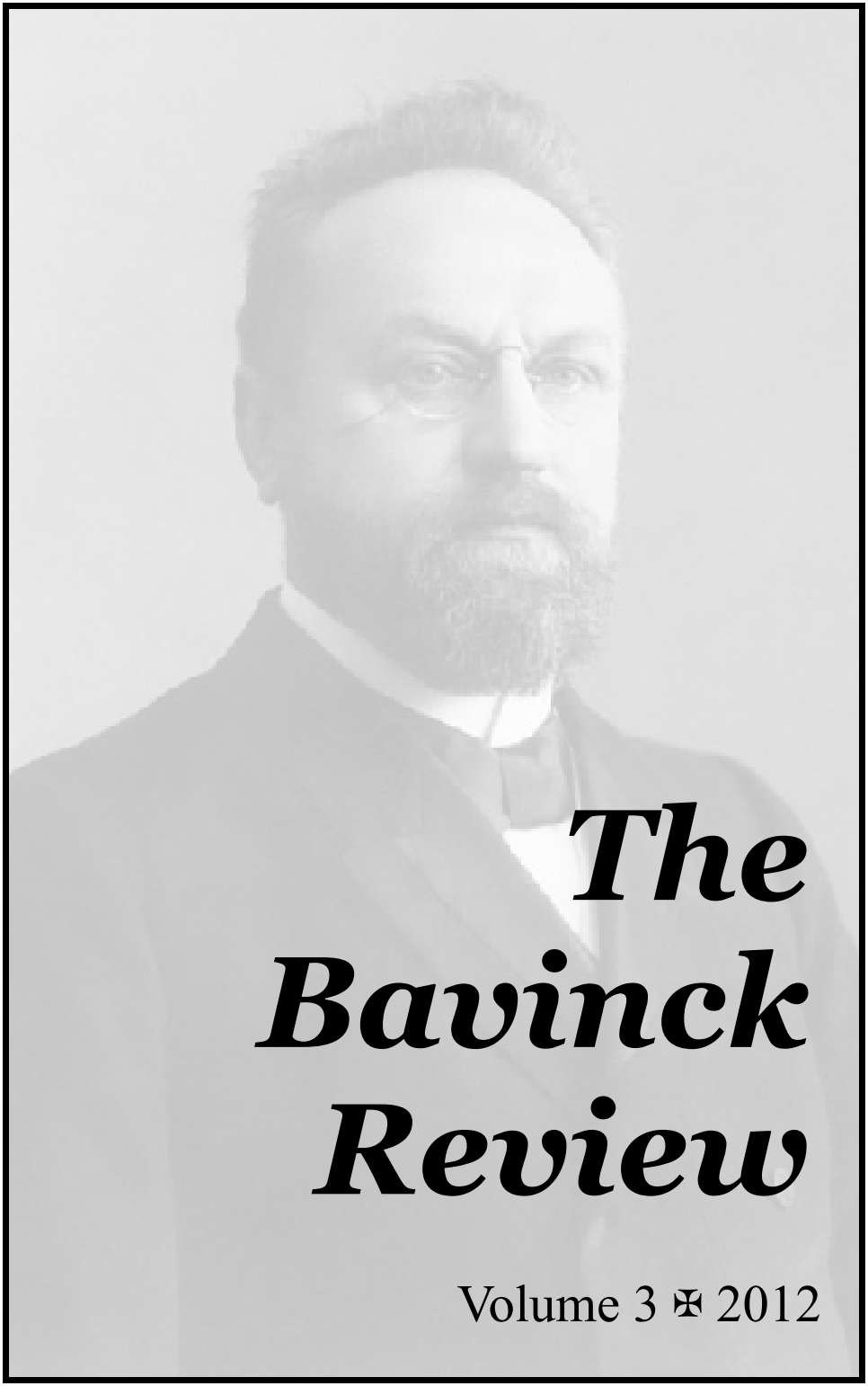


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Editorial

The 2011 Bavinck Conference

John Bolt
Calvin Theological Seminary

This third issue of *The Bavinck Review* is a few months late. Please accept our apologies. Except for the opening essay, the four main articles are the final versions of papers presented by younger Bavinck scholars whose proposals were awarded first prize standing for the 2011 Bavinck Conference, "After 9/11/11 . . . What? Reformed Theology and the Church's Global Mission Today," held on October 12–14, 2011, at Calvin Theological Seminary.

The claim of a number of scholars, led by Eugene Heideman and Jan Veehof, that "grace restores nature" is the key theme for understanding Bavinck has come under criticism in recent years. In particular, it has been suggested that "grace restoring nature" contributes to this-worldly triumphalism in which, for example, sin is understood "more as an offense against the creational norms than an offense against our personal relationship with God."[1] By bringing together under one purview Bavinck's "grace restoring nature" theme and Jonathan Edwards's insistence on salvation as "the implanting of something new" (regeneration), Dane Ortlund shows convincingly that these two themes (and thinkers) can be reconciled and hence belong together. Though they lived in different times and fought different battles, their vision of salvation

1. William D. Dennison, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism and the Roots for Transformation: An Introductory Essay," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (June 1999): 286.

for the individual person and for the eschatological goal of history were not at odds. Ortlund summarizes it nicely by asking, "Could we say, then, that *it is that which is new which restores*?" And further: "Salvation is *new normalcy*. Utter newness; yet also a return to our true home." That seems just right.

