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HERMAN BAVINCK (1854-1921)
A CENTENARY CELEBRATION

Introductory Essay
by N. Gray Sutanto & Justin McLendon

JBTS 6.2

Special Thanks

On behalf of the editors of JBTS, we wish to express our gratitude to Dr. N. Gray Sutanto, Assistant Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, for his dedicated work on this issue. In 2019, McLendon approached Sutanto about assembling contributors for a 2021, *JBTS* Bavinck Centenary issue. Upon accepting the invitation, Sutanto secured contributors, provided editorial feedback as the articles came together, and championed the project through to completion. In sum, he was a constant encourager and disciplined colleague. Though Sutanto does not have an article in this issue, his name and scholarly work appears within the footnotes throughout the volume. Sutanto is a first-rate scholar, one whose ongoing scholarship on Bavinck illuminates critical issues of current engagement. Future Bavinck researchers will benefit from Sutanto's scholarship, and his commitment to this volume evidences his desire to engage and support Bavinck studies. Throughout the process of assembling this issue, Sutanto's professionalism and collegiality has been graciously offered and warmly received.

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921): A Centenary Celebration

Introductory Essay

N. GRAY SUTANTO AND JUSTIN MCLENDON

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Introduction

The *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* (hereafter, *JBTS*) is a broadly evangelical, interdenominational journal committed to publishing current scholarship across biblical and theological disciplines. Biblical and theological themes have been the focus of every issue to date. Within biblical studies, examples include the Israelite Monarchy and Pauline Studies, and within theological studies, examples include Christianity and the Philosophy of Science and the Catholicity of the Church.¹ This iteration, *JBTS* 6.2, marks the first volume dedicated exclusively to a Christian theologian and scholar.² This shift in focus prompts at least two questions: why dedicate a volume to a singular figure, and why focus upon Herman Bavinck?

In God’s kind providence, the church has always benefited from the labors of certain thinkers whose overall work encouraged, critiqued, and even preserved the church’s witness through various challenges and conflicts. Christians bear an inherent responsibility to investigate those voices from the past in order to render judgments upon their work within its context, and upon the commencement of such an investigation, Christians are charged with discerning which thinkers prove relevant for the church’s current opportunities and challenges. Said differently, the church is a reflective people—with an eye of thankful discernment to its past, and a safeguarded optimism toward its eschatological future. In either direction, the church discovers Christian thinkers worthy of sustained reflection from its past, while persisting in prayer for the emergence of its future leaders.³

1. Open access to every *JBTS* issue can be found on jbtsonline.org.
2. Though *JBTS* will continue its primary focus on biblical and theological themes in forthcoming volumes, the editorial team has goals to dedicate future issues to noteworthy Christian scholars.
3. Of course, biblical principles support person-specific reflection. In Philippians 2, for example, Paul specifies and praises the faithful service of Epaphroditus, then adds “hold people like him in high regard” (Phil. 2:29, NASB). Conversely, Paul names Hymenaeus and Alexander in his letter to Timothy, warning of their blasphemous acts (1 Tim. 1:20). Thus, Christian reflection

Additionally, to borrow from Acts 17, Christians live and move and have their being in the contexts of their own traditions, all of which have been shaped by an innumerable host of individuals. Reflective study, therefore, encourages present-day Christians to recognize and think within and beyond their own cultural and denominational silos. As Bavinck himself acknowledges, the theological task is never engaged in isolation from one's personal, ecclesial, and contextual influences:

Theologians never come to Scripture from the outside, without any prior knowledge or preconceived opinion, but bring with them from their background a certain understanding of the content of revelation and so look at Scripture with the aid of the glasses that their churches have put on them. All dogmaticians, when they go to work, stand consciously or unconsciously in the tradition of the Christian faith in which they were born and nurtured and come to Scripture as Reformed, or Lutheran, or Roman Catholic Christians. In this respect as well, we cannot simply divest ourselves of our environment; we are always children of our time, the products of our background.⁴

