

BAVINCK'S THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY REGARDING A RECENT CRITICISM OF THE TWO BAVINCK'S HYPOTHESIS

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ABSTRACT: The present article handles the recent criticism of the so-called 'two Bavincks hypothesis' of Jan Veenhof voiced by Bavinck scholars. Since 1968 Veenhof has introduced the two Bavincks hypothesis, this hypothesis has had significant effects on Bavinck studies in the second half of the twentieth century. Following Veenhof's bipolar portrayal of Bavinck, several Bavinck scholars have labeled Bavinck's theological characteristic as the two Bavincks, namely, advocating his theological identity as a figure who has unresolved duality between orthodoxy and modernity in his thought. However, numerous studies have recently attempted to amend and redress this two Bavincks hypothesis by scholars who only argue for one Bavinck rather than two Bavincks. In the light of this, the present article first examines the recent criticisms for the two Bavincks hypothesis respectively and further argues that there is one Bavinck, who is an orthodox Calvinist and at the same time a modern European man.

KEYWORDS: *Theological Identity; One Bavinck; Two Bavincks Hypothesis; Orthodoxy; Modernity.*

ABSTRAK: Artikel ini mendiskusikan kritikan belakangan mengenai 'hipotesa dua Bavinck' dari Jan Veenhof yang disuarakan oleh para ahli Bavinck. Sejak 1968 Veenhof telah memperkenalkan hipotesa ini yang mempengaruhi secara signifikan terhadap studi akan Bavinck di paruh kedua abad ke-21. Mengikuti penggambaran bipolar Veenhof mengenai Bavinck, beberapa ahli Bavinck telah melabel karakteristik teologi Bavinck sebagai dua Bavinck, yaitu menyodorkan identitas teologisnya sebagai sosok yang memiliki dualitas tak terselesaikan antara ortodoksi dan modernitas di

dalam pemikirannya. Namun, beberapa studi telah berusaha mengoreksi dan menimbang ulang hipotesa ini dengan pandangan satu Bavinck saja, bukan dua. Dalam terang ini, artikel ini pertama menguji kritikan terkini akan hipotesa dua Bavinck dan kemudian menyokong pandangan satu Bavinck saja, yaitu seorang Calvinist yang orthodox dan sekaligus pria eropa yang modern.

KATA KUNCI: : *identitas teologis; satu Bavinck; hipotesa dua Bavinck; Orthodoxi; Modernitas*

The Two Bavincks Hypothesis

Jan Veenhof has introduced the two Bavincks hypothesis in his dissertation on *Revelatie en Inspiratie* in 1968.¹ The core of Veenhof's hypothesis is that the fundamental duality of orthodox and modern elements remains unsolved in Bavinck's thoughts and continues to cause a perpetual crisis of Bavinck's theological identity. According to Veenhof, there are not only tensions in Bavinck's thoughts between orthodoxy and modernism but further inconsistency or incoherency to some extent. In light of this, Veenhof argues that these two elements dominate Bavinck's theology and personality throughout his lifetime. Veenhof's view shows an underlying assumption that Bavinck's life and theology are linked inextricably. Indeed, Veenhof notes the description of A. Anema on Bavinck's thoughts and life as the possible source of his two Bavincks hypothesis.² Moreover, to be specific, Veenhof points out the notion of the term 'organic' in Bavinck's theology as a decisive rationale for his two Bavincks hypothesis. In Veenhof's judgment, Bavinck drew his organic metaphor from Schelling's Idealist philosophy, the German history of religions school, and the Dutch Ethical theology.³ From this standpoint of the two Bavincks, indeed, Veenhof maintains that Bavinck's organic motif belongs to the modernist Bavinck. Noting that Bavinck's employment of the organic concept in his theology under the influence of German Idealist philosophy, Veenhof insists that it would not be an exaggeration to say that Bavinck's thought can be divided into two poles between Reformed orthodoxy and modernism throughout his life.

The influence of the two Bavincks hypothesis was considerable in terms of a hermeneutical lens for Bavinck's thought and his life in Bavinck

¹ Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie: De Openbaringsen Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinckresin Vergelijking met die der Ethische Theologie* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1968), 93-140.

² Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 108.

³ Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 267, 268.

scholarship for many decades.⁴ For instance, concerning the characteristic of Bavinck's view of Scripture, based on this two Bavincks hypothesis, Henk Vroom distinguishes the two lines of Bavinck's thinking between his reverence for Scripture as an absolute, divine authority and his openness to searching for the true meaning of texts by scientific research.⁵ Vroom adds his voice to the explanation that an unrelenting tension between two poles in Bavinck's thought gives his followers a choice of which line they prefer to follow.⁶

Similarly, an assumption of an inner tension between two poles in Bavinck's thought can be found in Malcolm Yarnell's opinion on Bavinck's approach to Scripture and philosophy. In this regard, Yarnell assesses Bavinck's treatment of Scripture that "Bavinck's enigmatic, shifting, and often contradictory treatment" of Scripture and philosophy has legitimized the inconsistency and ambiguity in Bavinck's thoughts.⁷ From this standpoint of view, Yarnell considers Bavinck as a "schizophrenic," in singling "the contradictions in Bavinck about the priority of Scripture and reason" out as evidence.⁸

Moreover, with respect to the central theme of Bavinck's theology, the indirect influence of the two Bavincks hypothesis also can be found. Eugene Heideman attempts to determine which Bavinck wrote various sections of *Reformed Dogmatics*: the "biblical" Bavinck or the "scholastic" and "idealist" Bavinck.⁹ In a similar vein, Syd Hielema insists that "a tension between a more relationally-oriented doctrine of God and a more abstract, philosophical one" can be found in Bavinck's thought.¹⁰ As it were, by considering the prolegomena of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* as a more scholastic section than the rest of the others, Hielema maintains that it belongs to the scholastic Bavinck rather than the biblical Bavinck.¹¹ Additionally, David VanDrunen

⁴ Henk Vroom, "Scripture Read and Interpreted: The Development of the Doctrine of Scripture and Hermeneutics in Gereformeerde Theology in the Netherlands," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28, no. 2 (1993): 352-372; Malcolm B. Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* (B & H Publishing Group: Nashville, 2007); David VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ is Twofold: Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (April 2010): 147-164. John Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam: Herman Bavinck's Reception and Influence in North America," *Calvin Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (2003): 263-280; G. C. Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden: Herinnering en Ervaring* (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 5.

⁵ Vroom, "Scripture Read and Interpreted," 358.

⁶ Vroom, "Scripture Read and Interpreted," 363.

⁷ Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*, 50.

⁸ Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine*, 51.

⁹ Cf. Brian G. Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology & the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 12.

¹⁰ Syd Hielema, *Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption* (Th.D. diss., Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology, 1998), 108. Cf. Mattson, *Restored To Our Destiny*, 11.

