the fruit of this loving bond/fellowship, bringing a three-in-oneness.
  - f. "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."
6. All human society is built upon the threefold cord of father-authority, mother-love, child-obedience.
  - a. Man complements woman, woman the man, & children are held as an example to all (**Mt. 18:3**).
  - b. Society needs authority, love, & obedience rightly ordered, & each person, male & female, must possess these, rightly ordered, in keeping with their God-given masculinity and femininity.

## The Christian Family Chapter 2 Outline

### 7. Sin and Its Consequences for Woman and for Man

- a. Mankind's fall affected the family greatly: Eve/woman being tempted/deceived along with being created after & from Adam/man serves as the double basis for women not being teachers/authorities in the Church nor ruling over man (I Tim. 2:12-14; I Cor. 14:34). God's created order and the fall affirm male headship.
  - i. The fall occurred by Satan going directly to the woman, who was under the authority/guidance of her husband, to deceive her. She sinfully listened to Satan.
  - ii. Then, Eve/woman wrongfully instructed/taught Adam/man by giving him the fruit as well, and Adam/man sinfully listened to her, rather than guarding her from the snake and leading.
  - iii. "Eve fell in terms of covetousness; she fell b/c she believed eating the fruit would make her like God. Adam fell because his love for his wife surpassed his love for God (Bavinck says)".
  - iv. This was a reversal of the family order. Eve is taking charge/authority and then telling her husband to eat. Adam let her do this and did not lead well, thus "Adam and Eve sinned not only as individuals/persons, but also as husband and wife, as father and mother; they were playing with their own destiny, with the destiny of their family...the entire human race."
- b. This sin led Adam and Eve to a sense of shame at their nakedness. Their eyes indeed were opened, but not as Satan promised. They saw their sinfulness in God's presence.
  - i. But shame is also a blessing – to know your sin and have shame over it is good, you are double cursed if you sear your conscience and have no shame for sin. Shame is for the body as conscience is for the soul. Both demonstrate our fallen condition, how far we have fallen from the upright, sinless, male and female image bearers of God that we were created to be.
  - ii. Conscience, shame, and clothing are intimately related, and distinguish us from angels and animals. They point to our God-created beginning and our deepest fall, but God provided clothing/covering for man and woman (**Gen. 3:21**) to cover their shame/guilty conscience, pointing forward to His covering their sin/shame through Christ dying, naked, on the cursed cross, and giving us His righteousness as clothing.

### 8. The Punishment of Sin for Each, and the Related Blessing

- a. The punishments God gives to Adam/man and Woman/Eve are specific, relating to their nature/calling as male and female.
  - i. Eve is punished in terms of her calling, as a mother and wife, because she failed to be a suitable helper to her husband, but rather tempted him and led him to fall/sin.
  - ii. The woman's greatest source of joy, bringing children into the world, will now be painful.
  - iii. Adam/man is punished indirectly through the curse on woman, as he will rule over her, yet her desire for her husband will be one of conflict as she will desire to rule him (**Gen. 3:16**).

- iv. But Adam/man is also punished directly in that, on his account, the ground from which he was taken/created and was told to develop and cultivate, to bring forth its fruits and potential, is now cursed, and he will have to do this by the sweat of his brow, against violent storms, earthquakes, wild animals, thorns and thistles, etc.
- b. There is still mercy in this punishment, for the individual, the family, and all society.
  - i. Man will continue to live & not die right away, he will still be fruitful and multiply.
  - ii. Adam then names his wife Eve/“mother of all living”, & here we see the high calling for woman is indeed motherhood, a helpmeet to man in bearing/nurturing children.
  - iii. Mankind is still called to the dominion mandate, to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue/rule it (**Gen. 9:1-3**), but now, due to their sin, it is painful/difficult.
  - iv. But God is with Adam/man & Eve/woman in their/our callings still, as the seasons continue, the animals fear us, & through the childbearing of women the seed of the Church is born, & Jesus the Savior Himself comes, *the* Seed of the woman (**Gal. 3:16**) who crushes the head of the Serpent (**Gen. 3:15**), by which Christ & His people overcome the sinful and cursed world (**Jn. 16:33; 1 Jn. 5:4**).
  - v. And When Christ returns, the curse on the earth and God’s people is lifted, so that we inherit the renewed heavens and earth, ruling and dwelling forever with the Lord (**Rev. 21**).

## **The Christian Family Chapter 3: The Family Among the Nations**

### **9. The Ravaging of the Family Through Sin**

- a. The Children of Adam and Eve had to marry each other, but this was not incest as the knowledge/reality of those “outside the family” did not yet exist.
- b. Only over time did the sense of blood relationship and awareness of incestuous relationships become planted in the heart of man.
- c. This was a mercy of God protecting against sinful sexual family abuse.
- d. God willed that man would be fruitful and multiply, and *leave and cleave* to his wife. That required marrying someone not your sister, and marrying into another family.
- e. Sin ravaged the home immediately, as Cain killed Abel, weapons were made to take vengeance, Lamech embraced polygamy, and wickedness led to the global flood.
- f. After the flood, mankind gathered to build the tower of Babel, rather than spread over the earth and take dominion for the Lord, and so they/their languages were scattered.
- g. Different cultures, abilities, gifts, customs, etc., developed in each nation. In time national identity led to strength, but also conflict with other nations, warring, etc.
- h. Nations/peoples who achieve high levels of flourishing and welfare nonetheless through prosperity and abundance often deteriorate and decline in terms of religion and morality, in terms of home life and family life (page 17). The U.S.A. fits the bill.

### **10. The Origin and Development of the Family according to the Teaching of Evolution.**

- a. Evolutionists argue that in the beginning people embraced only promiscuity and concubinage sexually, in keeping with our animal ancestry. There were no homes.
- b. Over time, *hordes* formed, communal living, like packs of animals, where the women are shared in common with the men, the children are shared in common, etc.

- c. But within these hordes/packs, a sense of *blood relationship* formed, and thus emerged families rather than hordes. But this started with the bond between mother and child, for mom had to feed and provide for the child. The father was unknown, not living with one woman but with the men, sleeping with multiple women.
- d. Evolutionists say this was the golden age for women, they had the matriarchy or feminocracy! They ran the home, because there was no father at home.
- e. But nomadic life gave way to settled life, and so the men become more connected to the home, and thus monogamy emerged, and with the father at home, patriarchy. Eventually these were elevated to law in certain cultures.
- f. Bavinck says this does show the ravage of sin on the family, but the evolutionist is inaccurate, because even the most advanced, cultured, sophisticated societies still have all sorts of sexual sins, polygamy, etc. In short, we still live like animals beneath the surface of our sophistication, because we all have sinful hearts and fleshly lusts.
- g. Bavinck notes this is especially seen in the center of civilization, the focal points of culture, in the large cities full of grandeur and glory (page 23). Again, consider how true this is in the U.S., in our entertainment, film industry, sports, etc. It is sexualized.
- h. Evolutionists turn the concept of sin into a sickness due to animal-nature origins, so that guilt is only an illusion. Prisons become hospitals, and this creates victim culture.

**11. *The Preserving of Marriage & Family Life among All Peoples, Despite Its Frequent & Serious Perversion.***

- a. Despite the stream of evils in each generation, culture, nation, ravaging the family, the family still persists, the “home has been preserved and maintained everywhere and in every age in more or less pure form” (23).
- b. The basics of family life are found in even the most primitive peoples today.
- c. All societies still look to marriage between man and woman as the norm, the spine of a civilization. Nature/creation itself teaches all peoples the difference between man/woman. Naturally, man worked outside of the home, the woman in the home.
- d. Feminocracy never existed anywhere, & queens have been the exception, not the rule.
- e. Many now admit that patriarchy was the earliest form of life, and so they want to “smash the patriarchy” as it is said to day.
- f. “Frequently we encounter the phenomenon that among various people groups, a higher respect for marriage and family life is seen the more deeply we investigate their past, whereas with the increase of well-being and wealth such respect deteriorates and is assaulted and oppressed by means of various ignoble practices.”
- g. Egypt, Greece, & Rome held women in high esteem, and the Chinese did for parents.
- h. Literature and art show masculine fidelity, feminine devotion, and filial dependence (27). The Code of Hammurabi, predating Moses, protects women in case of divorce.
- i. This all shows that God preserved a conscience, a sense of right and wrong (**Rom. 2:14-15**), in the family, preserving the natural love that He had planted in the heart of man, and “thereby opened a fountain of pure happiness and inestimable blessing for earthly life”.