Thus, as children of this present time, it proves necessary to seek assistance from the church's theological forebears, recognizing the weighty responsibility of offering appropriate "glasses" for the continuance of a biblically robust Christian vision. Further, our initial glasses should invite critical self-reflection—as the editorial introduction to *Christian Worldview* has noted, a worldview is as much a telos as it is a starting point that is more analogous to map-making. As our inductive study of the world enlarges, our glasses need to be retooled and our maps continue to be reshaped.⁵

Church historian Tony Lane suggests that reading the past helps sharpen two important interpretive practices: researching the past helps us "understand the present" and "escape the present."⁶ For the former, studying historical personalities and events informs current movements within Christianity, reminding us that nothing exists within a vacuum. As to the latter, escaping the present helps expose our cultural blind spots and idiosyncrasies, and our recognition of these realities proves critical in our forward journey. So why dedicate a volume to a singular scholar? Because Christians of every generation bear the responsibility to discover and apply the treasures from those whose prior ministry will inform our present journey.

Who was Herman Bavinck? Herman Bavinck was a Dutch Reformed theologian whose life and career spanned seismic shifts in European life and culture. The son of a Dutch secessionist pastor, Bavinck began his studies at the Theological School in Kampen, where he would later teach and write his *Reformed Dogmatics*. After a

upon individuals is warranted as both encouragement and warning.

4. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 82.

5. N. Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton, and Cory Brock, eds. and trans., editor's introduction to *Christian Worldview* by Herman Bavinck (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 16–17.

6. Tony Lane, *A Concise History of Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 1.

year of study in Kampen, however, Bavinck transferred to the modernist University of Leiden. After finishing his doctoral work on the ethics of Ulrich Zwingli, Bavinck went on to work a brief pastorate at Franeker, before taking up a post at the Theological School at Kampen. He taught there from 1882-1902, during which he published the first edition of his four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics*. He then accepted a position at Abraham Kuyper's recently established Free University of Amsterdam in 1902, where he focused more attention on showing Christianity's relevance for the other scientific (*wetenschappelijke*) disciplines and public issues. Bavinck was also elected as parliamentarian in the First Chamber in 1911, representing Kuyper's Antirevolutionary Party, and remained productive until his death on July 29, 1921—actively writing on dogmatics, psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, and more. He was married to Johanna Adriana Schippers, and their daughter, Johanna Geziena Bavinck, was born in 1894. Though Bavinck's legacy garners considerable interest in our day, "In the early twentieth-century Netherlands, Herman Bavinck was a household name. To his contemporaries, he was known not only as a brilliant theologian. To them, he was also—among other things—a pioneer in psychology, a pedagogical reformer, a champion for girls' education and advocate for women's rights, a parliamentarian, and a journalist."⁷ His personality and writings bear characteristics that do not usually go together: orthodox and modern, psychologically rich yet focused on corporate responsibility, fusing together ecclesial confessionalism and cultural engagement.

Why a special issue on Herman Bavinck? The articles within this issue provide their own answers to this question, but three additional responses are in order. First, the timing is appropriate. Early Friday morning, July 29, 1921, Herman Bavinck "entered into the joy of his Master" (Matt. 25:23, NASB). His death was not a surprise, as James Eglinton notes, for in late August of the previous year Bavinck suffered a heart attack after spending a week participating in the Leeuwarden Synod.⁸ As Eglinton explains, Bavinck's health was irreversibly in decline after suffering this heart attack. Additionally, B. B. Warfield, the great Princeton theologian, died in February of 1921, and the great Dutch theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper, died in November of the previous year.⁹ From a human perspective, we rightly claim that the church (and the world) lost three influential, world-class theologians in an eight-month span. Thus, 2021 marks the centenary anniversary of Bavinck's death, and such an occasion inspires an investigation into his legacy.

7. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), xvii. Eglinton adds more descriptions when describing what Bavinck's simple gravestone *could* say: "Here lies a dogmatician, an ethicist, an educational reformer, a pioneer in Christian psychology, a politician, a biographer, a journalist, a Bible translator, a campaigner for women's education, and eventually, the father, father-in-law, and grandfather of heroes and martyrs in the anti-Nazi resistance movement." See Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 291.

8. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 285–86.

9. Eglinton contrasts the vastly different approaches Kuyper and Bavinck took in their final days, distinguishing between Kuyper's dying in public and Bavinck's dying in private. See Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 288–90.

Second, recent scholarly developments indicate that Bavinck studies are flourishing, but widespread interest has not always been the case, at least not in the Anglophone world. As Bruce Pass notes, “Until 2001 only six doctoral dissertations on Bavinck’s theology had been written in the English language.”¹⁰ In the two decades since, Bavinck studies are truly of *international* interest, with James Eglinton’s definitive biography on him now published in 2020, along with an ever-increasing assortment of monographs, journal articles, and conference presentations offer reflections upon Bavinck’s thought. Regardless of which platform scholars employ, it is undeniable that Bavinck’s overall theological project garners considerable interest as thoughtful scholars from various traditions inquire of the holistic nature of Bavinck’s corpus, influence, and continuing relevance. This volume evidences Bavinck’s international appeal, for contributors from the United States, Canada, Scotland, Australia, and the Netherlands offer their research.

The genesis of the recent surge in Bavinck interest is due in part to a number of factors: One, the English translation of Bavinck’s magisterial, four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics* (Baker, 2003-2008) lies at the heart of increased international focus, for its contents are intellectually stimulating, systematic in scope, and cognizant of the lived realities of the Christian faith.¹¹ Two, at least in the United States, certain antecedents preceded the English translation of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, all of which tilled the soil of Reformed communities in America; theologians such as B. B. Warfield, Geerhardus Vos, and Cornelius Van Til interacted heavily with Bavinck’s scholarship.¹² Further, Louis Berkhof’s popular *Systematic Theology* presentation was at best a repackaging of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*.¹³ As such, the English

10. Bruce Pass, “Herman Bavinck and the Problem of New Wine in Old Wineskins,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 4 (October 2015): 432.

11. Many other English translations also account for the surge in scholarly and pastoral interest into Bavinck’s work. Examples include Herman Bavinck, *On Theology: Herman Bavinck’s Academic Orations*, trans. and ed. Bruce Pass (Leiden: Brill, 2020); *The Wonderful Works of God*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Westminster Seminary Press, 2020); Herman Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise*, trans. and ed., Cameron Clausing and Gregory Parker, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019); Sutanto, Eglinton, and Brock, ed., *Christian Worldview*; Herman Bavinck, *Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers*, trans. and ed. James Eglinton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017); Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018); Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, ed. Stephen J. Grabill (Grand Rapids: Christian’s Library Press, 2021); Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

12. For an illuminating comparison and analysis of Bavinck and Vos, see George Harinck, “Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 18–31. John Bolt attributes Geerhardus Vos with introducing the works of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck to B. B. Warfield, and subsequently, to have both men invited to deliver the Stone Lectures at Princeton (Kuyper in 1898 and Bavinck in 1908). See John Bolt, “Herman Bavinck Speaks English: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 19 (2008): 117.

13. In describing Berkhof’s dependence on Bavinck, Henry Zwaanstra claims, “Berkhof’s theology was essentially the theology of Herman Bavinck. Berkhof was also dependent on Bavinck for the names of most of the theologians he mentioned [in his *Systematic Theology*] and on whose

translation of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* was welcomed and appreciated in the broad Reformed tradition. Three, Bavinck studies are flourishing because of the growing realization that the church's present challenges require on the part of its theologians a generous and faithful orthodoxy, a keen awareness of the church's catholicity, and a dispositional integrity to wrestle honestly with present challenges across any number of ideological spectrums.¹⁴ Bavinck's life and work model these characteristics in spades, as he often moves in ways that cuts across perceived binaries: between theological integrity and social responsibility, confessional fidelity and openness to creativity, and between theoretical and practical concerns.

