



***The
Bavinck
Review***

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The Bavinck Review

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The Bavinck Institute
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The Bavinck Review

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The views expressed in *TBR* are the personal views of the respective authors. These views do not necessarily represent the position of the editorial committee, The Bavinck Institute, or the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary.

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Editorial

This fourth volume of *The Bavinck Review* is the first not to coincide with papers delivered at a Bavinck conference. Nevertheless, the first several essays find a unifying theme in exploring Herman Bavinck's approach to non-Christian religions by means of his *gratia communis* formulation.

Professor Henk van den Belt leads the way with a thorough historical analysis of Bavinck's formulation of the revelation-religion relationship. He inquires into the theological grounds for Bavinck's affirmations of the truth, goodness, and beauty evident in non-Christian religions. In what senses does Bavinck consider non-Christian religions and religiosity itself to be divine revelations? How can a Reformed dogmatics with its affirmation of a *religio vera* nevertheless find theological grounds for affirming proximate goods in non-Christian religions? His historical findings lend themselves to further dogmatic reflection on the *religio vera* within the contemporary context of religious pluralism. They also help to clarify the meaning of certain controversial passages within the *Reformed Dogmatics* wherein Bavinck makes positive statements about pagan religions in general and Muhammad in particular.

These intriguing passages are the subject of Dr. Brian Mattson's essay on the "insider" debate in contemporary Reformed missiology and Rev. J. W. Stevenson's response. Mattson argues that misguided appeals to these passages such as Stevenson's suggest that Bavinck's view of non-Christian religions in general and Islam in particular downplays the doctrine of total depravity in order to highlight the goods found in these religions. Against these appeals he argues that, rightly understood in context, Bavinck's statements regarding the goods in non-Christian religions have the opposite effect, one that is grounded in the catholic tradition and is non-controversial. Further, he argues that Bavinck's statements—when interpreted in light of his view of the relation between nature and grace—do not provide theological grounds for "insider" models of missions. Stevenson's reply challenges Mattson's reading of his appeal to Bavinck's statements as misguided. He further argues that his view of Herman Bavinck's theology and J. H. Bavinck's missiol-

ogy in relation to contemporary “insider” movement missiological discussion is not at odds with but in harmony with Mattson’s.

My review essay takes a turn to the technological. After surveying the current array of digitized Bavinck resources, sampling their functionality, and sharing some tips for rewarding digital research, I reflect upon the ways in which these digital tools can provide a boon to Bavinck researchers.

Professor Bolt’s essay revisits the VanDrunen-Kloosterman *duplex regnum* debate with a significant revision of his earlier Bavinck Society discussion guide in light of two recent dissertations by Drs. Brian Mattson and James Eglinton. The underlying theological question in this debate is one that Bavinck calls the hardest theological question of all; namely, the proper relation between nature and grace. This difficult question comes into expression in smaller, even simple, questions such as whether Bavinck, who designated a portion of his student budget for “Glas bier,”¹ would consider those Leiden pints to be *Christian* in any sense; or whether in Bavinck’s view a fundamental, creational institution such as the family can be properly qualified as *Christian*, as the title of his recently translated book suggests.² Though seemingly simple on the surface, such questions have a profound depth when viewed in light of the nature-grace relation. Bolt offers his own perspective on this discussion.

The Bavinck Institute has a new website on a new server with a new URL: BavinckInstitute.org. Please update your bookmarks and feed subscriptions as the old URL will expire. Our new digital digs are optimized for speed, distributed globally via a content delivery network, and viewable on mobile devices. Thus all users, and especially international users, should notice a faster and more fluid website experience.

Finally, the editorial committee invites potential essay authors, translators, and book reviewers to please take note of the newly posted [submission guidelines](#). The committee looks forward to receiving your submissions.

—Laurence O'Donnell

1. See Willem J. de Wit, “‘Will I Remain Standing?’: A Cathartic Reading of Herman Bavinck,” *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 16n15.

2. Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, ed. Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian’s Library Press, 2012).