**The Christian Family Chapter 4: The Family In Israel**

**12. Law and Custom among Israel with Regard to Marriage, Patriarchy, Paternal Authority, Women, and Children**

- a. God covenant with Israel, making Himself known as Jehovah, and so Israel stands in distinction from the other nations in having no other gods but Jehovah that they worship.
- b. The first table of the Law/10 Commandments is followed by the second, and love toward God is the foundation for love toward neighbor, already taught in the OT (Lev. 19:18).
- c. This love for God and fellow man was to emanate from the heart, eradicating coveting.
- d. Patriarchy existed always among Israel; it was assumed & assimilated into their law throughout their history. Israel as a nation was entirely patriarchal, with the twelve tribes divided up into clans, the clans into extended families, and these into households.
- e. Each group had its own head/representative, forming the “members of the assembly”.
- f. The husband/father thus had extensive power: the entire family, including wife, slaves, animals, were *his* property (Exodus 20:17), but he was not to treat his family like slaves.
- g. Mores rather than hard laws established the rights of the family. Daughters had significant freedom in the home, addressing strangers while working (Gen. 24:15-16).
- h. The women were not required to be veiled, interacted with men (Ruth 2:5-6), took part in feasts/festivals (Ex. 15:20-21), brought their own possessions/slaves into marriage, etc.
- i. The wife was the homemaker, spinning/weaving/sewing/baking/caring for the flock (Gen. 29:9; Exod. 2:16; I Sam. 2:19; 8:13; 2 Sam 13:8; Prov. 31:10-31).
- j. Her full honor was in motherhood, especially with sons (Gen. 16: I Sam. 1), and children were a rich treasure/blessing/inheritance of the Lord (Psalm 127:3).
- k. Firstborn sons were heirs of paternal authority and protectors of mom and sisters.

**13. The Nurture of Children, the Position of the Woman, and the Sanctity of Marriage**

- a. The children were to be nurtured in the fear/knowledge of the Lord (Ex. 12:26; Det. 4:9).
- b. Honor was due to father & mother (Ex. 20:12; Lev. 19:3), striking or cursing either was punished by the death penalty (Exod. 21:15; Lev. 20:9).
- c. The skillful homemaking wife is praised as the ideal wife whose worth is far above rubies (Prov. 31:10-31), and her labors for her home shows her righteous fearing the Lord, and is to be praised (vv. 29-30). Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Noadiah were prophetesses.
- d. Marriage is of divine origin, instituted by God to be monogamous and unbreakable, a covenant He established for the purpose of producing godly offspring (**Mal. 2:14-15**).
- e. Polygamy and divorce were permitted, but due to their hardheartedness (and not permitted at all now that the fullness of the Spirit is poured out).
- f. Prostitution, fornication, adultery, and other unchaste and impure acts were forbidden.
- g. “The sacredness of marriage comes to fullest expression in that it serves as an image of the covenant of fidelity between God and His people”.
- h. While the pagan gods/goddesses turn sexual union/marriage into conflict/discord/unfaithfulness, Scripture precludes all such immorality and has no concept of a female deity.
- i. God alone is the Holy and Exalted One, but dwells with His people who are of a humble and quiet spirit.
- j. Jehovah covenanted with the Patriarchs first, but then with Israel at Mt. Sinai as a nation.

- k.* As such, Jehovah becomes their Father (Deut. 32:6); Husbandman who planted them (Isa. 5: Jer. 2:21), and above all, the Bridegroom and Husband who had chosen and betrothed Israel to Himself out of pure grace (Isa. 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 2:32; Ezek. 16; Hos. 1-3).
- l.* Israel/God's people must honor Him as their Lord/Savior/Husband, and He is jealous for such singular devotion from us, as a husband is jealous for the faithfulness of his wife.
- m.* All apostasy Jehovah regards as harlotry and adultery, sexual immorality and infidelity (Lev. 20:6; Num. 14:33; Ps. 73:27; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16:32).

## **The Christian Family Chapter 5: The Family In The NT**

### **14. The Holy Family**

- a.* The NT opens with the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ to Mary, unique among all religions.
- b.* Mary gladly accepted her calling by God as the mother of Jesus, whereas Eve failed hers.
- c.* Jesus submitted to His parents' authority on earth, in obedience to His heavenly Father.
- d.* Jesus obeyed the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment to honor father/mother, yet also underscored the importance of the spiritual family/kinship, saying those who do His will are his father, mother, sibling, etc. (Mark 3:32-35).
- e.* Jesus must do His Father's business, and when family gets in the way of that, He must obey His heavenly Father (Lk. 2:49).
- f.* And yet, even while hanging on the cross, atoning for sin, Jesus thinks of His mother, and provides for her future care as a likely widow (Joseph being deceased) by having the Disciple John care for her as another "son" by bringing her into his home (Jn. 19:26-27).

### **15. Jesus' Regard for Women, Marriage, Parents, & Children**

- a.* Jesus had no earthly bride, though is married to the Church, yet also was not a monk who refused to look at/speak to women. He honors women and they minister to Him.
- b.* Jesus forgives their sins, and allows the woman caught in adultery to depart without punishment (Jn. 8:11). In these ways Christ restores women were they/Eve failed.
- c.* Christ redeems marriage as well, as a righteous institution that is not an unconditional duty to all, especially in times of intense persecution (Mt. 24:19), and is an earthly institution that does not continue in heaven (Matt. 22:30).
- d.* Yet Jesus honors marriage by performing His first miracle at the wedding in Cana, which He attended and by so doing blessed the institution of marriage (John 2).
- e.* Jesus upholds the sacred bond of marriage by refusing divorce apart from adultery, saying Moses permitted divorce certificates was due only to the sinfulness/hardness of the heart of men and women.
- f.* "In terms of its nature and essence, marriage is the bond of one man and one woman becoming one flesh for their entire lives. In this way God has joined them together, and what God has thus joined, man may not put asunder (Matt. 19:4-6)"; page 42.
- g.* The kingdom of heaven is worth selling all for, it is better than any earthly blessing, including marriage and family – yet for the redeemed community in the kingdom of God, marriage is to be held in high honor and an indissoluble bond, between husband and wife as well as parents and children (including monetary support for each other, Matt. 15:4-6).
- h.* What Jesus is doing in His teaching ministry, like with all else, is not abolishing OT law, but fulfilling it, as well as developing and clarifying it. His teaching doesn't abrogate the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment but restores its proper meaning which the teachers of the law (scribes, Pharisees, etc.) had greatly damaged.

- i.* Jesus healed many sick children and raised some from the dead (Mt. 17:14-20; Jn. 4:46-54; Lk. 7:11-15; 8:41-56) and receives them to touch and bless them as belonging to His kingdom (Mt. 19:13-15); see also Mt. 18:3, 5.
- j.* The little/young children in Mt. 21:16 crying out “Hosanna to the Son of David” displeased the chief priests and scribes, but Jesus said it fulfills the OT idea of the mouths of young children and nursing babies praising the Lord (so have children in worship!).

**16. The Apostolic Teaching**

- a.* It is likely all the apostles except for Peter were married (Mt. 8:14; I Cor. 9:5).
- b.* Paul like Christ saw being unmarried better in dire situations (I Cor. 7:1-17), but affirms marriages goodness and to be received with thanksgiving and consecrated by the Word and prayer (I Tim. 4:3-5).
- c.* Marriage is honorable (Heb. 13:4) & pictures the heavenly marriage and prepares one for it (Eph. 5:32).
- d.* Marriage is not uniquely Christian, it is rooted in nature and all nations/cultures/religions marry. What is rooted in creation/nature is not weakened or destroyed by special revelation, but is established and strengthened, made richer and deeper (page 44).
- e.* Since marriage is to picture Christ and the Church, the husband and wife ought both to be Christians/believers. A “mixed” marriage of believer and unbeliever is not to be entered, although if both are unbelievers and only one converts, the marriage should continue, for the unbelieving spouse is sanctified through the believing spouse & the children are holy (I Cor. 7:14).
- f.* Christ did not destroy, but restored marriage. The husband remains the head of the family, since he is the image and glory of God, and the wife remains submissive to him, because as one created after and from and for him she is the glory of her husband (this quote from Bavinck on page 45 is very helpful in understanding the “glories” of man and woman; man was made first, to/for the glory of God, woman was made as a helper to man, to/for the man; so the man is the image/glory of God immediately/directly, the woman the image/glory of God mediately/indirectly, coming from/for the man).
- g.* In Christ neither man or woman is above the other and both are heirs of life (Gal. 3:28; I Pet. 3:7). Both have the same faith, sacraments, Spirit, access to God in prayer, etc.
- h.* The Christian family then requires husband to love his wife, live for her, and give himself up for her as Christ did the Church (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; I Pet. 3:1-7), and wife must submit to her husband in the Lord and unto the Lord (same verses).
- i.* Children honor/obey father and mother (Eph. 6:1-3) and are covenant heirs (Acts 2:39; I Cor. 7:14; I Tim. 2:15). Parents must nurture their children in the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21) b/c the family is a chosen generation, holy people, royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

**17. The Blessing of Christianity for Family Living.**

- a.* Apart from this Christian ordering/duties, marriage is a nightmare. Men are either lazy or consumed by their lusts for other women, having many harlots, concubines, and the children were often taught by slaves rather than the mother. In short, no family bond is found, the “one flesh” union is broken, and children are neglected. Then there’s homosexuality/vile passions that further pervert the family/society.
- b.* Bavinck gives the example of Perpetua who embraced Christ, though it cost her not only her family, but ultimately her life (pg. 48). Christ did bring a sword to families/homes.
- c.* But Christianity brought peace to many homes as well: “Christianity infused a new spirit in natural ordinances and institutions, reforming them from within. It did not liberate wives from their husbands, or children from their parents, or servants from their masters, or workers from their vocations, or subjects from the state. But Christianity made for better wives and children, manservants and maidservants, workers and citizens, and led them back to their respective relationships. Christianity provided spiritual liberation, and precisely in that way recreated earthly relationships.” (Page 48).