So why focus a special issue on Herman Bavinck? The timing is appropriate, Bavinck studies are flourishing, and finally, shepherding future Christian leaders is integral to the mission of *JBTS*. Since its founding, *JBTS* has sought to provide high-level scholarship and research to both scholars and students.

Further, we suggest three particular exemplary traits in Bavinck's life and work that are particularly noteworthy for emulation:

1. *Bavinck models the importance of theological priorities.* In his earlier work, *Trinity and Organism*, Eglinton challenges the so-called "two-Bavinck" hypothesis¹⁵, repositioning Bavinck studies to orient Bavinck's theological project through an organic motif, one that understands that "Bavinck attempts to understand all of nature and history as a broad sweep of Trinitarian divine self-revelation."¹⁶ As such, the depth of Bavinck's scholarship and the breadth of his interests are the fruits of one whose theological commitment gives first priority to the doctrine of God and his revealing work. This doxological aim was as much an intellectual commitment as much as it was a devotional lifeline. In other words, Bavinck's Trinitarian prioritization never deadened his affections or devotional piety; in fact, a casual reading of Bavinck's *Sacrifice of Praise* or *The Wonderful Works of God* evidences a theologian whose spiritual

views he commented. The scriptural references Berkhof cited were for the most part taken from Bavinck's volumes. Bavinck, however, usually referred to many more texts than Berkhof, and occasionally Berkhof cited passages not found in Bavinck. Berkhof was, however, pervasively dependent on Bavinck, often to the point of literally reproducing Bavinck's words and phrases." See Henry Zwaanstra, "Louis Berkhof," in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 149.

14. See especially Cory Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Schleiermacher* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020); N. Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), and Bruce Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentricism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

15. In short, the "two-Bavinck" hypothesis understood Bavinck, Eglinton explains, as a "Jekyll and Hyde theologian who vacillates between moments of 'orthodoxy' and 'modernity' without ever resolving his own basic crisis of theological identity." See James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*, paperback ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 28.

16. Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, xi.

compass never strayed from a Trinitarian foundation, regardless of the subject matter of his writing. American evangelical scholarship has recognized this need and attentiveness from Bavinck as well—as Dane Ortlund describes, “Bavinck has a big God with big grace and his *Dogmatics* is careful, worshipful, courageous, Bible-saturated, historically sensitive, exegetically responsible, philosophically conversant, aroma-of-truth-emitting theology.”¹⁷ Students entering ministry can learn from Bavinck’s example when engaging the rigorous and formative theology courses of their training.

2. *Bavinck models Christian charity with every interlocutor.* As Richard Mouw states, “Bavinck maintained a steady and sustained focus, with a modest tone in dealing with views with which he had significant differences.”¹⁸ Additionally, John Bolt argues,

Bavinck wrote theology with the church in mind; he prized evangelical piety; he did not disparage modern learning; he took a genuine interest in the world’s non-Christian religious traditions *as important data for Christian theology*; though he was firmly committed to the Reformed confessional tradition, his theological range was truly catholic. The greatness of his mind is evident.¹⁹

These attributes of engagement are, sadly, in short supply across the tenuous landscape of evangelicalism. There exists a knee-jerk impulse within current theological discourse whereby some have taken upon a strategy that can aptly be described as “attack and retreat.” In a general sense, this approach unfolds as such: one launches a barrage of attacks upon one’s opponents while painstakingly positioning the attacks as just, even framing the concerns with rhetoric of protecting orthodoxy, only then to flee to a theological ghetto where one can then claim an isolationist victimhood when opponents respond. Regrettably, these tactics are no longer confined to the immature outbursts of playground bullies, for the vast polarization of our times has corroded much of our dialogue. In contrast, Bavinck routinely engages other traditions on their terms without reducing his interlocutors to sleight of hand caricatures. He presents the best version of his opponent’s views before distilling areas of agreement, disagreement, and analysis. This approach is Christianly, it encourages mutual learning among all parties, and in time it proves formative

17. Dane C. Ortlund, “‘A Benefit No Mind Can Fully Comprehend’: Bavinck’s Doctrine of Justification,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 46 (2011): 249.