¹¹ Hielema, *Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption*, 109.

maintains that Bavinck's defense of the natural law and two kingdoms belongs to the orthodox Bavinck and his arguments of the restoring nature by grace and the kingdom as leaven belongs to the modern Bavinck.¹²

Recent Critique of the Two Bavincks Hypothesis

Recently, the attempts to amend and redress the two Bavincks hypothesis have followed an established academic tendency; George Harinck,¹³ Barend Kamphuis,¹⁴ Nelson Kloosterman,¹⁵ Dirk van Keulen,¹⁶ Brian G. Mattson,¹⁷ John Bolt,¹⁸ and James P. Eglinton.¹⁹ Research into Bavinck's theological identity has made perceptive strides toward reaching a consensus in Bavinck scholarship. In treating these researches on Bavinck, this article provides a rationale for a more reliable picture of Bavinck's theology. In this section, the recent criticism for the two Bavincks hypothesis is examined respectively, and it is to be hoped that this article can serve as a stepping stone for those who grasp Bavinck's theological identity as one Bavinck rather than two Bavincks.

George Harinck

Among Bavinck scholars, George Harinck's contribution stands out for his emphasis upon Bavinck's engagement with modern culture. Harinck

¹² VanDrunen, "The Kingship of Christ is Twofold," 162.

¹³ 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, no. 2 (2003): 248-262; Id., "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 60-77; Id., "Why Was Bavinck in Need of a Philosophy of Revelation?" *The Kuyper Center Review*, ed. John Bowlin, vol. 2, Revelation and Common Grace (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 27-40; Id., "Universality and Dualism: Herman Bavinck and the Debate on Whether to Civilize the Dutch East Indies through Missions or Education," *Calvin Theological Journal* 48 (2013): 217-233.

¹⁴ Barend Kamphuis, "Herman Bavinck on Catholicity," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 24 (2013): 97-104; Id., "Herman Bavinck on the Catholicity of Christianity and Church," *Beiheft zur Okumenischen Rundschau: Christliche Traditionen zwischen Katholizität und Partikularität*, no. 85, ed. Leo J. Koffeman (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 2009): 149-155.

¹⁵ Nelson D. Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold': Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck by David VanDrunen," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (April 2010): 165-176.

¹⁶ Dirk van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*: Some Remarks about Unpublished Manuscripts in the Libraries of Amsterdam and Kampen," *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010): 25-56.

¹⁷ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*.

¹⁸ John Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi: Between Pietism and Modernism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013); Id., "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 263-280; Id., "Herman Bavinck on Natural Law and Two Kingdoms: Some Further Reflections," *The Bavinck Review* 4 (2013): 64-93; Id., *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

¹⁹ James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020); Id., *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2012); Id., "How Many Herman Bavincks? De Gemeene Genade and the 'Two Bavincks' Hypothesis," *The Kuyper Center Review*, ed. John Bowlin, vol. 2, Revelation and Common Grace (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 279-301; Id., "Bavinck's Organic Motif: Questions Seeking Answers," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 51-71.

draws attention to Bavinck's coherent and balanced thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and modernism.²⁰ Portraying Bavinck's career, Harinck underlines that "the longing for unity" must be considered as "the *Leitmotiv* of Bavinck's life."²¹ Harinck maintains that the desire for the unity in Bavinck's thoughts is in opposition to the dualism between nature and grace, the natural and supernatural, and orthodoxy and modernity.

Harinck explains Bavinck's attempts to harmonize Christianity with modern culture with the notions of synthesis and catholicity.²² Harinck comments that Bavinck's synthetic world- and life-view rather than an antithetic manner is a distinctive characteristic of his theological approach. In Harinck's observation, unlike Kuypers' antithetical attitude, Bavinck provides a wealth of synthetic and balanced insights, not by presenting the dichotomy between Christianity and modernism, but by applying those notions to the challenges of modernism.²³ In Harinck's assessment, with respect to Bavinck's synthetic theological approach, Bavinck's theological position can be understood as a new expression of Christian belief in modernism.

Specifically, noting that Bavinck pays attention to dualism and inconsistency as distinguishing features of his days' modern culture, Harinck argues that Bavinck attempts to provide the spiritual direction in his time. In Harinck's view, in distinction from Kuypers' antithetical attitude, Bavinck was more open towards modernism, having a high expectation of a renewed relationship between Christianity and culture.²⁴ In his view, Bavinck seems to have believed that Christianity is part of modern culture's make-up. For Harinck, Bavinck contributes to the character and direction of modernism as one of the participants of modern culture.²⁵ Harinck accounts for Bavinck's ardent interests in the international cultural developments of his days, including theological kinds of literature, the recent novels, and the publications of modern scientists and philosophers. In Harinck's estimate, it is no exaggeration to suggest that Bavinck's proposed worldview would overcome the weaknesses of modernism, such as the lack of unity and balance, and present a balanced way of thinking and living.

²⁰ Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and the neo-Calvinist Concept of the French Revolution," 20-30.

²¹ Harinck, "Something that must remain, if the truth is to be sweet and precious to us," 254.

²² Harinck, "Something that must remain, if the truth is to be sweet and precious to us," 250.

²³ Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 63. Cf. Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 119-154; Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 191.

²⁴ Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 61. Cf. Id., "Herman Bavinck and the neo-Calvinist Concept of the French Revolution," 26.

²⁵ Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 62.

Particularly, Harinck offers a new window into Bavinck's engagement with modern culture, outlining the early and later phases. In an early phase, Harinck notes that Bavinck invests much effort to stand against the claim of modernism, presenting Christianity as an all-encompassing and balanced view.²⁶ In his view, Bavinck recognizes the aspects of the advent of modernism both in the negative and positive sides. Bavinck sharply criticizes the anti-supernatural character of modernism and its attempt to exclude Christianity from culture. At the same time, Bavinck positively notes that Christians had a chance to ensure internal stability, by carefully revalidating Christianity's position in modern times. Hence, Harinck comments that Bavinck contributes to preserving the independence of Christianity, by warning about modernism as an anti-religious program and at the same time giving an impulse to the believer's freedom for Christianity in all domains of life.

Over against the challenges of modernism to eliminate Christianity from the public sphere, by presenting a worldview underlining its all-encompassing unity, Bavinck makes a considerable effort to defend and broaden the scope of Christianity. Bavinck views that modernism tries to expel Christianity from the public sphere to relegate it to the private sphere as something sectarian. As Harinck notes, when it comes to Christianity and Christian life, for Bavinck, the new threats of modernism were to drive Christianity out of the public sphere such as science, politics, and public life.

According to Harinck, Bavinck's later phase's engagement with modernism concentrates more on how Christians can be united rather than on the endeavor to fight against modernism. In Harinck's evaluation, the optimism of modernism had changed to the pessimism. Bavinck seems convinced that the anti-supernatural modern worldview has no more extended power morally and spiritually. Bavinck is aware that atheism had become a considerable branch of modern culture in this phase. From Harinck's analysis, Bavinck devotes himself assiduously and faithfully to the universality of Christianity, rather than challenges the claims of modern culture itself. In this later phase, Bavinck pays more attention to the common ground for all kinds of Christians, resting in his doctrine of God, who reveals Himself to humanity personally. In this regard, Harinck maintains that "In relation to our current reflections on the relationship between belief and modernity, Bavinck's spirituality is of great importance. His starting point was the unity of God, which implies a catholic Christian faith - a faith of all times and of

²⁶ Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion," 74-76.

all places.”²⁷ In the light of this, Harinck places Bavinck’s emphasis on the church’s catholicity and his thought on the synthesis between Christianity and modernism at the foundation of his theology.