- d. Women performed important ministries in the early church, receiving apostles into their homes, assisting the apostles in their ministry (Rom. 16:3, 6-15), led in certain prayers and prophesying in the time of extra-ordinary spiritual gifts (I Cor. 11:5), and were possibly tasked with certain church projects though not holding office (Rm. 16:1; I Tim. 3:11; 5:3-16). The spiritual elevation of women benefited the home and the woman.
- e. The leaven of Christianity bound husband and wife, parents and children to one another again. The wife became mother and nurturer of the children again, children were not to be aborted or castaway after birth, and the family was not only a part of the state/society, but “acquired an independent existence and became the foundation of the entire civil society” (page 50).

## **The Christian Family Chapter 6: Danger Confronting the Family**

### **18. The Ascetic Movement within the Christian Church**

- a. Because man is born sinful from generation to generation, good principles must continually be developed & applied day after day, moment after moment. The Christian family has been both good & evil in history.
- b. The Ascetic movement falls in the latter category, an institution that destroyed marital life. The Ascetics taught that abstaining from food & drink, relaxation & rest, and especially marriage, was God-pleasing.
- c. Augustine, Chrysostom, & others would argue that the married state was silver, unmarried gold.
- d. This mentality developed into hermitic living and monasticism. This led to lifelong vows of celibacy and saying it was superior to the married state, which is contrary to Scripture.
- e. The Church can be thankful for the gains with respect to Christianity and civilization through Monasticism (spreading the gospel, works of mercy, etc.), but it also caused deeply immoral situations. The Roman Catholic Church, especially under Pope Gregory VII, maintained that the clergy must be separate from women, marriage, and the family and depend only on the church to maintain hierarchical power.

### **19. Rome and the Reformation**

- a. Yet contradictorily, Rome also elevated marriage to the status of being a sacrament. But their reason is that marriage of itself is a fleshly communion unworthy of the Christian, and so must be “elevated” into the heavenly as a means of grace/sacrament.
- b. For the Roman Catholic Church, supernatural grace doesn’t elevate the natural, but suppresses it, and the supernatural hovers above the natural. “The leaven is indeed sprinkled over the dough, but never kneaded within so that the dough becomes saturated with it.”
- c. But for us, marriage is a natural communion of husband and wife, which Christ by His merit has perfected, sanctified, and elevated to an instrument of supernatural grace (like baptism/the Eucharist).
- d. “[marriage] equips them not only to live together in unity and love, but also to bring forth and nurture children to propagate the human race and the church of Christ at the same time.”
- e. This denigrating of marriage naturally denigrated/lowered the estimation of the woman. “Men saw the woman to be primarily a temptress of the man, a snare unto sin, a ‘gateway of the devil,’ as Tertullian called her. This did not lead to sexual abstinence for the man, but to sexual abuse.



- f.* Satisfaction of lust was sought outside the marriage and women became instruments for pleasure. Asceticism gave way to libertinism, b/c asceticism suppressed nature and the good of marriage/sexual desire for so long. Prostitution rose especially starting in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.
- g.* Members of the spiritual and monastic classes were swept into this sexual immorality also.
- h.* The Reformation/Calvin's reforms in Geneva helped stem this tide, but the free gospel was perverted by many into freedom from all moral restraints; the wars of the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries multiplied lusts of the flesh.
- i.* When peace and prosperity came after, the aristocrats and others surrendered to excess and hedonism. Rousseau of France is cited as an example, he who left his children to live with concubines prior to the French Revolution. Women led in the French Revolution and marriage was denigrated and perverted.

## **20. The Sexual Problem and Attempted Solutions**

- a.* In the 19<sup>th</sup> century prostitution & sexual immorality reached a crescendo due to intellectual anarchy leading to erasing the categories of good & evil & floods of lusts/wickedness coming in.
- b.* The multiplication of ease, entertainment, pleasures, etc., further eroded the necessity and desire to enter into marriage and bear the burdens of a family. Social norms now make it more difficult to marry as well.
- c.* Even in Bavinck's day over 100 years ago, they were talking about legalizing prostitution, making it safe and legal as possible, since it is ineradicable. It is a sickness that requires the attention of the medical health industry, not a sin to be opposed (bottom of page 58).
- d.* Others in Bavinck's day wanted marriage and procreation to be brought under the control of the state/government, to produce a strong generation with artificial breeding.
- e.* Others believe marriage is the cause of all sexual misery. Marriage requires, by church and state laws, to devotion between the man and wife for all of life, even when the love has faded and passion has disappeared. Deregulating or getting rid of marriage altogether would be much better, they say.
- f.* If marriage cannot be destroyed then divorce, and let the state take care of the children.
- g.* Others argued the woman lagged behind the man in physical strength, intellect, & scientific prowess, because they were confined to marriage and the home/husband/children.
- h.* Things will be better when the woman is liberated and can enter into any and every job in the work force she desires.
- i.* They were also pushing at this time for the right for women to vote (which brings up the question, should we have head of household voting in the church?) in the church, state, and organizations.
- j.* Of course, many were denouncing capitalism at that time, the unequal distribution of goods. Poverty was to blame for prostitution, drunkenness, robbery, murder, etc. If everyone had an equal wage and a place to live, all these evils would disappear. There would be a harmonious brotherhood among all humanity.
- k.* Equality and fraternity might men forfeiting your children to the state, but it is worth it to eradicate so much pain, misery, and maladies of modern society.
- l.* Bavinck closes the chapter by saying, "There has never been a time when the family faced so severe a crisis as the time in which we are now living. Many are not satisfied with remodeling;

they want to tear things down to the foundation.” He may have been right, and over 100 years later, the powers that be largely have torn down the foundations of the family in our society, and we are reaping the whirlwind.

## **The Christian Family Chapter 7, Part 1: Marriage & Family**

### **21. Reformation in Terms of Christian Principles**

- a. Reformation begins in our own heart and life. We must reform in our own circles/families against the rising tide of those in our culture who seek to destroy the family.
- b. To reform the state requires establishing one’s own political party, legislation, etc., & may still fail.
- c. The issues in our culture (especially woke-ism today) go against nature, whether sound or sick.
- d. Christianity “everywhere and always seeks the reformation of natural life, but only in such a way and by such means that nature is liberated from unrighteousness” (page 64).
- e. “Scripture proceeds from the distinction between man and woman.” Culture can only make changes within the limits and on the foundation of nature itself, of man and woman.

### **22. The Distinction Between Man and Woman**

- a. Women are human beings (news flash) because they are made in the image of God like men.
- b. Man and woman each are complete persons, with a complete human nature. They do not “complete” each other in this sense. We all have body and soul, mind and will, etc.
- c. Men and women have obvious bodily differences (page 67), but Bavinck adds that the souls operate/function differently in man and woman as well (page 68).
  - i. Women are more observant and have quicker sense impressions and retain them longer/deeper. Her imagination is more lively and has quicker connectivity.
  - ii. Her thinking/evaluating is less analytic, more visual, less concerned with principles and rules in abstract and more value is placed on the amenities of life.
  - iii. With man, volitional capacity is more logical, more capable of persistence, more persevering in striving for a goal, but the woman surpasses him in forbearance and patience, in the capacities for suffering and adapting.
- d. “To the man belongs the strength of physical prowess, the wide chest, the commanding eye, the full beard, the powerful voice; to the woman belongs a delicate shape, sensitive skin, full bosom, round shape, soft voice, long hair, elegant carriage, and supple movement. He engenders respect, she engenders tenderness.” (page 69).
- e. “The man is susceptible to the danger of doubt and unbelief, rationalism and dead orthodoxy, while the woman risks no less a danger of superficial piety and superstition, mysticism and fanaticism. The loquaciousness of the woman contrasts with the incommunicativeness of the man. The vanity of the woman is no worse than the coarse indifference of them an. The infidelity of the man is matched by the stubbornness of the woman.” (This and other differences between man/woman Bavinck lists on page 69).