18. Richard Mouw, “Neo-Calvinism: A Theology for the Global Church in the Twenty-first Century,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 51 (2016): 9. This article is the published version of Mouw’s 2015 “Herman Bavinck Lecture” delivered at the Theological University Kampen, which can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/129498693>.

19. John Bolt, “Herman Bavinck: The Man and the Mind” (blog), *Crossway*, September 24, 2015, para. 2, <https://www.crossway.org/blog/2015/09/herman-bavinck-the-man-and-the-mind/>

and lasting. Students training for any kind of Christian ministry should adopt such a posture with all current and future interlocutors.²⁰

3. *Bavinck models an expansive vision of the Christian faith.* Regardless of one's conclusion of Bavinck's theological project, serious interaction with his scholarship helps readers identify modern tendencies to sequester the Christian faith into compartmentalized safehouses. The privatization of the gospel threatens every generation, and again and again Bavinck promotes a theological vision that demolishes the barriers of our individualistic impulses. Bavinck's neo-Calvinism provided a wide lens to view and integrate Christianity's claims across social, cultural, religious, and personal barriers, and this wide-lens approach not only flows out of a robust grasp of Christ's lordship, but also the leavening power of the gospel.²¹ In sum, these three principles are immediately relevant for ministerial students, and Bavinck's life and thought provide a much-needed example for future ministers and academicians.

With these principles in place, how, then, should we engage Herman Bavinck?

Engaging Bavinck

Engaging Bavinck requires a serious commitment on the part of every reader, for his vast corpus can be mined in such a way that isolated comments can be co-opted for the sake of interests alien to Bavinck's overall project. Bavinck is rightly admired, but he must be studiously engaged. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto believe "Bavinck offers to the contemporary reader the most substantial alternative amid modern theologies of the twentieth century and particularly the neo-Orthodox movement, especially represented by the theology of Karl Barth."²² Thus, studying Bavinck should not only involve a close reading of the primary texts, but also his dogmatic and intellectual contexts. The following suggestions are encouraged:

1. We should read Bavinck *Contextually*. A centenary issue rightly situates the contextual timeframe between Bavinck's world and our own. Bavinck knew nothing of nuclear weapons or Watergate, nor could he have predicted The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Bavinck did comment on political power

20. For more on Bavinck's friendship with those with whom he disagreed, see Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 81–85. Also, see James Eglinton, "Why Befriend Your Opponents? Bavinck on 'Critical' Friendship," *The Gospel Coalition* (May 25, 2021), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bavinck-critical-friendship/>

21. See especially, Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of the Christian Church," *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 220–51; and Herman Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God, The Highest Good," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 133–70.

22. Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018), xiii.

and scandal, and he engaged theologically with the Roman Catholic Church, but his scholarship deserves the contextual boundaries of his world. It is easy to view theological heroes outside of their known world, all to situate these heroes within our own. Donald Macleod indicates this tendency, explaining

Each of us reads Bavinck through our own eyes. I am Scottish, not Dutch; 20th century, not 19th; and very much inclined to have my own view on everything. Inevitably then, I read Bavinck in light of my own agenda. This means that there is always a risk of making him say the things I want to hear. There is also a risk of confusing his thinking with my own. I hope this will be taken as a tribute to Bavinck. He has gotten under my skin.²³

We suspect Bavinck will “get under the skin” of many more readers as his popularity increases, so it remains of utmost importance to engage him in his own context.