Within the framework of Harinck’s study on Bavinck’s theology, Veenhof’s hypothesis about irreconcilable dualism has no place in Bavinck’s thoughts. In Harinck’s estimates, Bavinck devotes much attention to how the believing community can harmonize the relationship between Christianity and modernism, keeping their faith. In Harinck’s view, throughout his whole life, Bavinck tries to present a balanced way of thinking and living against modernism notably in terms of an organic reformation of church and state, family and society, and further dedicates to establishing the new ground for the broadness of Christianity, based on his understanding of a personal God. Seen in this perspective, Harinck apparently does not subscribe to Veenhof’s hypothesis of the two Bavinck. Given his thorough and in-depth reappraisal of Bavinck’s theology and life, Harinck takes a firm stand on the proposal presented by those who advocate one Bavinck model that should be deserved serious attention.

Barend Kamphuis

Barend Kamphuis considers catholicity to be the important theme in Bavinck’s theology, and he is convinced that it is one of his most significant contributions to Reformed theology. In Kamphuis’ view, Bavinck makes a great effort to maintain the inextricable relationship between the catholicity of Christianity and the catholicity of the Church. Kamphuis’ claim can answer the question regarding dualism within Bavinck’s thought and the foundation of his perspective on a series of dualism itself.

Considering Bavinck’s vigorous discussions on the Reformed churches’ challenge, Bavinck emphatically warns against the dualism of his day. Kamphuis highlights that Bavinck’s address of “the catholicity of Christianity and the Church” provides the rationale for the catholic and synthetic nature of Bavinck’s theology against the claim of the two Bavincks hypothesis that there exists a dualism between orthodoxy and modernism in Bavinck’s theology. Kamphuis esteems Bavinck’s this address highly, particularly against sectarianism and dualism that separated the life between Christians and non-Christians. For Bavinck, the Church’s history did not proceed towards asceticism and separatism, but towards a world religion. Bavinck’s explanation runs as follows: “Christianity is a world religion that should govern all people and sanctify all creatures irrespective

²⁷ Harinck, “Something that must remain, if the truth is to be sweet and precious to us,” 261.

of geography, nationality, place, and time."²⁸ In Kamphuis' view, Bavinck criticizes that dualism leads to sectarianism and further both sectarianism and dualism had severely damaged the catholicity of Christianity, saying that "Sectarianism failed to respect the catholicity of the church; dualism did not honor the catholicity of the Christian faith itself."²⁹ Namely, both sectarianism and dualism have one thing in common: a lack of awareness of genuine catholicity. Concerning sectarianism under the influence of modern culture, Bavinck comments that sectarianism brings about the erosion and disappearance of church consciousness. Although Bavinck grants that this sectarianism has its foundation, Bavinck emphasizes the exclusive aspect of the truth. In line with his emphasis on the catholicity of Christianity, Bavinck argues that the Church should be treated as the pillar of the truth. For Bavinck, there exists an exclusive and absolute foundation of Christianity and the Church more than they rested on. Then, where does it come from the catholicity of Christianity and the Church for Bavinck?

Kamphuis considers the most critical ground of the notion of catholicity in Bavinck as reconciliation through the Cross of Jesus Christ, which links up Christianity's catholicity and the unity and catholicity of the church.³⁰ For Bavinck, it was beyond doubt that all things are reconciled to God only in Christ and brought together in unity under him. The blood of the Cross reconciles the relationship between God and humanity, heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile, man and woman.³¹ Once again, one of Bavinck's characteristic emphasis comes fore that the faith overcomes the world, entering into all circumstances and connecting with all forms of life. For Bavinck, as Kamphuis states, only in this way could the thoroughgoing universalism of Christian faith be expressed in words powerfully and beautifully. According to Kamphuis, from the standpoint of this catholicity based on Christ, Bavinck's view is nothing less than a complete rejection of all dualisms. It is God's omnipresent and almighty power that governs all things, and thus in his theocratic rule, God leads all things to unite and hold together. On this basis, Bavinck regards Christianity to be the religion of the cross and also emphasizes its mystery of suffering on the cross as the center of Christianity.

Kamphuis assesses the relevance of Bavinck's thoughts on the catholicity of Christianity and the Church, singling the doctrines of revelation

²⁸ Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 221, 228.

²⁹ Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 246. Cf. Kamphuis, "Herman Bavinck on Catholicity," 97, 98, 100.

³⁰ Kamphuis, "Herman Bavinck on Catholicity," 97-104; Id., "Herman Bavinck on the Catholicity of Christianity and Church," 149-155.

³¹ Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 224.

and Christology as the key to his understanding of Christianity's catholicity. Only in and through Christ can one get a true knowledge of God and the salvation of humanity. With an apparent conviction that Kamphuis writes, "Bavinck's Christology is a broad Christology, at the start, but also in its elaboration: all elements of creation are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. In Bavinck's Christology, the catholicity of Christianity is primary."³² Hence, for Kamphuis, Bavinck's resistance to sectarianism and separatism should be understood from the visible unity of the Church. In this sense, Kamphuis' emphasis on Bavinck's aversion to dualism and sectarianism, based on his notion of the catholicity of Christianity and the Church, can be understood as an illuminating piece of evidence against the claim of two Bavincks hypothesis, while it is not a direct critique of that hypothesis.

Nelson Kloosterman

When criticizing the two Bavincks hypothesis, Nelson Kloosterman speaks in a similar vein, pointing out the coherence of the catholic and synthetic nature of Bavinck's theology. Kloosterman strongly believes that while one can recognize various tensions in Bavinck's thoughts, it is not adequate to agree with the claim that the two incompatible worldviews run through Bavinck's theology. In Kloosterman's view, the two Bavincks hypothesis is nothing more than an overemphasis of the tensions in Bavinck's thoughts. Notably, Kloosterman restrains John Bolt's claim of Bavinck's duality, grounded on his interpretation of Berkouwer's remarks on Bavinck's theology. Berkouwer's comments on Bavinck's theology: "The danger present in describing and evaluating Bavinck's life-work is that one might annex him for one's own insights. It is, however, not impossible to escape that annexation-danger, since various undeniable (*onweersprekelijk*) themes become manifest in Bavincks work."³³ For this Berkouwer's comment, Kloosterman emphasizes that Berkouwer takes note of the danger that he faced himself the danger of peoples with opposing perspectives appealing to Bavinck in this passage.

From this point of view, Kloosterman maintains the necessity of an alternative translation rather than that of Bolt, suggesting that the Dutch word '*onweersprekelijk*' in Berkouwer's passage should be construed as meaning 'undeniable.'³⁴ In Kloosterman's assessment, Bolt misinterpreted

³² Kamphuis, "Herman Bavinck on Catholicity," 102.

