

Book Reviews

Bayn al-Aql wal-Iman (Arabic translation of *Our Reasonable Faith*), by Herman Bavinck, 4 vols., Maadi, Egypt: International Publications Ltd., PO Box 74, Maadi, Egypt 11431, 1995. Price: LE2.50 (\$0.74) each for Vols. 1 & 3, and LE3.50 (\$1.03) each for Vols. 2 & 4. All four: LE12.00 (\$3.65). Reviewed by Joseph Sikaly, translated by S. Vishanoff.

This is a substantial work of theology. It was written in Dutch, translated into English under the title *Our Reasonable Faith*, and then translated from English into Arabic and published in four attractive paperback volumes of moderate size. It studies theological issues beginning with revelation and the nature of God and man, going on to a rather full discussion of Christ in his two natures and the Holy Spirit. Its theological stand is evangelical. It does not enter into controversy in defense of the truth, and its thought is not greatly influenced by theories and opinions whether old or new.

In the first volume, the work studies God's revelation of Himself (general and special revelation, as to extent and content). God is the highest good of mankind, and this good includes both man's understanding of the good and his actual enjoyment of it. When the author treats man's ability to appreciate art and the marvels of creation, he enters profoundly into the human soul, sounding its depths and reaching to its far regions. Yet he always builds on a firm theological foundation, taking texts of the Bible as the basis of each truth he expounds.

The second volume treats the nature of God the Father, the first person of the Trinity. I wish that this section provided direct answers to many of the questions raised by our friends in the Arab Muslim world, but the book was not written for them. It takes an inclusive view, with a wide horizon, and so does not engage in controversy. Despite this limitation, it does answer the questions of many readers, and of all who ask themselves questions such as "Where in the Bible is the proof of the Trinity?" They will find, for example, that even Christ's conception shows that God is One in Three Persons.

In the second part of the third volume, one is struck by the analysis of the divine and human natures of Christ. The Person of Christ is not a mere idea or image formed through imagination: He is a real person who revealed himself at a specific time and appeared as a specific human being, Jesus Christ. By this sound teaching, the author has struck a decisive blow in the issue of the two natures of Christ. It reminds one of the Apostle Paul, who before his repentance knew Christ only on a human level. But Paul's knowledge of Christ was transformed at the time of his conversion, faith, and rebirth, and so it will be for the sons of our Arab people who read this book, if they seek the truth; in these texts, which fit together so solidly, they may find the light they need to know Christ according to the Spirit. It is only natural that without this light so many people should find it hard to reconcile the prophethood of Christ with his suffering and death on the cross, and so it has been for generations.