2. We should read Bavinck *Dogmatically*. Bavinck’s theology was confessionally Reformed, but readers must resist the tendency to reduce “Reformed” to the popular TULIP acronym. In other words, for Bavinck, reformed theology was never solely about soteriology. Steeped in the Three Forms of Unity of the continental Calvinists (the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism), Bavinck’s dogmatic commitments form the ecclesial and confessional soil from which he never uproots. For this reason, Cameron Clausing and Gregory Parker believe Bavinck is appropriately a “churchly dogmatician.”²⁴ Bavinck’s confessional influence and commitment shape his perception of theology’s ecclesial task. Bavinck insists that

the church requires theology, presses for theology, cries out for theology, without which the church would languish—even as theology would die without the church. Theology, and especially dogmatics whose essence must be systematic, has a glorious task; namely, to lead the church in understanding and knowing itself, in order to bring the church to awareness of its own life and treasures.²⁵

3. We should read Bavinck *Carefully*. Engaging Bavinck’s work requires an awareness of how he proceeds through a topic. It often involves a

23. Donald Macleod, “Herman Bavinck and the Basis of Christian Certainty,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 92.

24. Herman Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise*, ed. and trans. Cameron Clausing and Gregory Parker, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019), xx. Further, Clausing and Parker state, “Bavinck consciously performed his theological task with the church in mind” (xx).

25. Herman Bavinck, “The Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System,” trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman *The Bavinck Review* 5 (2014): 101.

three-layered approach: (1) biblical exegesis (2) tracing the historical-theological development of a doctrine (3) expressing that doctrine freshly and normatively for the present day.²⁶ In light of this approach, we suggest readers to work through to the end of each section of Bavinck's writing to capture the breadth and depth of his inquiry. Additionally, Henk van den Belt notes, "In his *Reformed Dogmatics* he opens every locus with biblical references, but continues with a historical survey of the development of the specific theological doctrine from the church fathers through the Middle Ages and the Reformation to Reformed Orthodoxy."²⁷ Ignoring these features of Bavinck's approach will frustrate readers and confuse their grasp of his argumentation.

Working through Bavinck's argumentation in this way also alerts readers to Bavinck's firm commitment to reformed catholicity.²⁸ As Brock and Sutanto argued elsewhere, Bavinck's dogmatic approach utilized diverse voices, which Bavinck believed demonstrated a commitment to a principled and catholic eclecticism.²⁹ From the fathers to the Reformers to his own contemporaries, Bavinck did not ignore or overlook sources that could shed light upon Christian truth. Regarding this trait, G. C. Berkouwer states,

Bavinck did not confine himself to discrete dogmatic questions, however, but concerned himself with the broader issues of the role that the church should play in the world, and with the nature of the church's catholicity. He never stopped wrestling with them. The beauty of catholicity, a beauty he saw continually threatened and disfigured in history, captured his mind and affected his approach to theological problems.³⁰

26. For more on this, see, N. Gray Sutanto, "How to Read Herman Bavinck: 4 Principles," *The Calvinist International*, September 18, 2019, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2019/09/18/how-to-read-herman-bavinck/>

27. Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 230.

28. See Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of the Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 220–51.

29. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicity, Theological Epistemology, and Consciousness," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70 (2017): 310–332.

30. G. C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives*, trans. and ed. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 12. Also, according to George Harinck, "In his memoir, Dr. G. C. Berkouwer described Bavinck's aim in one word: Catholicity." See George Harinck, "Something That Must Remain, If the Truth Is to Be Sweet and Precious to Us": The Reformed Spirituality of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003): 250.