### **23. The Unmarried State**

- a. Bavinck says men and women are not incomplete as human beings, but incomplete as man and woman. He means that men have their strengths and weaknesses as human beings, women have different strengths and weaknesses as human beings, and each find in the other their “complement and corrective” (page 70).
- b. “Just as she cannot dispense with his independence and strength, he cannot be without her dependence and tenderness. Marriage is thus grounded in the nature of both” (page 70).
- c. Marriage was ordained by God in/at Creation, it was necessary and not introduced by the Church or State. “In Holy Scripture there is no *prohibition against*, but only a *command for* marriage.”
- d. A few have the gift of abstinence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven [Matt. 19:12] and we should not marry unwisely. We cannot say that every person must marry to fulfill their destiny.
- e. “Marriage does not belong to the essence of being human” (71). Jesus was human, and many have served the Lord in missions and mercy, science and art, etc., as unmarried.

#### **24. Marriage as the Norm**

- a. Most will marry even though celibacy is permissible for those called to it. But those with a calling/nature to marry are driven toward it until they are married. Bavinck then talks about how poets, etc., write and speak of the bliss of the marriage day, and in more modern times, the horrors of marriage itself, focusing on sinful passions, forbidden affections, unnatural lusts.
- b. “After the wedding, the seriousness of living gets underway for the first time. Once the couple ‘have each other,’ then for the first time begins the test whether they will keep each other... love that wanes becomes hatred...aversion...drudgery...” (74-75).
- c. Some say the justifiable cure is adultery, free love, and that monogamous marriage is to blame. But this cure is worse than the disease and ruins families, institutions, societies.

#### **(PART TWO BEGINS BELOW)**

#### **25. The Choice of Spouse and Courtship**

- a. “What superficiality and frivolousness are exposed with the choice of a spouse!
  - i. In ancient times entering into marriage was the business of the parents, the family, and the tribe; the search for a spouse was initiated by the parents and directed by them (Gen. 24:20; 28:1; 34:11; 38:6). This situation ran the risk that parents failed to take into account the inclination of their sons and daughters, and exercised domination over their heart and hand already during their adolescence.
  - ii. Today, however, sons and daughters have often become so independent and wise that they hardly bother any more with the wishes and advice of their parents or friends...to an often momentary passion all other interests are sacrificed.”
- b. In choosing a spouse it must be remembered that marriage is a moral institution. It is given by God, is divine law, and we must answer how we will enter marriage in accordance with them.
- c. Genuine heart affection matters, but “such affection does not exclude taking into account one’s confession and personal piety, age and status, health and suitability” (77).
- d. Christians may only marry other Christians, “in the Lord” (I Cor. 7:39).
- e. Engagement is far more than “going steady”, but is a “triumph achieved through struggle, a prize that must be won in a contest” (page 77).

- i. Engagement must prepare for the fellowship of marriage. It is not just a time to know each other's virtues, but to begin to learn to tolerate one another's faults. It balances both the expectations and disillusion of marriage.
- ii. Marriage is both a gift and a task, not only a privilege, but also a calling. Learning this during engagement prepares for the blessing and burden of marriage.

## **The Christian Family Chapter 7, Part 2: Marriage & Family**

### **26. The Unmarried State**

- a. Bavinck says men and women are not incomplete as human beings, but incomplete as man and woman. He means that men have their strengths and weaknesses as human beings, women have different strengths and weaknesses as human beings, and each find in the other their "complement and corrective" (page 70).
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- c. Some say the justifiable cure is adultery, free love, and that monogamous marriage is to blame. But this cure is worse than the disease and ruins families, institutions, societies.

### **28. The Choice of Spouse and Courtship**

- a. "What superficiality and frivolousness are exposed with the choice of a spouse!
  - i. In ancient times entering into marriage was the business of the parents, the family, and the tribe; the search for a spouse was initiated by the parents and directed by them (Gen. 24:20; 28:1; 34:11; 38:6). This situation ran the risk that parents failed to take into account the inclination of their sons and daughters, and exercised domination over their heart and hand already during their adolescence.
  - ii. Today, however, sons and daughters have often become so independent and wise that they hardly bother any more with the wishes and advice of their parents or friends...to an often momentary passion all other interests are sacrificed."

- b. In choosing a spouse it must be remembered that marriage is a *moral* institution. It is given by God, is divine law, and we must answer how we will enter marriage in accordance with them.
- c. Genuine heart affection matters, but “such affection does not exclude taking into account one’s confession and personal piety, age and status, health and suitability” (77).
- d. Christians may only marry other Christians, “in the Lord” (I Cor. 7:39).
- e. Engagement is far more than “going steady”, but is a “triumph achieved through struggle, a prize that must be won in a contest” (page 77).
  - i. Engagement must prepare for the fellowship of marriage. It is not just a time to know each other’s virtues, but to begin to learn to tolerate one another’s faults. It balances both the expectations and disillusion of marriage.
  - ii. Marriage is both a gift and a task, not only a privilege, but also a calling. Learning this during engagement prepares for the blessing and burden of marriage.
  - iii. “No Christian says that the person is corrupted by marriage, but he confesses that marriage is corrupted by the person.” Marriage is a blessing if you marry well (page 79).

**29. Sins to which Husband and Wife Are Exposed in Married Life**

- a. Besides risk of life, disaster and accident, sickness and death, need and misery, the faults and sins of one another must be put up with. “Often husband and wife are each other’s crosses”.
- b. “Many a husband, who appears great and strong in the eyes of other people, is weak in his home, petty and narrow-minded; and many a wife, who seems like an angel when she is visiting others, in her own home is a pest to her husband.” (page 80).
- c. Infidelity is the great sin to which the husband is exposed in marriage.
  - i. “The honeymoon period is soon past, and when the wedding dress and veil are put away, so too the beautiful illusions. With many, love gives way to coldness, coldness to indifference, indifference to neglect.
  - ii. And the husband who once swore to his love with the most precious of vows, seeks diversion and the satisfaction of his desire in a bar or a club, and with another woman; brothels are patronized mostly by married men.”
  - iii. So Scripture demands men love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Without this love, men cannot make demands of their wife, & cannot muster prayer to God.”
- d. Stubbornness is the great sin that the wife is so easily liable and must struggle against.
  - i. “The consent of the wife signifies that she declares herself to have been gained and won, that she is giving herself in the fullest sense to the man of her choosing.
  - ii. But this promise contains more and is more difficult to keep than many a wife thinks at the outset of marriage.
  - iii. It requires immense, continual self-denial, and she easily comes to think that the wishes and demands of her husband are unfair and unreasonable.”
  - iv. Even though outwardly the form is still preserved, inwardly the distancing has already occurred, and she withholds from him everything pertaining to her soul and body over which she has power, and drives her husband further and further away, to the path of sin and shame.

- v. Scripture calls wives to thus be submissive to their husbands, for he was made in the image/glory of God, he was made first, and the woman created from him and for him, and the wife was the first to transgress (I Cor. 11:3-9; Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:12-15).
- e. The wife's obedience is so that the Word of God is not blasphemed (Titus 2:5).
  - i. For the same Word prescribing obedience for the wife also commands obedience from children toward their parents, from the servant toward his master, from the maid toward her mistress, from the citizen toward his government.
  - ii. If the wife is disobedient toward this Word of God, then she is setting a bad example for her children and servants, and she is also provoking them to disobedience.
  - iii. This evil works its way out from the small sphere of the family throughout society and the state, and undermines the foundations of both.
  - iv. The wife's obedience may also win their husbands to the Lord when the preaching of the Word did not directly accomplish this, b/c the husband sees "the power of the Word in the life of their wives" (1 Pet. 3:1).

**30. The Subjection of Husband and Wife to the Command of God.**

- a. In our sin, "The husband refuses to honor the command to love, saying that he cannot love a wife who has so many faults as he sees in her. The wife refuses to be obedient to a husband who is so unreasonable in his demands and so tyrannical as she has come to know him. Both exert pressure for multiplying and easing the opportunities for divorce."
  - b. Continuing down this path leads to destruction of family, fracturing nurture, corrupting and undermining state and society.
  - c. But returning to faithfulness in marriage with the husband loving his wife and the wife obeying her husband **will yield renewed families, the wife restored to her honor, society reformed, the state reborn. From the family outward, blessing and prosperity will once again spread across all the nation.** (page 84). Faithful Christian families are the key component needed.
31. Loving husbands and obedient wives "enjoy marriages and family life that [surpass] every earthly association and community in beauty and radiance."
- a. This love and obedience is to be followed "in the Lord", Col. 3:18.
  - b. This love and obedience is therefore defined and limited. They are relative and conditional and not the highest but subordinate to the highest love and obedience, to Christ.
  - c. This is why Christ may demand divorcing an unbelieving husband or wife, forsaking parents or children, house or field – to faithfully follow Him for His sake.
  - d. Through love and obedience, "only within marriage does the personality of husband and wife, and of each according to their natures, come fully into its own". (85)
32. "The essence of marriage [is] the full & complete communion of husband & wife, with body & soul together, for all of life. For that reason it is monogamous, the bond of one man and one woman."
- a. "It finds its example and likeness only in God's covenant with his people, in the communion of Christ with his church.
  - b. The tremendous blessing of marriage for man and woman is incredible:
  - c. "At the beginning one doesn't realize even a fraction of this; but as time progresses, and the years multiply, among the adventures and disappointments of life, the souls of husband and wife

grow together more intimately, until marriage comes to be acknowledged more and more as the most precious and priceless gift of God on this sinful, thorn-covered earth, and the estate of marriage becomes a cause for worship and gratitude....it is a moral institution that nurtures, enriches, and perfects both husband and wife...preparing each other for the kingdom of God.”