³³ Dutch Original: "Het gevaar van een beschrijving en beoordeling van Bavincks levenswerk is, dat men hem annexeert voor eigen inzichten. Het is echter niet onmogelijk boven dat annexatie-gevaar uit te komen, doordat in het werk van Bavinck allerlei *onweersprekelijke* motieven zichtbaar worden." Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden*, 55.

³⁴ Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold,'" 175.

the Dutch word '*onweersprekelijk*' as 'irreconcilable.' "To buttress his claim that there were two Bavincks," Kloosterman pointedly emphasizes, "John Bolt cites the observation of Dutch theologian Berkouwer, and footnotes the Dutch original, as to how people with radically opposing agendas had annexed (appealed to) Bavinck's theology in defense of their own views."³⁵ In relation with this discussion, Eglinton rightly remarks that "Berkouwer's claim seems to be that the 'two Bavincks' model will only emerge if one does not first grasp the nature of the diverse central themes of his worldview and, one logically assumes, the nature of their overall unity."³⁶

On this basis, Kloosterman is convinced that Bavinck's thoughts are actually coherent rather than inconsistent. In taking this position, like Kamphuis, Kloosterman also locates the underlying unity in Bavinck's thought in his Christology. Kloosterman maintains Bavinck's emphasis on the Christological unity, namely, that Jesus Christ revealed himself progressively in the unfolding of salvation history "through his unitary and unitive mediatorial activity."³⁷ In the person and work of Christ Jesus, this Christological unity could be applied to the relationship between the church and the world coherently. Based on this coherence of Bavinck's thoughts, Kloosterman speaks with emphasis that Bavinck's thoughts should not "be elevated to the level of incoherent inconsistencies or irreconcilable themes," even though, no doubt, there exist tensions in Bavinck's life and his thought.³⁸

Dirk van Keulen

The advocates for the two Bavincks hypothesis underscores, on the one hand, that Bavinck devotes himself to teaching systematic theology and writing his *magnum opus*, *Reformed Dogmatics*, as dogmatics professor at Kampen Theological Seminary (1883-1902) in an early stage of his life. On the other hand, they pay attention to the shift of Bavinck's interests and emphasis towards philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, education, and ethical issues during the period of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (1902-21). However, during the years of Bavinck's professorate at Kampen, it is a fact that Bavinck spent a great deal of his time on his work on both dogmatics and ethics. Bavinck was employed in Kampen to lecture on ethics, which is often overlooked, regardless of its importance to Bavinck's whole theology.

In this regard, Dirk van Keulen's recent study provides supportive

³⁵ Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold,'" 174.

³⁶ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 35, 36.

³⁷ Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold,'" 170.

³⁸ Kloosterman, "A Response to 'The Kingdom of God is Twofold,'" 166.

evidence for teaching activities for ethics during his tenure as a professor at the Theological School in Kampen. At the International Herman Bavinck Conference at Calvin College on Sept. 17-20, 2008, Van Keulen presented Bavinck's unpublished manuscript of *Reformed Ethics*.³⁹ Specifically, Van Keulen has discovered Bavinck's own handwritten small notebook entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek* in the Bavinck Archives, no. 176, 186 of the Historical Documentation Centre, Free University, Amsterdam. According to Van Keulen, although these documents have been severely damaged, it is noteworthy that Bavinck himself had written some of the documents, and students of his ethics classes had compiled other documents during the Kampen years.

Van Keulen demonstrated that in the Bavinck archives, there are several documents that Bavinck used for his lectures on ethics, such as "a small lecture notebook," "an extensive manuscript entitled *Gereformeerde Ethiek* (*Reformed Ethics*)," and several manuscripts made by his students.⁴⁰ This discovery demonstrates that Bavinck devotes himself to preparing and giving lectures on *ethics* while at the same time writing his *Reformed Dogmatics*.⁴¹ Concerning this point, Van Keulen argues that Bavinck was interested in not only dogmatics but also ethics during his early professorate at Kampen.

Furthermore, for the relationship between Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* and his *Reformed Ethics*, Van Keulen's study proposes that Bavinck's ethics must be in the spotlight with his dogmatics proper understanding of his theology. Van Keulen makes several interesting points about the similarity between Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* and his *Reformed Ethics* in terms of their structure and methodology. In addition to this, Van Keulen comments that the form of composition gives the impression that Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* is entirely dogmatic in character.

Indeed, Bavinck provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. No sentence better summarizes Bavinck's thoughts on dogmatics and ethics than this: "Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God; ethics is that of the service of God."⁴² For Bavinck, dogmatics preceded ethics, and ethics was utterly dependent on dogmatics. Bavinck maintains that there is no fundamental difference between dogmatics and ethics, underlining instead the inseparably close relationship between the two. Bavinck has enough to occupy his mind and time throughout his life as he deals with the notion of ethics in conjunction

³⁹ Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," 25-56.

⁴⁰ Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," 26.

⁴¹ Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," 53.

⁴² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:58.

with dogmatics. Based on his examination of the parallels between *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Reformed Ethics*, Van Keulen states that the careful division of the subject matter between Bavinck's Reformed dogmatics and ethics manifests that beyond doubt his *Reformed Ethics* was intended as a companion to *Reformed Dogmatics*.

All the above considered, it is hard to agree with the two Bavincks hypothesis, since it seems that throughout his whole theological career, Bavinck clearly deals with both dogmatics and ethics. It seems reasonable to say that Bavinck makes an effort to apply his theological principles to Christian life in his early years. Although it is definitely true that Bavinck had more interests on a broader range of topics in his later years, it is an undeniable fact that Bavinck's attention was directed to not only a systematic theology but also ethics even in his early years. Considered in Van Keulen's observation, the two Bavincks hypothesis should be reinterpreted in reality as having no remarkable division of Bavinck's theological works.

Brian Mattson

Brian Mattson emphasizes, given his antipathy to any dualism and lifelong endeavors toward a unified worldview, that one should not follow the two Bavincks hypothesis. In Mattson's observation, the theme of restoring nature by grace continually emerged in Bavinck's theology. In his view, Bavinck passionately craves the worldview of unity and diversity with his emphasis on the theme 'grace restores nature.' Besides, Mattson speaks of an apparent life-long struggle concerning the relationship between Christianity and culture in Bavinck's life.⁴³ Mattson convincingly declares that the argument that there exist the inner contradictions and unresolved tensions in Bavinck's thought is simply wrong.⁴⁴

Notably, Mattson maintains that Veenhof's account of Bavinck's organic motif rests on a genetic fallacy, particularly concerning the assumption of the two Bavincks hypothesis concerning possible sources for his organic motif. Mattson raises questions about whether Bavinck was open to accepting the concept of the organic motif of his days, or he just co-opted the language and used the same word to mean differently.⁴⁵ In Mattson's estimates, Veenhof assumes Schelling's Idealist philosophy, the German history of religions school, and the Dutch Ethical theologians as possible sources for Bavinck's use of the organic motif. Indeed, for Veenhof, it stands to reason that Bavinck's organic notion can be traced historically

⁴³ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 2.

⁴⁴ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 18.

