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Editorial

Our fifth volume opens with a colorful Holy Land adventure. With the mind of an archeologist, the eye of a photographer, and the heart of a Reformed Christian, Professor Emeritus de Vries leads us back to the early twentieth century where we trace Abraham Kuyper's footsteps in the sands of the Holy Land as he recorded them in his travelogue, *Om de oude werldzee*. In response to Kuyper's enthusiasm for sacred soil, orientalist biases, and colonialist notions that come to light along the way, de Vries asks us to consider how much of what we think about Palestine-Israel today has been inherited from Kuyper and his contemporaries a century ago.

"Missional" is a buzzword in theology these days. But what does it mean? How is it defined theologically? In what sense is God on a mission? Should we replace ice cold, abstract "systematic" theology with white hot, relational "missional" theology? These are the questions professor Bolt addresses in his essay on the "missional character" of the Bavinck tradition. He presents a series of rhetorical questions to explain how Herman Bavinck (in dogmatics) and Johan Herman Bavinck (in missiology) together contributed a robustly "missional" voice within twentieth-century Protestant theological discourse and to suggest how that tradition offers wisdom that is still relevant for enriching "missional theology" today.

How do Christians evaluate non-Christian religions? Gayle Doornbos looks at how J. H. Bavinck addressed this fundamental missiological question both psychologically and ultimately on the basis of his interpretation of Romans 1:18–32. She then offers several suggestions for how Bavinck's psychological and theological insights can enrich current missiological discussions that flow out of the recent shift to the Triune-God-as-missionary-God paradigm.

This year's translation piece, Herman Bavinck's lecture on the "Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System," is interesting to consider both in its own right and in relation to the "missional" question in the previous two essays. Regarding the former, Biblical studies generally, and in Reformed theology redemptive-historical biblical studies in particular, has been in vogue for several decades now. Ac-

cordingly, dogmatic theology with its penchant for philosophical and historical analysis, its pursuit of the unity of faith and reason, its scholastic form, and its aim of grounding Christian ethics in that which may be known about humanity's duty to God in both general and special revelation has dwelt under varying degrees of derision and neglect. Perhaps the no small amount of unrest of souls and ideological ennui that characterizes contemporary thought about the true, the good, and the beautiful bids us to ponder whether a century-old taste of perennial wisdom on the "systematic" character of knowledge concerning God offers light and guidance for our pursuit of seeing all things in God and God in all things. Regarding the latter, if it is it really the case that systematic theology is inherently cold, abstract, philosophical and hence to be joyfully relegated to history's dustbin, then certainly it offers not aid but an outmoded hindrance to the "missional" mind. Yet, if systematic theology teaches divine wisdom concerning God, is taught by God, and leads its pupils to God, then there is reason for both masters and disciples to consider whether a greater or more useful tutor than divine wisdom can be found for pursuing and promoting "missional" ends.

Finally, Professor Bolt's ecumenical adventure introduces a longstanding friendship with a colorful criss-crossing of Roman Catholic and Neo-Calvinist traditions. What arises out of this friendship is the type of academic exchange that is at once amicable, critical, and real—a gift that invites the wounds of friend for sharpening and perfecting. Professor Echeverria's close reading and patient analysis of Neo-Calvinist criticisms of Roman Catholic formulations of the relation between nature and grace will certainly interest if not challenge Reformed Protestants as will Professor Bolt's frank assessment of where and how Echeverria's critiques ring true in the Neo-Calvinist tradition.

-Laurence O'Donnell