## **The Christian Family Chapter 8: Family & Nurture**

### **33. Sexuality**

- a. God also purposed marriage to propagate the human race and to expand the kingdom of God.
- b. With the institution of marriage, God immediately pronounced the blessing of fruitfulness.
- c. Thus asceticism is denounced in Scripture, there is no moral value in abstaining from things like food, drink, marriage, sexual relations, etc., and is not a safer/more direct way to perfection.
- d. The body and soul is good and clean, only sin contaminates body and soul, and earthly relations.
- e. But sex and the body are not liberated from the soul either. Sex is confined to God’s parameters.
- f. Being fruitful and multiplying is good, but God limits this in plenty of ways, by monogamous marriage, by limited years the wife is able to bear children, etc.

### **34. Procreation, Unity, & Diversity in the Family**

- a. That children, image bearers of God, are created from sexual union is as mysterious and profound as the union between husband and wife itself.
- b. Your existence is the fruit of communion between a man and woman. You are born into the community of family, and had no say in the matter. This was all part of God’s will. We have no say in determining our parents, siblings, country, lineage, etc. Nor do parents pick the children.
- c. Family bonds were severely weakened in Bavinck’s day, still further in our own. But it is a bond created by God, and cannot utterly be severed. We all sense it and know it, even if we hate it.
- d. *“Masculine and feminine qualities, physical and spiritual strengths, intellectual, volitional, and emotional gifts, age and youth, strength and weakness, authority and obedience, affection and love, unity and diversity of interests, all of these come together in one family, unified and distinguished and blended together. The diversity both attracts and repels, unifies and isolates; sometimes the family is a small kingdom divided against itself, but such division can be intense because the unity is generally so deep and solid.” (page 92).*

### **35. The Family’s Nurturing Power for Parents**

- a. All these priceless qualities make the home the first and best school of nurture that exists on the earth, for good or ill. Civilizations rise and fall based on how the youth of a generation is raised.
- b. Schools and churches cannot replace the family. [As an aside, I’ve seen this while teaching the last 7 years or so in Classical Christian Schools. My students’ home life, and after that church life, almost completely determines their grades, behavior, morality, etc.]
- c. Bavinck calls for a restoration of the family, not removing children from their family. Family is the foundation to society and church and state. We need strong families.
  - i. “And let a vigorous protest be sounded against all those who through immoral entertainment, low art, cheap novels, and sensuous performances violate the honor of marriage and...family.”

- ii. “The family is a school for the children, but in the first place it is a school for the parents.” Bavinck points out that you don’t “know it all” or much at all, when first married and first having children.
  - iii. The family is no longer an industrial commune, and “Life and customs and civil legislation are all moving in the direction of limiting power of the husband in this respect.” (page 94).
  - iv. Nevertheless, the honor or shame of a family still falls on the father’s head in society.
36. The husband is the head of the family, but the wife is the heart. **Quotes from Bavinck:**
- a. “The husband brings in the fruits of his labor, wife distributes them according to each one’s need;
  - b. the husband gives, the wife receives; the husband establishes the family, the wife preserves the family; the husband conceives the child, but the life of the child is intimately developed along with that of the mother far more than with that of the father;
  - c. the husband lives in society, the wife lives in her family;
  - d. the husband exercises “power directed outward and influence directed inward,” the wife exercises “power directed inward and influence directed outward.”
  - e. Just as the husband is independent in his work and must nevertheless labor with a view to the interests of his family, so too the wife is independent within the family, but in such a way that she thereby remains bound to her husband through moral relationships.
  - f. When according to his duty the husband brings in the reward of his toil for maintaining the family, then the wife takes that reward in receipt and apportions it according to the need of each.
  - g. She organizes the household, arranges and decorates the home, and supplies the tone and texture of home life; with unequalled talent she magically transforms a cold room into a cozy place, transforms modest income into sizable capital, and despite all kinds of statistical predictions, she uses limited means to generate great things.
  - h. Within the family she preserves order and peace, because she knows the character of each person and knows how to supply the needs of each. She protects the weak, tends the sick, comforts the sorrowing, sobers the proud, and restrains the strong.
  - i. Far more than the husband, she lives along with all her children... for the children she is the source of comfort amid suffering, the source of counsel amid need, the refuge and fortress by day & by night. The heart of her husband trusts in her, & her children call her blessed [Prov. 31].
  - j. Both husband and wife nurture each other and are themselves formed by their children who were born from them. A marriage that remains childless is not thereby rendered purposeless, just as the life of an unmarried person need not be profitless.
  - k. For husband & wife marriage is meaningful & a means for fulfilling their earthly & spiritual calling.
    - i. But just as marriage is to be recommended in general, so too a marriage blessed with children is what may generally be described as a customary, normal marriage.
    - ii. By father, mother, & child the family is built according to... beautiful symmetry.
  - l. Holy Scripture evaluates having children entirely differently than the modern generation.
    - i. It teaches that a marriage blessed by God serves the extension of the human race and the subjection and dominion of the earth, [Gen. 1; and a godly seed, Mal. 2:15].
    - ii. Scripture therefore views children as a blessing from God/inheritance of the Lord [Ps. 127-28]
  - m. For the wife the way to heavenly salvation lies paved in the family;



- i. In bringing forth and nurturing children she demonstrates the genuineness and the power of her Christian faith (1 Tim. 2:15)
- ii. for the husband the apostle's saying possesses a similar significance.
- n. The family exerts a reforming power upon the parents.
  - i. Who would recognize in the sensible, dutiful father the carefree youth of yesterday,
  - ii. And who would ever have imagined that the lighthearted girl would later be changed by her child into a mother who renders the greatest sacrifices with joyful acquiescence?
- o. The family transforms ambition into service, miserliness into munificence, the weak into strong, cowards into heroes, coarse fathers into mild lambs, tenderhearted mothers into ferocious lionesses. Imagine there were no marriage and family, and humanity would, to use Calvin's crass expression, turn into a pigsty."

### **37. The Family's Nurturing Power for Children, Misunderstood by Recent Theories of Nurturing**

- a. Children are a blessing/enrichment, but place serious obligations on parents for many years.
- b. To a great extent, a child's future depends upon that child's nurture, Bavinck says. Agree?
- c. Bavinck notes that government, organizations, church and state, institutions, etc., were all looking to help children, especially disabled, disadvantaged, neglected ones. He says this is commendable, but quickly points out that this is making child nurture occur "systematically".
- d. "People are moving toward the position that scientific technique must take the work out of the hands of nature." Bavinck applauds a more comprehensive nurture, one that is not merely intellectual but includes "the hygienic, the aesthetic, and the moral, even...religious." (98).
- e. But he laments all this is bent toward technical experts, and involves evolutionary theory:
- f. *"But now cultural man has evolved, with his consciousness and will, with his apprehension and aptitude; and he has the calling to relieve nature of its work and to labor with his scientific insight for the improvement of the human race.*
  - i. *Artificial selection continues today, having replaced natural selection!*
  - ii. *Therefore we should let the pairing of spouses, the lifestyle of the pregnant woman, the physical and spiritual care of the child from his or her first day of life onward, come to stand under the oversight and control of science....he was an animal, he became human, and under the discipline of science surely he will yet become an angel."*
- g. Now these technical experts question the family's ability to nurture their own children, and so the family is no longer trusted, and not just the bad or poor families but middle class families too!
- h. So the cry then and today is trust the experts, trust the science, trust the state to rear your kids!
- i. *"Is the nurture that the government offers in its schools and institutions the entire nurture a child needs, or does it serve merely to supplement the nurture that is given to the child in the family?*
  - i. *To whom does the task of nurturing belong in the first place, to the family or to the state, to the parents or the experts, to practice or to theory, to life or science? A powerful, continually growing stream is moving [toward the] technically expert & artificial nurture.*
  - ii. *Just like the advocates of free love point with a certain relish to the many unhappy marriages in order to bring legal and lawful marriage into disrepute, so too defenders of government childcare seize with eagerness upon all the miseries and faults of home childcare to thereby strengthen their theory and to recommend it as the only real and adequate solution.*

