

ANTHOLOGY

20+21

GUEST WRITINGS

FROM THE GREATER

HERITAGE

**BARNES CASTRO COOPER FREESTONE
MARGARET PEYTON SILVA TAMBRINO
TIPTON WALLER WILSON**

Anthology 2021

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Edited by J.R. Waller, MBA

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And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen. (John 21:25)

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PREFACE

Welcome to Anthology 2021 a “best of” collection of guest writings from the last 12 months at The Greater Heritage.

For those unfamiliar, we are both a Christian publishing *and* Bible teaching ministry. The former is fairly straightforward. We publish timeless, Biblical and theologically sound eBooks, paperbacks and hardcovers from authors new and old.

However, the activities that make up the latter are more varied. Church resources, pocket card guides, Bible studies, devotionals and a podcast are just some of the tools we leverage to help others understand Christianity and the Bible from a balanced, Biblical perspective.

Sourcing written guest content from like-minded believers is an integral part of our teaching. It allows us to communicate a steady stream of God honoring content to our readers. It also has the added benefit of bringing different perspectives and unique backgrounds to our ministry which in turn lets us reach more people with the Gospel.

This past year we continually prayed for God to bring us more guest contributors than ever before, and he came through in a big way. In particular The Baptist College of Florida came alongside us as a tremendous advocate for our mission. They sent us multiple students who wrote many articles for us. We can't thank them enough.

God also brought us Paul Tambrino and Thiago Silva. These two exceptional academicians jumped into the fray and brought to our readers content rich in apologetics and historical theology. Dr. Tambrino was even kind enough to start a column with us called *Ask Augustine* where he answers various theological questions on a weekly basis.

From practical tips on Christian living, to deep dives into doctrinal history, The Greater Heritage truly had something for everyone in 2021.

On behalf of all of us at The Greater Heritage, I want to personally thank each and every one of our 2021 guest writers for being a blessing to our over 13,000 unique website visitors this year, and for having the courage to share with the world God's literal, complete and final Word.

Soli Deo gloria!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J.R. Waller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

J.R. Waller, MBA

Founder, The Greater Heritage

2021 GUEST WRITERS

CASSIE BARNES

Cassie is a Christian schoolteacher and educator specializing in elementary, middle and high school mathematics and history. She is actively involved in her church as a Sunday school teacher and is a proud wife and mother of two boys. She currently resides in Orlando, Florida.

CHRISTIAN CASTRO

Christian is a student at Patrick Henry College studying the liberal arts with an emphasis in philosophy. A native Texan, he tries to emanate some good ole' South to the people of Northern Virginia and thereby lift their spirits. In his free time, he enjoys studying theology and meeting with friends. You can follow him on Instagram at [realchristiancastro](#).

MANDI COOPER

Mandi Cooper is a writer and Christian living in northern Virginia. In her free time, she enjoys theology, politics, playing the piano, and hiking.

KELLY FREESTONE

Kelly Freestone is an English major at The Baptist College of Florida and an editor for Affordable Christian Editing. Kelly's husband, Norman, has been called to be a pastor, and Kelly feels called into women's ministry. They have three kids: Caleb, Samuel and Hannah.

ELIZABETH MARGARET

Elizabeth is an aspiring author and is a junior at the Baptist College of Florida. She enjoys writing poetry, short stories, and short novels. She has a passion to inspire young women to own their faith, to read the Bible, and then apply it to their lives. Lizzy maintains a YouTube channel and a poetry website. In her free time, she enjoys working out early in the morning along with playing musical instruments.

RYAN PEYTON

Ryan is a director, playwright, screenwriter and videographer. He spent nearly two decades as a professional magician before branching into screenwriting and production. Currently, he is working on starting his own production company and manages the Beginner Filmmaking Facebook group. He enjoys the outdoors and serving as the Junior Church Pastor at Starlight Baptist Church in Winter Springs, Florida. He resides with his wife and 3 kids in Orlando, Florida.

THIAGO SILVA, ThM

Thiago Silva is a pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and professor of Systematic Theology at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the South (in Brazil). He holds an ThM from Calvin Theological Seminary and is currently a PhD student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. He enjoys coffee and a good glass of wine. He is married to Lidia and is the father of three children.