⁴⁵ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 47.

and philosophically, but Mattson notes that Bavinck himself opposed such a hermeneutic. By noting Bavinck's consistent and relentless critique of Idealism, the history of religions school, and the Ethical theology, Mattson argues that Veenhof's claim is far removed from Bavinck's antipathy towards the late nineteenth-century philosophy and theology.

Particularly, Mattson refuses Veenhof's claim that Bavinck was a part of the nineteenth-century theologian who had inherited his theology from mystical theosophy. Veenhof accounts for the relationship between Bavinck and the historical stream drawn from Cocceius, Bengel, Böhme, Oetinger, Beck, Hegel, and Schelling. Mattson illustrates the lack of reliable information about the linkage of the organic motif of mystical theosophy to that of Bavinck. Instead, "to Böhme, Oetinger and Beck," Mattson suggests that "he[Bavinck] attributes a 'mystical theosophy' largely responsible for the resurgence of pantheism in the nineteenth-century, finding its culmination in Hegel and Schelling, against whom, of course, he has no shortage of words."⁴⁶

Moreover, Mattson pays attention to the relationship between Bavinck's organic motif and the tradition of Reformed scholasticism. Mattson maintains that it is reasonable to think that Bavinck found historic Reformed orthodoxy to seek unity for his thought in reaction to his liberal education at Leiden. Mattson provides several evidences from recent studies attesting to the possibility that the source of Bavinck's organic motif is primarily his own historical-theological tradition as follow: First, Reformed orthodoxy's interests in historical development and the gradual manifestation of God's salvation can be a more suitable candidate for the source of neo-Calvinism's use of the organic metaphor than post-Kantian philosophy represented by Hegel and Schelling.⁴⁷ Second, concerning Bavinck's application of the organic motif, Mattson notes Bavinck's epistemology as an innovative adaptation of the *principia* of Reformed scholasticism.⁴⁸ Third, Bavinck took a keen interest in Reformed scholasticism and acknowledged his own tradition is evidenced in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, as well as his numerous citations of Dutch Reformed theologians such as "Voetius, de Moor, Vitranga, van Mastricht, Witsius, and Walaeus as well as the important Leiden *Synopsis*

⁴⁶ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 50, 54.

⁴⁷ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 49. Mattson notes Richard A. Muller's recent study on historiography. Cf. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Trinity of God*, 2nd ed., vol.4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 1382-91.

⁴⁸ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 50, 51. Mattson points out Bavinck's understanding of the three *principia* of theology from Henk van den Belt's exposition of the application of the Reformed scholastics. Van den Belt comments on Bavinck's epistemology is an innovative adaptation of the *principia* of Reformed scholasticism. Cf. Henk van den Belt, *Autopistia: The Self-Convincing Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology* (Diss., University of Leiden, 2006), 257-71.

purioris theologiae.”⁴⁹ Fourth, Mattson singles out the relationship between Geerhardus Vos and Bavinck as an important issue that cannot be ignored in terms of their emphasis on the term organic and its concept.⁵⁰

In sum, Mattson emphasizes that there is no need for Bavinck to enlist German Idealism to form the concept of the organic and apply it. In his observation, it should be noted that Bavinck has already been situated in the stream of the Reformed heritage. Over against the nineteenth-century philosophical theological thoughts, it would be more reasonable to assume that Bavinck attempts to offer an answer and a foundational account of reality from Reformed theology.

John Bolt

In recent years, John Bolt clarifies his position on the theological identity of Bavinck that there is a fundamental unity in Bavinck's thought. Considering John Bolt's sketch of Bavinck in his dissertation and various articles, he seems to accept Veenhof's interpretation of duality in Bavinck's thought to some extent. In his 1982 dissertation *The Imitation of Christ in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck*, Bolt describes Bavinck as a man who seeks to strike a balance the Dutch Reformed pietism and nineteenth-century Dutch modernist theology.⁵¹ Furthermore, in his 2003 article "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam: Herman Bavinck's Reception and Influence in North America," Bolt mentions tension between the two poles within the thought of Bavinck as a conventional portrait, remarking on this as "[A]ny consideration of Herman Bavinck's influence has to start with the annoying acknowledgment that there is not just one but rather *two* Bavincks."⁵² Indeed, it seems that Bolt acknowledges that there exists the evidence for duality in Bavinck's thoughts. Indeed, Bolt wrote, "[T]here is plenty of evidence to warrant talking about a duality in Bavinck, and we cannot understand the developments in twentieth-century Dutch Reformed theology apart from the conflicting appeals made to these two sides."⁵³ Bolt emphasizes that Bavinck's theology with respect to the developments in twentieth-century Dutch Reformed theology cannot be understood to

⁴⁹ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 51. John Bolt indicates, according to Mattson, that in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, Reformed scholasticism is obviously imprinted, for example, in his use of the *archetypal/ectypal* scheme. Cf. John Bolt, "Editor's Introduction," *Reformed Dogmatics* 2:12.

⁵⁰ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 52. Mattson singles out the relationship between Geerhardus Vos and Bavinck as an important issue that cannot be ignored in terms of their emphasis on the term organic and its concept. Cited from Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 49-54.

⁵¹ John Bolt, "The Imitation of Christ in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck," (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1982), 39-79.

⁵² Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 264, 265.

⁵³ Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 267.

its full extent, apart from the plenty of these irreconcilable themes in the tension of Bavinck's thought.

However, it is also true that Bolt recognizes that Bavinck's characterization, following the two Bavincks, is no other than oversimplification. Bolt views that the concept of the modern Bavinck was invented by Valentijn Hepp. In Bolt's assessment, Hepp's portrayal of Bavinck's old age despair was somewhat exaggerated. Bolt states that "It may be true that Hepp, for example, exaggerated Bavinck's despair in the last decade of his life."⁵⁴ Indeed when Hepp's picture of this period is compared with that of Bremmer, it appears as if it is slightly out of proportion. Nevertheless, Bolt seems to accept the characterization of the two Bavincks from the viewpoint of inconsistency in Bavinck's thought to some extent, in reliance on Berkouwer's comments on Bavinck. Bolt gave attention to Berkouwer's appraisal of Bavinck's theological work that "Bavinck's theology contains so many irreconcilable (*onweersprekelijke*) themes in tension."⁵⁵

Concerning this translation, Kloosterman suggests some corrections on Bolt's rendering of Berkouwer's view on Bavinck. In response to Kloosterman's proposal for correction of mistranslation, Bolt humbly admits his mistake in a translation that the Dutch word 'onweersprekelijke' ought to be interpreted as 'irreconcilable' rather than 'undeniable.'⁵⁶ Further, Bolt clearly indicates his stance on the matter of the two Bavincks hypothesis as follows: "I also agree with him [Kloosterman] that while there are tensions in Bavinck's thought, there is an underlying unity in his thought."⁵⁷

Most importantly, Bolt revised his 1982 doctoral dissertation in 2013, including an update on the Bavinck scholarship since 1982. It is worth mentioning that there have been some improvements in terms of providing a more detailed explanation of Bavinck's view of the task of theology in Bolt's revised dissertation than his prior one. Bolt seems to be aware of the need to emphasize the unity of Bavinck's thought. Considering Bavinck's understanding of the task of theology, Bolt sheds new light on Bavinck's emphasis on the unity of thought in theology. In his revised dissertation.⁵⁸ Indeed, Bolt sees the fact that Bavinck underscores the task of the theologian to be thinking God's thoughts after him and tracing the unity of God, citing Bavinck at this point that "His work is not finished until he has mentally

⁵⁴ Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 266.