- iii. *They use examples of unhappy families not to press for reforming and improving family life, but on the contrary, to undermine the parental home as a nurturing institution and to build a new system of breeding and raising children on the ruins of the family.*

**38. The Imbalance of These Theories.**

- a. But many in Bavinck's day also said, "Don't forget the family in nurture, and especially mom!"
- b. The problem is when we overestimate family nurture, thinking it will end sin, crime, etc.
- c. Every person is born sinful, we cannot transmit our sanctification into our offspring. We always have to start at "square one" with our covenant children in our nurturing.
- d. Bavinck does say science has benefited us greatly in nurturing our children in family and school.
  - i. He highlights their counsel regarding the lifestyle of the pregnant woman, care of healthy & sick children, nutrition and clothing, sunlight and fresh air, work and rest, overstimulation of the body, getting exercise, and many more good things.
  - ii. "But science cannot replace living, only fortify, guide, and improve living."
- e. *"Just as agriculture owes many improvements to science, but nevertheless remains dependent on nature, on soil and climate, on rain and sunshine, on sowing and harvesting, so child-rearing can be assisted and supported by science but can never be appropriated by science or assigned to science. Even less so because all those sciences relating to childcare are still deficient and repeatedly change their conclusions."* (pages 104-105).
- f. *"People can organize schools to be as friendly as ever, with an education that resembles real life as closely as ever, and with a teacher who is equipped with sufficient knowledge and who has a heart filled with love for the children; it's still just a school."*

**39. The Family as the Nurturing Institution Par Excellence.**

- a. "In contemporary society, with its many demands and multiplicity of examinations and tests, it is indispensable. One needs a certain discipline of the intellect and the will, of the memory and judgment, of physical exercise and motor development.
  - i. But for that reason we value all the more the fact that the family is more important than the school, that practice is more important than theory, and life is more important than instruction.
  - ii. The family is and remains the nurturing institution par excellence." This is b/c God brought the family into being for nurture, it is not an artificial program instituted by the state.
- b. You are always part of your family, you are not always part of a school or program. Everything in the home either nurtures the child, or fails to do so:
- c. *"The hand of the father, the voice of the mother, the older brother, the younger sister, the infant in the bassinet, the sickly sibling, grandmother and grandchildren, uncles and aunts, guests and friends, prosperity and adversity, celebrations and mourning, Sundays and workdays, prayers and thanksgiving at mealtime and the reading of God's Word, morning devotions and evening devotions. Everything is serviceable for nurturing each other day by day, hour by hour, without plan, without appointment, without technique, all of which are set beforehand.*
- d. *It is life itself that nurtures, that cultivates the rich, inexhaustible, multifaceted, magnificent life. The family is the school of life, because it is the fountain and hearth of life."*
- e. *The powers of observation, memory, and judgment are exercised, but also the powers of imagination, of the will, of conscience, of character, and of the heart, as are the muscles and the*

*nerves, together with the head, hands, and feet. Vices are -resisted—stubbornness, selfishness, and jealousy; virtues are -cultivated—purity, order, obedience, cooperation, compassion—as in no other school. A person’s becoming human occurs within the home; here [in the family] the foundation is laid for the forming of the future man and woman, of the future father and mother, of the future member of society, of the future citizen, of the future subject in the kingdom of God.”*

## **The Christian Family Chapter 9: Family & Society**

### **40. The Concept of Society**

- a. God created man not as isolated individuals, but as a family from the beginning, before the Fall, before sin, giving Eve to Adam, for it was not good for man to be alone.
- b. Man as head/authority, wife as helpmeet, and children as subordinates under the authority of their parents was God’s design from the beginning, and these “disparities” are by God’s good design and should be expressed in society as well.
- c. “From that first family have come clans and tribes and nations, and among those nations a rich group association has developed, which we generally refer to as society.”
- d. “The word society is related to the French *societe*, and the Latin *societas*, which itself is based on *socius*, which means “companion.” Hence, the word society has come to refer to a group of people living together in an ordered community.” Page 110.
- e. But Bavinck says society also refers to that which arises naturally, organic, social entities, arising by nature through birth and life.
- f. “No person is merely an individual; a single individual is not a person. Above the entrance to the history of humanity stands written this saying: “It is not good that the man should be alone” [Gen. 2:18]. From conception onward, a human being is a product of fellowship; every person is born from, and in, fellowship; persons are cared for and nurtured in the context of fellowship, and continue in some kind of fellowship throughout life, all the way to one’s final breath. A human being is a convivial creature and remains so, all the hermits and bachelors notwithstanding.”
- g. NOTE: Bavinck says this organic society manifests in different forms, such as *family* (husband/wife/child), *state*, and *church*. We all come from a family even if we haven’t formed a new one/married, we exist in a certain state, and if we are Christians, we belong to a church family. In this sense persons are not merely individuals, but exist by God’s design in a society of some sort.

### **41. The Boundaries of Society with Respect to Family, Church, and State**

- a. “Therefore society must be understood in the broader sense of the word as referring to the entire form of human association willed by God, grounded in nature, and coming to gradual development in history, which comes to manifestation in the combination and cooperation of the gifts and powers granted to humanity, and which has as its goal the preservation and generation, the distribution and enjoyment, of various spiritual and material goods.” (pages 113-114).
- b. Bavinck argues that if sin did not enter the world, human society would have developed entirely patriarchally, meaning everyone was a large association of families, and the institution of church and state would not have been necessary. He says the church formed only after the proto-evangelium in Gen. 3, lived in the families of the patriarchs, was nationalized in Israel, and on Pentecost came to exist independently of both state and society.

- c. Bavinck argues the state formed in Genesis 9 after the flood, when God told man to punish the murderer with death, so the state now bears the sword of justice.
- d. Family, State, and Church are each independent of the other then, with its own origin and purpose. But the family is the oldest and only pre-fall institution, the state and church came about after the fall, such that the church owes its existence to special grace, the state common grace.
- e. "Society corresponds most closely to the family; even apart from sin, society would have developed from the family, and the relationships within which society is manifested are expansions and indications of the fundamental forms found in the family. Authority and obedience, independence and subordination, equality and inequality, correspondence and variation, unity of nature and diversity of gifts and callings—all these have been present in the family from the very beginning, and in no sense came into existence as a result of sin." (115).
- f. But Bavinck adds society is more than just groups of families, but an economy forming from the flow of gifts and powers between families. Bavinck says this developed very gradually, and initially was more patriarchal, with not just parents and children but grandparents and grandchildren living together, and thereby these patriarchal families were very independent since they produced all that was needed for survival and continuation (food, clothing, and shelter, etc.).

#### **42. Changes in Society Resulting from the Need for Camaraderie and from Work**

- a. Bavinck says the woman is most naturally happy/comfortable in the home, but men make friends and has interests outside the home, with other men close to his age and disposition. So men form clubs/associations for "play or amusement, hunting or fishing, pursuing political or social interests." (I can hear the women screaming and screeching "Smash the Patriarchy!" now haha).
- b. "The man who is always home, who has no social or political interests and is not a member of any outside group, easily becomes a "domestic" or a "busybody in the kitchen"; and the man who returns to his friends a few weeks after his wedding and regularly attends club and group meetings runs the serious risk later of entirely neglecting his wife and children." But Bavinck says man must pursue both, the family/home and social/political interests outside the home.
- c. *"Work is rooted in human beings as rational beings and is a likeness of the work that God accomplishes through creation and providence.... Work displays a spiritual & a material side."*
- d. *"Even in the most spiritual work, a person exerts the body more or less, the philosopher thinks, but only with his brains; the day laborer works with his hands, but also needs his soul, his mental acumen."* (pages 118-119).
- e. Scripture speaks of the labor of the soul (Isa. 53:11) & working in wisdom, knowledge, and skill (Eccles. 2:21). All work has a rational and moral character.
- f. *"This explains why religion and civilization, cultus and culture, Christianity and humanness exist together in such an intimate relationship. All progress in civilization and culture is dependent on the religious-moral life of humanity. All of history serves as proof of this. When religion and morality deteriorate among a nation, they drag down with them the best and most refined culture. Intellectual development, material prosperity, wealth, and luxury are in themselves excellent things; but when they are severed from the root of religion, they serve to advance evil far more than they arrest and restrain it. No enduring civilization exists without a healthy religious and moral life. Those who forsake God need to fear pain upon pain, but those who trust in him, in him alone, will be surrounded by his kindnesses."* (page 119)