PAUL TAMBRINO, EdD, PhD

Paul Tambrino, is President Emeritus of the Iowa Valley Community College District, and former Academic Vice President of Warren County Community College. Prior to becoming an academic administrator he taught accounting and more recently theology at several colleges and seminaries, served in the

U.S. Army Reserve, writes a weekly newspaper column, and has written several journal articles and three books (*Ask Augustine*, *Mariology: Past, Present and Future* and *Big Truths for Growing Minds: Stories of Long, Long Ago*). He holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Theology from Trinity Seminary, and a Doctor of Education from Temple University. Paul was awarded the honorary rank of a three star general at the US Air War College, Air War University-class of 1997 and he is a Paul Harris Fellow in Rotary International. Today, he enjoys spending time with his family, rooting for the Yankees and spreading God's word.

KATHRYN TIPTON

Kathryn is a general studies sophomore at the Baptist College of Florida and works at The Vineyard Christian Retreat, a Christian camp in southeast Alabama. Her hobbies include playing music, singing, web design, photography, and writing. She attends and serves at Eanon Baptist Church and hopes to one day be involved in full time ministry.

J.R. WALLER, MBA

J.R. is Founder of The Greater Heritage, and host of The Greater Heritage Podcast. He holds an MBA from Rollins College, Certificate in Christian Apologetics from Biola University and Bible Knowledge Certificate from The Master's Seminary. He is former James Madison Institute Leaders Fellow and University of Central Florida Center for Public and Nonprofit Management Fellow.

THOMAS WILSON

Tom is currently Music Director and Choir Director for Starlight Baptist Church in Winter Springs, Florida. He was ordained as a minister of the gospel on June 9th, 2002. He holds a Bachelor of Pastoral Studies from The Patriot Bible University in Del Norte, Colorado. He was Senior Pastor of Apopka Baptist Temple from 2002-04.

HISTORY & THEOLOGY

THIAGO SILVA, ThM

Herman Bavinck on the Danger of Spiritual Pride

"Pride has no place for those who study and teach a theology that reflects the amazing grace of God."

Introduction

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) was a theologian and pastor who developed a robust reformed theology and worldview that was applied in the various spheres of life in their given context, whether in the pulpit, in academia, art, education, politics and society.

Due to the Trinitarian foundation of his reformed confessionalism, Bavinck taught a practical theology where Reformed dogmatics was taught in conjunction with Reformed ethics. According to Bavinck:

In dogmatics we are concerned with what God does for us and in us. In dogmatics God is everything. Dogmatics is a word from God to us, coming from outside us and above us; we are passive, listening, and opening ourselves to being directed by God. In ethics, we are interested in the question of what it is that

God now expects of us when he does his work in us. What do we do for him? Here we are active, precisely because of and on the grounds of God's deeds in us; we sing psalms in thanks and praise to God. In dogmatics, God descends to us; in ethics, we ascend to God. In dogmatics, he is ours; in ethics, we are his. In dogmatics, we know we shall see his face; in ethics, his name will be written on our foreheads (Rev. 22:4). Dogmatics proceeds from God; ethics returns to God. In dogmatics, God loves us; in ethics, therefore, we love him.¹

These words teach us something very important: it is not possible to study, develop and apply the doctrines of grace if we do not reflect God's grace in everything we do.

Therefore, it is the thesis of this brief article that, according to Bavinck, there is no reformed theology apart from reformed ethics; that is why pride has no place for those who study and teach a theology that reflects the amazing grace of God.

So, what did Bavinck teach his students about this topic? In his class notes discovered in 2008 – later published in 2019 as *Reformed Ethics* – we can find Bavinck addressing the issue of pride, its consequences, and its solution in several places.

I will briefly develop some of these points in this short article.

On Pride and the Fall

After developing a profound section on the essence of the image of God in human beings, Bavinck describes humanity under the power of sin.

It all started under the first act of sin. This act was that, out of pride, Eve denied both the consequences of sin and sin itself. This singular fact of Adam and Eve's sin involved two movements. On the one hand, sin led them to turn away from God and to enmity and hatred against God.

On the other hand, sin led them to turn to self, resulting in “selfishness - a love of something other than God, namely, oneself; deification of self, glorification of self, adoration of self.”²

In short, in the first sinful act committed by Adam and Eve, and in every sin committed, there is “deification of oneself, glorification of oneself and adoration of oneself.”