⁵⁵ Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 265. See the original Dutch text of Berkouwer, Berkouwer, *Zoeken en Vinden*, 55.

⁵⁶ John Bolt, "Herman Bavinck on Natural Law and Two Kingdoms," 77.

⁵⁷ Bolt, "Herman Bavinck on Natural Law and Two Kingdoms," 79.

⁵⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1: 44. Cited from Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 205.

absorbed this unity and set it forth in a dogmatics."⁵⁹ For Bavinck, the unity of thought is a command given to theologians for reproducing the unity about God's thoughts. In this regard, Bolt highlights Bavinck's conviction regarding unity of thought is not only possible but also "even a command."⁶⁰

Furthermore, Bolt stresses how Bavinck understands the possibility and reality of God's knowledge. Dealing with Bavinck's attempts to take issue with all forms of nominalism, Bolt offers a ground for Bavinck's insistence upon the possibility of our knowledge through his organic thinking. Bolt cites from Bavinck's emphasis upon the organic nature of divine thought, cosmic reality, and human thought.⁶¹ In this regard, For Bavinck, all notions of dualism and tension have no place. Bolt states carefully that "any discussion of alleged tensions or inconsistencies in Bavinck's thought must be sensitive to Bavinck's own qualifications and nuances and attempt to duplicate the subtlety of his own thought."⁶²

Particularly noting Eglinton's recent study on Bavinck's organic motif, Bolt highlights that the unity of thought in Bavinck's theology is founded on his doctrine of the Trinity.⁶³ Bolt emphasizes Bavinck's attempt to seek for the unity of thought in theology, presenting his trinitarian metaphysics as the foundation stone that supports the underlying unity of his thought. In this sense, an ultimate conceptual unity of Bavinck's thought, according to Bolt, always rests on his doctrine of the Trinity, particularly on the eternal unity of God himself.

James Eglinton

In his recent study, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*, Eglinton gives an overview of the two Bavincks hypothesis.⁶⁴ Concerning Bavinck's theological identity, James Eglinton offers an ambitious challenge prevailing view of two Bavincks hypothesis of Veenhof, not only noting several erroneous assumptions regarding Veenhof's interpretation of Bavinck but also proposing some trenchant guideline for a new general reading of Bavinck's theology.

Firstly, Eglinton notes that there exist erroneous interpretations of Bavinck's theology and his life, based on the two Bavincks hypothesis.

⁵⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1: 44. Cited from Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 207.

⁶⁰ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 207.

⁶¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1: 231. Cited from Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 207.

⁶² Bolt, "Herman Bavinck on Natural Law and Two Kingdoms," 83.

⁶³ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 206.

⁶⁴ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*; Id., "Bavinck's Organic Motif," 51-71; Id., "How Many Herman Bavincks? De Gemeene Genade and the 'Two Bavincks' Hypothesis," 279-301.

Eglinton speaks straightforwardly that Veenhof's bipolar portrayal of Bavinck has tended to regard Bavinck as "a Jekyll and Hyde theologian who vacillates between moments of 'orthodoxy' and 'modernity' without ever resolving his own basic crisis of theological identity."⁶⁵ In his observation, the two Bavincks hypothesis leans too much on particular explanations of personal narrative. According to Veenhof, for example, Bavinck's colleague at the Free University, A. Anema's description of Bavinck as "a Secession preacher and a representative of modern culture," is an adequate rationale for the two Bavincks hypothesis.⁶⁶ In addition, Valentine Hepp interprets the sale of Bavinck's theological books as a piece of evidence for his two Bavincks hypothesis, noting Bavinck's own voice of "I have no further need of them."⁶⁷ Consequently, it has been generally accepted that this hypothesis not only mirrors Bavinck's particular history with specific reference to his conservative upbringing and liberal university education but further reflects a duality of Bavinck's theology between orthodoxy and modernity.

However, Eglinton maintains that the interpretation of Bavinck's personal history, which undergirds the two Bavincks approach to his theology, is by no means a settled one. Eglinton concurs with Bolt's view that Valentijn Hepp's description of Bavinck's despair in the last decade of his life is exaggerated.⁶⁸ Of course, Eglinton points out that Bavinck undoubtedly engaged in a lot of social and cultural life in the modern in his old age. However, he emphasizes that Bavinck did not give up on theology's relevance. In Eglinton's judgment, it does seem reasonable that Bavinck attempted to apply theology in every sphere of life as a Reformed dogmatician rather than two Bavincks.

Secondly, Eglinton refuses the two Bavincks hypothesis, by singling out Bavinck's own speeches. Eglinton states that Bavinck's inaugural address on "The Science of Holy Theology" at the theological seminary in Kampen in 1883 is at odds with the two Bavincks hypothesis.⁶⁹ In Eglinton's estimation, Bavinck's speech presupposes that orthodoxy and the modern world belong together. This speech provides the foundation for Bavinck's defense of theology in modern times by addressing theology's ever-relevant sanctity characteristics. According to Eglinton, at this lecture, Bavinck argued that

⁶⁵ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 28.

⁶⁶ Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 108.

⁶⁷ Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 317, 318.

⁶⁸ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 31, 32, 46. Cf. Id., 32. Eglinton cites Bolt's comments on the two Bavincks hypothesis that "the portrait I have just sketched of the two Bavincks—the fundamentalist scholastic and the good progressive modern man—is of course, in its exaggeration, a cartoon, a caricature." Bolt, "Grand Rapids between Kampen and Amsterdam," 266, 267.

⁶⁹ Herman Bavinck, *De wetenschap der H. Godgeleerdheid* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1883).

theologian can be a historically orthodox and an intellectual of modern context, but that theology should be regarded as holy theology rather than modernistic theology. In this sense, Eglinton contends that Bavinck's fundamental insistence on "the Science of Holy Theology" undermines the two Bavincks hypothesis. Additionally, Eglinton points out what Bavinck gave a speech on "Common Grace" in his final rectorial address at Kampen in 1894. This last lecture at Kampen can be the foundation of the criticism of the two Bavincks hypothesis in itself, because of Bavinck's emphasis on common grace as the neo-Calvinist. In Eglinton's view, Bavinck's stance on Christianity's engagement with culture is out of step with the two Bavincks hypothesis. Bavinck undoubtedly opposed any attempt to not only the isolaticism of his CRC circles but also the world-conformity movements.