In This Issue

This issue enlists contributors that reflect the vital character of Bavinck scholarship today. George Harinck and James Eglinton have led the way for much of the recent interests, and the other authors included in this issue anticipate the future trajectories of Bavinck scholarship, each having written fresh research on Bavinck or engaged him for constructive ends. Indeed, with the recent breakdown of the two-Bavinck thesis, according to which interpreters were forced to choose between a “modern” or a “classical” Bavinck, interpreters are now freed to explore the constructive insights of Bavinck afresh and are increasingly unfettered by the need to disentangle the primary sources from past binary readings.³¹ This issue reflects this newer outlook of Bavinck studies.

In the first article, George Harinck explores Bavinck’s views on political developments and issues within the Antirevolutionary Party, of which he was a member. Harinck presents Bavinck as a “reflective theologian,” and one whose doctrinal commitments informed his awareness and appreciation of the state’s roles in society. In the second article, James Eglinton explores an unresolved tension in the thought of the “mature Bavinck” (distinguished from the “young Bavinck”); namely, the tension between Bavinck’s views on the global export of culture and religion and his affirmation of the catholicity of the Christian faith.³² In his analysis, Eglinton suggests Bavinck’s nephew, the missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895–1964), sought to resolve this tension with Augustinian remedies. In the third article, Gregory Parker, Jr. provides a survey of Bavinck’s narrative regarding the historical origin and development of the theological encyclopedia. Parker believes a Reformed catholic thread exists throughout Bavinck’s encyclopedia, and he explains how Bavinck appropriated modern grammar to answer his most pressing concerns.

In the fourth article, Jessica Joustra explores Bavinck’s understanding of the imitation of Christ within the Christian life. Joustra describes Bavinck’s commitment to couple imitation with a traditional Reformed emphasis upon the law. In the end, Joustra believes Bavinck’s view of the imitation of Christ to bring functionally new

31. Cory Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern: Herman Bavinck’s Use of Schleiermacher* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020); Gayle Doornbos, “Herman Bavinck’s Trinitarian Theology: The Ontological, Cosmological, and Soteriological Dimensions of the Doctrine of the Trinity” (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2019), and Cameron D. Clausing, “‘A Christian Dogmatic Does not Yet Exist’: The Influence of the Nineteenth Century Historical Turn on the Theological Methodology of Herman Bavinck,” (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2020); Gregory W. Parker Jr., “Reformation or Revolution?: Herman Bavinck and Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace,” *Perichoresis* 15 (2017): 81–95; Jessica Joustra, “An Embodied Imago Dei: How Herman Bavinck’s Understanding of the Image of God Can Help Conversations on Race,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 11 (2017): 9–23; Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018); Matthew Kaemingk and Cory Willson, *Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021).

32. Eglinton argues the “mature Bavinck” is best understood as a refinement of his earlier thought, rather than a repudiation of his earlier convictions.

understandings of the law. In the fifth article, Gayle Doornbos engages Bavinck's utilization of "absoluteness" and "personality" in his doctrine of God proper. Doornbos suggests this aspect of Bavinck's thought represents a creative appropriation of modern philosophical concepts from within his classical, Reformed tradition. In the sixth article, Cameron Clausing explores Bavinck's view that Dogmatics is a progressive science. Clausing argues that Bavinck's view was an innovative move uniquely connected to his nineteenth century milieu and theological method.

In the seventh article, Cory Brock revisits Bavinck's view of the Beatific Vision. In doing so, Brock challenges recent critiques of Bavinck (especially from Hans Boersma) that has questioned Bavinck's analysis of this theme. Ultimately, Brock asserts that a careful reading of Bavinck's overall corpus demonstrates a careful eschatological unity. Finally, in the eighth article, Matthew Kaemingk argues that Bavinck's Christology offers relevant instruction for the economic marketplace questions of the day. Relying on Bavinck's *munus triplex* formation, Kaemingk suggests Christians employ a prophetic, priestly, and royal model of economic engagement. In sum, these articles honor Bavinck's enduring legacy while exploring timely subjects of our day.