Isn't that an expression of how horrible pride is? In fact, the descriptions of sin and pride bear a great resemblance. For Bavinck,

sin consists concretely in placing a substitute on the throne. That substitute is not another creature in general, not even the neighbor, but the human self, the “ego” or “I.” The organizing principle of sin is self-glorification, self-divination; stated more broadly: self-love or egocentricity. A person wants to be an “I,” either without, next to, or in the place of God. Turning away from God is simultaneously a turning to self. Prior to this, God was the center of all human thought and action; now it is the person's “I.” Humanity not only surrendered its true center but also replaced it with a false center.³

According to what has been said, one can see that self-worship is an essential aspect of sin.

According to Bavinck, “although this may not be conscious to the sinner, sin often proceeds from egocentricity, from the desire to exalt oneself.”⁴ For Bavinck,

the sin of pride, which is the naked expression of the principle of egocentricity, boasts of knowledge and virtue and develops into spiritual pride; it then progresses beyond egocentricity into terrible hatred of God, into intentional blasphemy, cursing, conscious

hatred of God, and into delighting in this. All these spiritual sins as well are forms of egocentricity. Hatred against humanity and against God is provoked, wounded egocentricity.”⁵

I believe that one of the things that is most prejudiced against the development of Reformed theology in churches is spiritual pride.

Learning, preaching, and teaching about God’s sovereign grace with a proud heart only shows that we are the ones who want to be sovereign by standing up against God’s grace.

As a result, this sin will cause us to hate God and our neighbors. In the same way, spiritual pride will lead us to arrogance, haughtiness, lawlessness, licentiousness, boasting and longing for fame or honor, and ingratitude.⁶

This should lead us to reflect seriously on the intention and the way we are learning, applying, and teaching the precious doctrines of grace.

Conclusion

We cannot continue to grow to the glory of God if our hearts do not recognize the deep need to mortify what destroys the relationship between theology and practice, doctrine and ethics; that is, pride.

It is a terrible contradiction to teach a theology that should lead us to humility, but which we are using to elevate ourselves above others, including God.

It is spiritual pride that leads one to the misuse of reformed doctrines, promoting division among those who should be more united in truth.

This is what led Bavinck to reflect on how much is still lacking in practice in the Christian confession.

“Those who confess Jesus Christ, in particular to the members of our [Reformed] Church, a lesson must be kept in mind: do not be arrogant. . . be clothed with humility.”⁷

Dear brothers and sisters, the appeal is clear: let us not be arrogant. Spiritual pride is so terrible because it reflects what happened in the fall.

Pride can never be the beginning or the basis of our learning and teaching, otherwise, all our spiritual pride will be the beginning and the basis of our spiritual ruin.

Perhaps more than one reader has already studied pride, humility and the imitation of Christ.

However, it is my hope that as Christians, and in this case as Reformed Christians, we can grow in humility in a real way and not as merely theoretical.

After all, Bavinck observes, “the purpose of ethics is that we grow in grace and not stay at the level of theory.”⁸

Endnotes - Herman Bavinck on the Danger of Spiritual Pride

1 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. John Bolt et al., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 22.

2 Ibid, 81.

3 Ibid, 105.

4 Ibid, 110.

5 Ibid, 112.

6 Ibid, 137-138.

7 Bavinck, *Kennis en Leven* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1922), 78.

8 Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, vol. 1, 13-14.

PAUL TAMBRINO, EdD, PhD

How Do We Know Jesus Is God? Does It Matter if He Is God or Not?

*"Does it really matter whether Jesus is God?
You bet it does."*

I find it amazing that the earliest defense we find in Scripture was written, not to affirm Jesus' divinity, but to affirm His humanity. John warns against a false teaching that Christ had not come in the flesh. (1 Jn. 4:2-3)

Because of Jesus' many works and miracles, many of Jesus' early followers were fully convinced that Jesus was only a divine spirit; that He was only a spirit who "appeared" to be human.

Today, more than two thousand years later, there's been a 180 degree turnabout, and we Christian apologists find ourselves defending Jesus' divinity - seldom (if ever) His humanity.

About a decade ago, I was walking around a nearby lake during the noon hour and was approached by two well dressed men who asked if I believed in the deity of Christ.