Thirdly, Eglinton believes that Bavinck's frequent use of the organic motif is not only the decisive evidence against the two Bavincks hypothesis but also the crucial factor to understand Bavinck's trinitarian theology. Eglinton's argument for a new reading of Bavinck rests on the conviction that Bavinck's organic motif must be accepted as "an agent of unity" in Bavinck's theology.⁷⁰ To demonstrate the significance of Bavinck's organic motif in Bavinck's theology, Eglinton points out that Veenhof's reading of Bavinck on the organic motif has been misunderstood. Eglinton argues, "one of the great misfortunes of Bavinck studies is that the organic motif has been misunderstood for so long as a symptom of disunity, rather than the primary analogy and agent of unity in the creation."⁷¹ and at the same time, he states that Veenhof's account of Bavinck's organic motif needs to be revised to establish Bavinck's theological identity.

According to Veenhof's accounts, Bavinck's motif of the organic comes from German Idealism in nineteenth-century theological and social movements.⁷² Veenhof contends that Bavinck's organic motif belongs to the modernist Bavinck based upon the conviction that Bavinck used the notion of organism and organic in the universal sense of the time. However, citing Caroline van Eck's critiques of the premise of Veenhof's account, Eglinton discredits Veenhof's analysis of Bavinck's organic motif.⁷³ According to Van Eck, the Enlightenment-centric history of organism, upon which Veenhof's account rests, is intrinsically wrong because of a dissonance between the

⁷⁰ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 51. Cf. *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷¹ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 29.

⁷² Veenhof specifies that the three sources of Bavinck's organic motif are Schelling's Idealist philosophy, the history of religions school, and the Ethical theologians. Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 267-268. Cited from Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 34, 54.

⁷³ Caroline van Eck, *Organicism in Nineteenth-Century Architecture: An Inquiry into its Theoretical and Philosophical Background* (Architectura & Natura Press: Amsterdam, 1994), 41-67.

Enlightenment-centric history of organicism and the facts of history. That is, by indicating the problem of the assumption of Veenhof's thesis that there exists only one historical development of organicism in terms of uniformity and homogeneity, Eglinton rightly demonstrates the failure of the generic historical definition of organicism.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of the view that Bavinck's organic motif is rooted in the heritage of Reformed theology, Eglinton underlines that Bavinck's use of the organic has a significance for the framework or logic of Bavinck's theological system. By Bavinck's own account of the organic, Eglinton attempts to grasp the meaning of the organic in Bavinck's whole theology. Eglinton comments that Bavinck defined the term 'organic' by himself over against the theistic mechanism (Scholten and Rauwenhoff) and the cosmology of Idealist pantheism (Hegel and Schelling). In this sense, Eglinton contends that Bavinck's organic motif should be understood from the perspective of its immediate context, rather than historical-etymological context. Specifically, according to Eglinton, Bavinck's definition of the organic is shared within the neo-Calvinist movement, emphasizing the notion of unity as distinct from the uniformity of the tendency of post-Revolution.⁷⁴ In addition, Eglinton offers Bavinck's own account of Calvin's perspective on the organic, and further argues the neo-Calvinism inherited their organic notion from Calvin's organic worldview.⁷⁵ By Bavinck's own definition from his *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing*, Eglinton also examines several key concepts of Bavinck's organic motif.⁷⁶

In this regard, it should be noted that Bavinck's organic motif is not merely repristination of the Reformed tradition but creative development and endeavor to contribute to theology in his times. With regards to the context of German Idealism in the nineteenth century, while Hegel's organicism seeks to develop for a purpose as monism and idealism in terms of the anti-dualistic sense, Eglinton argues that Bavinck's notion of the organic is founded on the doctrine of the Trinity. Namely, Bavinck focuses more on the teleology of organism to highlight the main difference between organicism of German Idealism and his understanding of organicism, by stressing that all creatures have been made in all unity and diversity for the glory of the

⁷⁴ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 79.

⁷⁵ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 143.

⁷⁶ Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: Kok, 1904). Eglinton argues that Bavinck attempts to clarify that unity in diversity is orderly. First, the created order manifests its unity and diversity simultaneously in Bavinck's trinitarian theology. Second, Bavinck clarifies that unity precedes diversity upon the basis of organic motif, though both of them exist simultaneously. Third, Bavinck explicates that unity in diversity is unlike the chaos of multiformity. Cf. Eglinton, "Bavinck's Organic Motif," 63; *Id.*, *Trinity and Organism*, 69.

Triune God.

In light of this, Eglinton suggests that the notion of “organic” is essential to grasp Bavinck’s view regarding the relation between the Trinity and creatures. Bavinck uses the organic motif to lead people to see the divine being and his work in reality. For Bavinck, “a theology of Trinity *ad intra* requires a cosmology of organicism *ad extra*.”⁷⁷ Eglinton provides an in-depth analysis of Bavinck’s use of the organic motif with ‘the unity-in-diversity’ within Bavinck’s doctrine of the Triune God. He notes Bavinck’s emphasis upon the relationship between “Trinitarian theology and organic cosmology.”⁷⁸ In this sense, Eglinton maintains that the creation’s reflection of God’s identity, notably the absolute unity and diversity of the Trinity, is stressed by Bavinck repeatedly.⁷⁹ Based on the notion that the universe is the general revelation of the Triune God, Bavinck demonstrates that this organic worldview articulates the basic harmony of God’s attributes of unity and diversity. It is noteworthy that Bavinck presents a trinitarian understanding of reality by describing that the universe reflects its identity in terms of his simultaneous emphasis on unity and diversity. In this regard, the organic motif lies at the heart of his doctrines of the Trinity and creation in Bavinck’s theology.

Most recently, through his released critical biography of Bavinck, entitled *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, Eglinton suggests a new interpretation of Bavinck as an orthodox Calvinist participant in the modern world. Eglinton maintains that both sides of orthodoxy and modernity within Bavinck’s thoughts ought to be understood at the same time, namely, by exploring orthodoxy, not denying modernity, not excluding orthodoxy.⁸⁰ Namely,

⁷⁷ Eglinton, “Bavinck’s Organic Motif,” 63; Id., *Trinity and Organism*, 68, 80, 168, 170.

⁷⁸ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 68.

⁷⁹ Eglinton, “Bavinck’s Organic Motif,” 102; Id., *Trinity and Organism*, 72, 80, 179, 200, 205. C.f. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2: 332. According to Bavinck, a faint analogy of the unity and diversity of the Trinity can be seen in the creatures. Eglinton is convinced that there exists a definite correlation between the Triune God and creatures by examining the sense in which Bavinck views that the organic character of all creatures is analogous to the Triune God.

⁸⁰ James P. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020). Cory C. Brock maintains that Bavinck is orthodox yet modern insofar as he subsumes the philosophical-theological questions and notions of theological modernity under the conditions of his orthodox, confessional tradition. He suggests a more nuanced understanding of Bavinck that how Bavinck can be understood as the orthodox Bavinck with respect to his engagement with modernism by exploring his use of Schleiermacher. Cory C. Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern: Herman Bavinck’s Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Lexham Press, 2020), 26-33; Bruce Pass also proposes a new reading of Bavinck as an orthodox yet modern theologian by emphasizing Bavinck’s Christology. According to Pass, Bavinck’s account of the doctrine of the two natures concerning the deity and humanity of Christ provides some reflections for understanding the relationship between orthodoxy and modernity in Bavinck’s thought. Bruce R. Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentrism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 196. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto makes an argument that Bavinck’s epistemology ought to be understood as both orthodox and modern, with an emphasis on the organic motif of Bavinck. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck’s Theological Epistemology* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020).