#### **43. The Power of Labor and Material of Labor**

- a. "The soul functions primarily through the intellect while the body functions primarily through the hand. These are very special powers associated with work; through the intellect, a human being elevates himself above the animal, he knows and "understands," he apprehends in his consciousness things outside of himself, making them his own spiritual property, and acquires dominion, knowledge, and power. Through the hand he similarly elevates himself above the animal, grasps something, holds on to it, lifts it and lowers it, realizes his ideas and wishes in the world outside himself, turns it into a work of his spirit and stamps it with his personality; with the hand, one "handles" and is "handy"; the hand is the organ of human dominion." (page 120). Mind and hand work together in labor as well.
- b. *"Someone has correctly observed that all our tools are extensions and refinements of our physical organs. Especially the hand, this human tool par excellence, has served as an example of this. The hammer simulates the forearm, the cup simulates the hollow of the hand, the pencil extends the finger. Our decimal system derives from our ten fingers, and the foot represents our unit of measurement. Our eye serves as the model for spectacles and binoculars, our ear for the telephone. The musical instrument known as the organ corresponds to our lungs, the pump resembles our heart. Our nerves are the "cables running through our body," and telegraph cables are the "nerves of humanity." In a word, a person invents tools with his own soul, his own thought, his own life; in technology man copies himself, but at the same time elevates, energizes, and extends his work capacity; even the rhythm of his work displays the poetry of his own soul."*
- c. Bavinck underscores that all development of the earth is from material that God has embedded in it. It was our calling & duty from the beginning to "fill the earth and subdue it"/develop it for God's glory.

#### **44. Complaints against Society and against Its Inequality.**

- a. Rather than seeing society with the sum total of its goods produced, relationships formed, etc., as blessings, today many simply wish to shift blame from themselves to society for everything.
- b. Bavinck notes that there have always been abuses in society, and even natural disasters occur. [Consider how many blame "global warming" for so many of our issues today, Covid, etc.].
- c. On pp. 124-25 Bavinck points out even in his day how the foundations of society themselves were being attacked and undermined, not just abuses emerging from/within society. **INEQUALITY** was the complaint in his day, and that complaint continues in our day:
- d. *"No more masters and servants, wives and maids, employers and employees, governments and subjects, for authority is presumptive despotism, obedience is slavery, submission is bondage, and service is groveling. Every organic, moral relationship that has existed so far must for the future be transformed into a contractual relationship: all service must become a position with a function. Similarly inequality in property may not continue; each person has equal rights and must receive as much as he deserves. In the future, people must no longer be able to be rich through a benefactor, through birth, or through inheritance, but rather wealth must be distributed strictly according to rights: every wage according to desert, or perhaps distribution according to need. This latter point has not yet been resolved."*
- e. Bavinck says that there are many classes of people, it is not all the filthy rich or the dirt poor, even though things are often presented in this way.
- f. These various classes and inequalities are good things, not bad, for God has bestowed various gifts, skills, interests, etc., from birth. God has established inequality Himself. The Church itself is considered a body with different parts, and by necessity a body needs not just a head but arms, legs, feet, toes, etc.

- g. "And because the organization of society possesses its starting point and its stability in the family, the struggle against society ultimately leads to a struggle against the family, against the distinction and relationship of husband and wife, of parents and children, of those who are independent and those who are subservient." Page 127.
- h. "The health of the family is a gauge, if not of society's material welfare, then certainly of its spiritual and moral well-being."

#### **45. The Moral Character of All Labor and the Necessary Distinctions within Society**

- a. Man is designed by God to look for purpose beyond the home, but if he is separated from family and placed by himself, he risks losing sight of the moral seriousness of life and pursuing selfish pleasure.
- b. Married men are bonded in love to provide for their wife and children, and this moral responsibility delivers him from many dangers. Being at home and away from home keep the man in balance.
- c. "[man's] work ties together the natural bonds of the family and the voluntary bonds of society."
- d. God has given us work, even the most menial and boring work, as a calling from God. Working for the family connects the moral aspect of work and helps prevent work/money from becoming selfish.
- e. Technology/tools and advancement over nature has actually made us more specialized and therefore more dependent upon one another, not less, as division of labor multiples and distance becomes greater between employer and employee.
- f. Fewer and fewer people have the specialized tools and machinery, falling into the hands of larger and larger businesses and corporations that can now trade internationally, so many men are left to work with/sell only their manpower, not able to avail themselves of the expensive tools of production.
- g. "A strategically organized strike can rob an entire world-class city in one instant of light and water, and shut down all traffic into and out of the city. This is how at the present time society has become a composite of the most manifold and complex relationships. Those relationships lose more and more of their personal, organic, moral character, and shift toward mechanical, business, contractual networks."
- h. Just the same, Bavinck warns against making too much of this, and that the Socialist's fears have not come to pass. The Industrial Revolution has increased, not decreased, the number of businesses.
- i. A few have grown immensely wealthy, but the average wage/salary of all men has increased too.
- j. Bavinck stresses that society is full of variety and many classes, and that's in general a good thing.

#### **46. Abuses and the Path toward Improvement**

- a. Bavinck basically notes how everything is tended toward globalism and freedom to do whatever you want. He says this is not inherently bad, so long as it is all directed by God's law and moral principles.
- b. "Before anything else, society is a complex composite of *moral* relationships...a people's economy is based on their ethics." Bavinck says since this is true, the family is vital for moral wellbeing in society.
- c. "In the family we get to know the secret of life, the secret, namely, that not selfishness but self-denial and self-sacrifice, dedication and love, constitute the rich content of human living."
- d. *"And from the family we carry those moral relationships into society. One who has learned to honor his father later respects the authority of those through whom it has pleased God to rule over him. One who has truly loved his mother cannot violate another woman's honor. One who views the family servants as housemates cannot become a tyrant over his own employees. The family is the nursery of love and inoculates society with such love. We need that love if there is going to be any reform within society. Not selfishness, not greed, not thirst for domineering, but love is the foundation and the cement of the Christian society. Christianity is not the architect, but the soul of society. One who destroys the family is digging away the moral foundations on which society has been established as a moral institution."*

*But one who exalts the family and outfits leadership with love rather than selfishness, such a person does a work that pleases God. For God is love and love is the law of his kingdom.” (Page 134)*

## **The Christian Family Chapter 10: The Future of the Family**

### **47. Changes in the Family**

- a. Bavinck states that the father/man was head of the family in former times, that included wife and children, slaves, livestock, house, garden, and before the state and church was instituted, he was also priest and king, lawgiver and judge in the home.
- b. The bonds were so strong that the family remained together even when the father died, everything being bequeathed to the oldest son. This continues in some countries still but has changed in many.
- c. In cities and villages/more developed places, the family has lost virtually all its economic independence, whereas formally the family would go to the city or market at most several times a year.
- d. Many even in Bavinck’s day never owned property and lived in rented dwellings, relocated often, etc.
- e. “It has been said, not without justification, that the countryside is the natural sphere of the family, but the city is the natural enemy of the family.”
- f. Bavinck laments the modern family where the father is gone all day to work, and often the mother works all day, and they both come home exhausted and not interested in doing much but sleeping.
- g. Bavinck notes how women are ill-equipped to be housekeepers/homemakers and often desire a professional position outside the home.
- h. Bavinck even addresses how men and women marry or just live together and have no sense of duty or desire to raise children to be citizens in the kingdom of God, or even good citizens of the state. Instead, procreation is a choice, not a duty, and they’ll even abort their children if it suits them. Even the children that are born, once weaned from the mother, are handed to the state to educate!
- i. So the cry of Bavinck’s day was “Equality” and the woman must be liberated to become like the men, making the State the one true family!
- j. “In reality, such emancipation is progressing further and further; the number of births is declining in almost all civilized countries, especially in France and the United States of America; divorce is increasing at an alarming rate, and is being made more easy through legislation and judicial action; sexual activity is casting off one restraint after another.” (page 139)

### **48. Protecting the Family against Such Changes**

- a. Christians must resist these changes, and as despairing as it may be, there is much hope: “Not for nothing has God permitted the continuation of the family in the human race and among all peoples; every family ever built and every child ever born is proof that his purpose with the human race has not yet been achieved, that his forbearance has not yet ended, and his grace has not yet been exhausted.”
- b. “People cannot create anything, the foundations of society were laid once and for all by God himself; but on those foundations people can build further and restore what needs restoring. So we may never despair of the reformation of human beings and family and society. Even if modern man should doubt its possibility, the Christian may not surrender to this discouragement, because genuine piety holds promise for this life and for the life to come.”
- c. “The state is not the sphere of love but of justice; it does not proclaim the gospel but enforces the law. For that reason, the state can never take over or displace the task of the family; the state is not a parent who provides its citizens with food and clothing and a place to live, with work and wages, sustenance

and pension. The state presupposes the family, as does society, both of which existed before the state, each leading their own lives and being governed by their own laws. Anyone who expects the state to satisfy all those interests, for which family and society and church are to look after, is undermining the independence of these spheres of life and is calling for a remedy that in the long run will turn out to be more dangerous than the disease.”