I told them absolutely because Jesus is God. Then they responded

exactly as I expected and as they had been trained. They said the Bible never teaches that.

I immediately turned to and read John 1:1 (a verse I knew they'd want to bring up) and read that "Word (Logos) was God." To which they replied, "Well it doesn't say that in the Greek."

Since I also had a copy of a Greek New Testament (NT) with me, I handed it to one of them and asked him to point out the error in my interpretation. They had no more knowledge of the Greek language nor where to find the book of John in a Greek NT than a fish does of the desert.

Throughout the NT God was zealous to announce that Jesus was His Son. (Matt. 3:17, Mark 9:7)

This title has resulted in much controversy throughout church history, particularly in the 4th Century when Arius denied the Trinity and argued that Jesus was only a created being; that Jesus had a beginning in time and thus was a creature.

Therefore, since Jesus was begotten He was not eternal, and if not eternal then only a creature and not God.

This controversy still exists today between Christian believers and Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and a number of smaller sects.

This is not to say that such groups do not hold an otherwise lofty view of Jesus (even over angels and the creatures), but they do deny His "full" deity.

The problem, they say, is that John 1:1 does not have the definite article and only says "the Word was God." Since it does not say "the Word was the God," it does not affirm that the Word was God and the statement really means "the Word was a God."

Well if that is what John was communicating there are at least two problems. First, almost all reputable NT Greek scholars disagree with that reading of the Greek. Second, such a reading raises a greater

problem than it solves because it leaves John affirming polytheism and not monotheism. The absence or presence of the definite article has no theological significance on this text.

In John 1:1 we also read that the Word was with God and the Word was God. Thus, the Word is both distinguished from and yet identified with God. That is Jesus is the same as God the Father yet distinguished from the Father. So the Father and the Son are one in being but distinguished by personality and their work and ministry.

Still, in the final analysis does it really matter whether Jesus is God? You bet it does.

If Jesus is not God the NT narratives are false and unreliable. If Jesus is not God, He was mistaken about His paternity as He repeatedly declared that He was the Son of God and that God was His Father.

If Jesus is not God and lied about His paternity, He would not be the God-man and would be a sinner like the rest of us. If Jesus is not God (and a sinner like the rest of us) He cannot be our divine redeemer because the sacrifice must be perfect.

If Jesus is not God we have no savior and we are still in our sins without forgiveness and have no hope after death. If Jesus is not God we have no mediator between God and man. If Jesus is not God, there is no Trinity as there is no Second Person of the Trinity.

If Jesus is not God, He should have prayed "Father forgive us," and not "Father forgive them" because He was a sinner like the rest of us.

So absolutely it matters that Jesus is God. If He is not God it subverts the entire Christian gospel, destroys the full meaning of Jesus as Divine Redeemer, and robs us of all hope of salvation.

Thank God that JESUS IS GOD.



Ask
Augustine
with Dr. Paul Tambrino

Tune in weekly to Dr. Tambrino's column *Ask Augustine* where he discusses various theological topics with wit, clarity and substance.

www.thegreaterheritage.com

About The Greater Heritage



Mission

The Greater Heritage is a Bible teaching and Christian publishing ministry that equips Christians for an abundant life of service, personal spiritual growth and character development through the study of God's Word and the contributions of His people in the fields of art, literature and music throughout history.

What We Do

The Greater Heritage publishes original articles, books and Bible studies. The ministry also hosts a podcast. All of its books are made entirely in the USA.

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The Greater Heritage
1170 Tree Swallow Dr., Suite 309
Winter Springs, Florida 32708
info@thegreaterheritage.com
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Anthology 2021 is a “best of” collection of guest writings from The Greater Heritage, including Bible studies, devotionals, theological studies, poetry, and Children’s literature all from a balanced, Biblical perspective. While the writers herein come from unique backgrounds – students, pastors, theologians, academicians, moms, and dads – each share a common desire to share with others what God has placed on their hearts. Their unencumbered zeal for God’s literal, complete and final Word are demonstrated with each and every stroke of the pen, and their messages offer a wellspring of hope, encouragement and inspiration.



The Greater Heritage is a Bible teaching and Christian publishing ministry that equips Christians for an abundant life of service, personal spiritual growth and character development through the study of God’s Word.



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