Eglinton proposes that Bavinck should be perceived as one Bavinck, an orthodox Calvinist as well as a modern European theologian, in the context of modern European culture.

From this point of view, for Eglinton, it should be clear that the organic motif is an agent of unity in Bavinck's thought.⁸¹ Eglinton's reinterpretation of Bavinck's organic notion provides a decisive and reliable methodology to examine his understanding of the triune God *per se* and the relationship between the ontological and economic Trinity in particular. Eglinton suggests that the relation explicated by Bavinck between the unity of the divine being and the unity of the creature offers a new approach to dealing with Bavinck's life and his theology. In this way, Eglinton maintains that Bavinck's theological thought is considerably more sophisticated and united than the two Bavincks interpretation makes out and further declares that there was definitely one Bavinck rather than two Bavincks.

Conclusion

In research on Bavinck's theological identity, as has been observed in this article, the main question is debated whether there are two irreconcilable themes and the reality of two Bavincks in his thought. The two Bavincks hypothesis of Jan Veenhof rests on the assumption that Bavinck's life and theology are intimately related. Veenhof regards both the Dutch Reformed pietism and the modernism of his day as background to an assessment of Bavinck's theological identity. On this basis, Veenhof's interpretation of Bavinck has categorized Bavinck's thoughts and life into two Bavincks, namely, a Reformed theologian and a progressive modernist. Namely, it is argued that there was a general awareness of two Bavinck and a ceaseless tension in Bavinck's thoughts.

However, against the two Bavincks hypothesis, without hesitation, this present article adds its voice to the consensus that there is only one Bavinck. This article carefully examines Bavinck's theological identity as an undivided figure, namely, a modern European theologian as well as an orthodox theological participant in modern culture, against a double portrayal, by presenting several arguments.

Let me sum up the main points of the respective sections concerning the criticisms of the two Bavincks hypothesis: (1) George Harinck gives his attention to coherent and balanced thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and modernism in Bavinck. It is without question that the longing for unity plays a significant role as the *Leitmotive* of Bavinck's life,

⁸¹ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 51, 71, 78, 79, 205.

answering the questions of the dualism between nature and grace, the natural and supernatural, and Christianity and modernity. Harinck places Bavinck's emphasis on the Church's catholicity and his thought on the synthesis between Christianity and modernism at the foundation of his theology. In Harinck's estimates, Bavinck devoted his whole life to how the believing community can harmonize the relationship between Christianity and modernism, keeping their faith, and contributed to presenting a balanced way of thinking and living as a participant of modern culture. (2) For Barend Kamphuis, the catholicity of Christianity and the Church is the most important theme in Bavinck's theology. Kamphuis underlines how Bavinck emphatically opposed and warned against dualism. Against sectarianism and dualism that separated the life between Christians and non-Christians of his days, the doctrines of revelation and Christology provide for Bavinck's notion of catholicity. The blood of the Cross reconciles the relationship between God and humanity, enabling Bavinck to fight against sectarianism and separatism. In Kamphuis's view, Bavinck's Christology is considered to be an illuminating piece of evidence against the two Bavincks hypothesis. (3) In Nelson Kloosterman's view, the coherence of the catholic and synthetic nature of Bavinck's theology proves Bavinck's theological identity as one Bavinck directly. While one can recognize various tensions, it is not adequate to speak of the existence of the two incompatible worldviews and the two Bavincks in Bavinck's thought. Kloosterman is convinced that Bavinck's thoughts are actually coherent rather than inconsistent, like Kamphuis, notably placing the underlying unity in Bavinck's thought in his Christology. (4) Dirk van Keulen sheds new light on Bavinck's career concerning ethical issues that Bavinck spent a great deal of his time not only on his work on dogmatics but also on ethics during the years of Bavinck's professorate at Kampen. Based on his discovery of Bavinck's manuscript on Reformed ethics, Van Keulen maintains that Bavinck devoted himself to both dogmatics and ethics even in his early years. Against the two Bavincks hypothesis, it stands to reason that Bavinck was a Reformed theologian throughout his whole theological career, instead of assessing that Bavinck's theological identity was changed after he left Kampen. (5) Brian Mattson pays attention to Bavinck's antipathy to any dualism and his life-long endeavors toward a unified worldview. Mattson notes that Veenhof's understanding of Bavinck's organic motif rests on a genetic fallacy. In his estimates, the two Bavincks hypothesis assumes Schelling's Idealist philosophy, the German history of religions school, and the Dutch Ethical theologians as primary sources for Bavinck's organic motif. Contrary to this position, Mattson proposes a new reading of Bavinck's organic idea, noting its relationship with the tradition

of Reformed scholasticism. In this way, Mattson points out the problem of Veenhof's understanding of Bavinck's organic notion and stresses Bavinck's enthusiastic endeavor of anti-dualism with his emphasis on an organic relationship between nature and grace. (6) John Bolt has clarified his previous position on duality in Bavinck's thought, in response to Kloosterman's proposal for correction of the mistranslation about Berkouwer's comments on Bavinck's theology. Furthermore, Bolt reiterates his emphasis on the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity in Bavinck's entire theology. In his revision of the dissertation, Bolt declares that he is not sympathetic to the two Bavincks hypothesis, stating that the unity of Bavinck's thought is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity, which is fundamental to Bavinck's theology. By agreeing with Eglinton's study on Bavinck's organic motif, Bolt emphasizes Bavinck's understanding of the organic nature of divine thought, cosmic reality, and human thought. Even though there exist tensions in Bavinck's thoughts, Bolt calls attention to Bavinck's attempts to seek the unity of thought in theology and his strong commitment to the unity of thought. (7) James Eglinton offers an ambitious challenge for two Bavincks hypothesis, by focusing much attention on Bavinck's organic motif with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. In Eglinton's view, Veenhof's account of Bavinck's organic motif needs to be revised to establish Bavinck's theological identity. Eglinton deals exclusively with the inherently problematic nature of two Bavincks hypothesis, noting several erroneous assumptions. Furthermore, Eglinton points out that Bavinck's organic motif ought to be read not only as a critical notion to grasp his doctrine of the Trinity, and it ensures the unity of Bavinck's thoughts.

Up until this point, the two Bavinck hypothesis and its criticism from the recent Bavinck scholarship are examined for the confirmation of Bavinck's theological identity, whether the two Bavincks lens is adequate recognition of Bavinck. It is the thought that expounding Bavinck's theology without accounting for the two Bavincks hypothesis and examining the recent criticism of this hypothesis will produce a distorted picture of Bavinck's theology and his life. In this regard, this article leads to the conclusion that it would be a misconception to read Bavinck through the lens of the two Bavincks hypothesis. It would be more reasonable to assume that there exists one Bavinck: Reformed theologian as a participant of modern culture. It is hoped that this article contributes to the good starting point for the study of Bavinck's theology and his life regarding the two Bavincks hypothesis.

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