- d. “As minister of God, the government must see to it that the rights of family and society, or each citizen and each sphere, are acknowledged and protected, and in case of conflict, ensure that justice is maintained. Consequently the state must call into being all such universal conditions whereby all citizens can fulfill their particular task and can answer to their own destiny in the sphere in which God has placed them and in agreement with the commandment he has given them.”
- e. “The task of the state is to discover the internal law to which the family is subject by virtue of its nature and the ordinance established by God, to acknowledge, protect, and maintain this law. In this way, by means of its legislation regarding marriage and divorce, property and inheritance, working hours and Sunday rest, the labor of women and children, public decency and many other things, the state would be working in a powerful way for the well-being and flourishing of the family. The state’s ideal is not to do everything itself, but to provide every citizen and all the spheres of life in society with the opportunity for each in their own domain to fulfill their own calling.”
- f. Bavinck argues that even the Socialists and Marxists in his day were realizing that the woman needed to return to the home and be a homemaker and raise children, according to her nature.

#### **49. The Continuation of Family Life.**

- a. Personal freedom is atomizing and dissolving the family bonds, Bavinck says.
- b. But Bavinck says while the forms of the family change, the essence remains.
- c. “One can indeed talk about servitude at home and about male tyranny, and can portray the woman as being genuinely free only when she achieves economic independence. But 90 percent of women still always opt for that home servitude far rather than working in this or that company. It sounds nice to say that the woman must also have time to devote herself to art and science. But this destiny remains open merely for a few women in any case. If women wanted to achieve economic independence, they would need to enter all those professions that are currently being performed by men. And those professions are rarely as desirable as they are often presented; in terms of monotonous, troublesome, and boring activity, they are truly not superior to the work of the woman in the family. When it comes to bottom line, the woman can nowhere land in a better situation than in the family, at the side of a husband who loves her, surrounded by her children whom she tends and nurtures. Her nature is designed for that, her orientation lies in that direction, there she best fulfills her calling and best reaches her destiny.”
- d. “If the future development of society can take this approach, that the woman need not supplement the family’s earnings, because the income of the husband would be adequate, then women in general would not go looking for employment in society, but instead return with deep gratitude and love to their families.”
- e. “The demands that modern civilization places on the cities makes living more expensive and causes taxes to rise, almost by the year. The houses are often small and uncomfortable, deprived of sunlight and fresh air.” Bavinck notes how many are returning to the countryside and leaving the cities. Most all that Bavinck is saying is true today. History might not repeat but it rhymes.



- f. “The oversaturation of culture arouses a hunger for nature. The city becomes more and more a “business place,” where people in a big hurry do their business only to flee as quickly as they can to get outside for fresh air, for renewal and enjoyment, tranquil and deep. Individualism resists socialism from all sides. Marx has made way for Nietzsche.” Bavinck pulls of a Mortal Kombat fatality here.

#### **50. Changes Relating to Servants**

- a. In Bavinck’s day, evidently Domestic servants was still common but transitioning as well: “Even if the domestic servants were to go so far that, like the young ladies in an office or in a store, they would be able to come for specified hours during the day to do their work in a home, then that would have the simple result that the family would constitute a smaller and still more intimate circle. The old notion that the family consisted of many more other persons than the parents and the children would disappear entirely, but the bond of marriage and kinship would be strengthened more tightly and the sense of spiritual togetherness would be strengthened by this as well. On the other side, with this new arrangement the domestic servants will certainly gain more independence, freedom, and personal development; but the “employment relationship” into which the domestic servant wishes to transition her work will undoubtedly grant the right to her employer to set higher demands than previously, and that work will essentially continue to have the character of a job for the domestic servant. One must not forget that at present, the family is often a school for the domestic servants, where they themselves are trained in home life. Not infrequently they begin their job without any ability and need to be introduced by the housewives with much patience and wisdom into the many little secrets of housekeeping and cooking. But if from the side of the domestic servants, the work acquires more and more the character of employment, then whether or not they want this, they will automatically increase the expectations that are tied to fulfilling such employment.” (pp. 148-149).
- b. “Currently the woman getting married is not infrequently completely unequipped for housework; because of her incompetence she is led by the nose by her domestic servant; in order to avoid unpleasant confrontations, she leaves everything in the kitchen and occasionally all the housework in the hands of her hired servant; every bond becomes torn, and the housewife and servant go their separate ways, to the harm of both of them and of all of home life.”
- c. We may not have domestic servants today, but hiring babysitters to help out busy mothers can be a good idea, assuming you can find a teenage/young girl who is willing to babysit.
- d. In fact, young mothers could help encourage teenage girls in being homemakers, good wives and mothers, etc., & mother and babysitter are benefited. It could be actual Titus 2 womanhood in action.

#### **51. Changes in the Training of Girls**

- a. “Among the women looking for a job, the number is very large of those who acknowledge that the woman does actually find her vocation within marriage and the family, in nurturing children and administering the housekeeping, but who, because in the current society they cannot count on that kind of future, choose for certainty over uncertainty and attempt to tread their own way through life. These latter have a legitimate claim upon our sympathy and support. The actual hardcore feminists are few in number; their zeal for the political and economic equality of women with men finds very weak support among married women; if the law would grant suffrage to women, the result would be that most women would abstain from voting, even as in fact thousands of men already do. The women preparing for a profession in science and art constitute a relatively small number, and it is not likely that they will push the men out or provide them with any damaging competition. But the great difficulty with the women’s issue lies with those many young ladies from the middle class who would like to marry but

cannot, and therefore are seeking an arena of activity in society. For these young ladies it is unbearably difficult not to be permitted to declare what is their heart's wish, to feel unneeded in their parental home, to receive repeatedly from their entire surroundings the impression that they could just as easily be missed, and then to have to wait passively to see whether anyone comes to offer her his hand and thereby open for her a sphere of work within the family. It is understandable and legitimate that she would free herself from such a humiliating, hurtful dependence and would want to maintain her independence and her self-esteem in one or another form of employment."

- b. "The woman who remains unmarried will thus be able to achieve her vocation and fulfill her calling best if she obtains the kind of employment that is connected as much as possible with family life. One can indeed seek the happiness of women in their political, social, and economic equality with men. But then one injures the nature of women, failing to distinguish between equality with men and identity with men, and society becomes more disintegrated than it already is now. The solution to the women's issue must be sought not in a diffuse distancing of women as far as possible from the family, but in an intentional return of women as much as possible to the family."
- c. "One may not forget that although the chances of marriage for many young ladies have become very uncertain, nevertheless in our country about 95 percent of women older than twenty get married, and most marriages by far are blessed with children. So theoretically and practically, women's vocation continues to lie with the family. However, when people train women in the same schools and for the same employment as men, then people are not taking into account either her nature or practical requirements. In that sense people are contributing to the disintegration of society, when later such women face an unexpected opportunity to marry, or seek to combine both employment and housekeeping—which in most cases is simply impossible; or for the sake of employment surrender marriage—which in most cases conflicts with the inclination of her heart; or, as usually occurs, without regret she gives up employment altogether along with her independence and freedom, and with great joy binds herself to the husband of her choosing. But in this latter case, with all her education she has not only wasted much time and money and work capacity, but also has acquired hardly any preparation for the huge task of housewife and mother."
- d. Bavinck argues that boys & girls should not be co-educated once reaching puberty: "In the interest of their physical and emotional constitution, and with a view to their vocation, girls need a different education than boys. They must be prepared in ways that correspond with the requirement of their nature in terms of housekeeping, motherhood, caring for and nurturing their children. No matter what general formation people want to apply to them, which to a certain degree is proper, the woman's vocation may never be lost from view. Those few women who later decide to devote themselves to some profession or occupation may pursue their own course, but this small minority may not set the standard for the training of the large majority." (Also consider that teenaged homeschool boys need male teachers/figures, coaches, etc., as they become men, not merely be homeschooled by mom.)

## **52. Changes in the Right of Property and Private Possessions.**

- a. People think of money when they think of capital today, rather than possessions, etc.
- b. Money has allowed capital to be spread to a much larger number of people than ever before. Money can be used for good or evil, and so we should not despise money or capital but steward it for good.
- c. Private property is a right from God that the government cannot infringe, but should promote/protect.
- d. "Thou shall not steal" presupposes personal property, & Socialism legalizes theft to produce "equality".

## **53. Marriage and Family Will Continue to Exist until God Achieves His intention with Them.**

- a. Marriage was instituted so that the glory of the King would come to light in the multitude of his subjects.
- b. Once it has attained this goal, marriage itself will pass away. The shadow will make way for the substance, the symbol for the reality. The history of the human race began with a wedding; it also ends with a wedding, the wedding of Christ and his church, of the heavenly Lord with his earthly bride.