Robert Covolo uses Bavinck's doctrine of revelation to bring us beyond the Barth-Schleiermacher dilemma: revelation only from divine presence within creation or revelation only as a lightning bolt of illumination from on high—Absolute Dependence or "Nein!" After qualifying this conventional portrait somewhat, Covolo considers Jürgen Moltmann's theology as a possible way forward only to dismiss it and propose the "Herman and J.H. Bavinck accord" as the better way. This consensus includes the conviction that God continues to reveal himself in two ways, that both forms of revelation are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that special revelation has an epistemic priority over general revelation. This both-and posture (in contrast with the Barth-Schleiermacher dilemma) is of current value in the battle against secularism, provides for commonness with humanity along with ecclesiastical distinctiveness, and establishes a basis for theology to be both kerygmatic and apologetic. Covolo believes that this is a valuable guide for the future of Reformed theology.

Steven Duby's paper builds nicely on Covolo's by looking at Bavinck's appreciation for the viability of human knowledge as a natural given. Duby provides a helpful survey of Bavinck's theological-epistemological reflections on rationalism, empiricism, and idealism and applies it to the linguistic constructivism proposed by Stanley Grens and John Franke in their book *Beyond Foundationalism*. The key to Bavinck's coordination of nature and grace is his doctrine of the *imago Dei*. The Fall corrupted the *imago Dei* but did not annihilate human nature altogether. The work of the Holy Spirit in renewal therefore does not deactivate human reason but purifies it. The import of all this is the conviction that "the gospel does not impose upon us the task of asking unbelievers to become other than what they are as human beings; rather, it urges us to call unbelievers by faith to shift back toward true humanity as creatures living not by bread alone but by every word

of God." This also means an end to the faith-reason antithesis; in fact, faith itself is a *habitus* of the mind. We have here an answer to both atheism and pluralism.

Matthew Kaemingk's paper applies the sort of insights highlighted in my summary of the previous two essays to a Reformed theology of the work place. He borrows insights from Herman Bavinck's "robust theology of work" and Lesslie Newbigin's "vocational understanding of ecclesiology" and links them to Redeemer Presbyterian Church's "model of professional missions in New York City" in order to propose a model for urban church planters. If a theology of cultural engagement such as Bavinck's is to truly benefit the church, it must also answer ecclesiological questions about mission, preaching, worship, and communal life for urban professionals in today's world. Here, Kaemingh argues, Newbigin is helpful and provides a "workplace ecclesiology" that has been tried with great success by Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

The final essay, by Daniel Ahn, uses J.H. Bavinck's missiology as a template for interpreting the "Term Question" in Korean Bible translation. Does one use the name traditional Korean religions use for the Supreme God or create a neologism? Ahn tracks this discussion from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mission to China (Matteo Ricci and various papal decrees), through nineteenth-century Protestant missions to China (London Missionary Society), to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century mission to Korea (Methodist and, especially, Presbyterian). The story is fascinating, and the conclusion that a more sympathetic and respectful attitude toward Korean indigenous religions which led to using the native name for the Supreme God, *Hananim*, may have been a factor in the rapid growth of the Korean church is surprising and challenging.

This issue also provides two English translations. The first is Herman Bavinck's 1888 essay on "The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl." A key passage from this essay has been quoted frequently as an indicator of the double pull on Bavinck's mind and heart:

> Therefore, whereas salvation in Christ was formerly considered primarily a means to separate man from sin and the world, to prepare him for heavenly blessedness and to cause him to enjoy undisturbed fellowship with God there, Ritschl posits the very opposite relationship: the purpose of salvation is precisely to enable a person, once he is freed from the oppressive feeling of sin and lives in the awareness of being a child of God, to exercise his earthly vocation and fulfill his moral purpose in this world. . . . *Personally, I do not yet see any way of combining the two points of view, but I do know that there is much that is excellent in both, and that both contain undeniable truth*.

Now readers have the opportunity to read the entire essay and place this passage in the framework of Bavinck's full analysis of Ritschl's theology.

The second is Herman Bavinck's preface to the life and works of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. Though disagreeing with the Erskine's particular form of polity, Bavinck nevertheless admires the twofold emphasis upon personal salvation and societal renewal that shines through in their preaching, and he views this fruit of Scottish covenant theology as a keynote of Reformed piety.

Two final points. First, readers will notice a small but significant change in the journal masthead: an editorial board. With three issues of *TBR* under our belt we are moving to the next level by becoming a peer-reviewed journal. We will accept proposals for papers for the next issue. Please send them directly to the editor (bltj@calvinseminary.edu). Also, finally, a gentle reminder to members of The Bavinck Society who joined in 2009: we would be happy to receive your membership renewals.

The Bavinck Review 3 (2012): 9–29

"Created Over a Second Time" or "Grace Restoring Nature"? Edwards and Bavinck on the Heart of Christian Salvation

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Bible Publishing Director, Crossway

> Man must be converted twice, first from the natural to the spiritual life, and thereafter from the spiritual to the natural life.
>
> —Johann Cristoph Blumhardt

Perhaps the two thinkers being most significantly re-appropriated and re-appreciated in current evangelical theological discourse are Jonathan Edwards and Herman Bavinck. Barth has certainly been on the receiving end of a surge of interest of late, as has Calvin with the recent celebration of his five hundredth birthday. Others too could be mentioned as enjoying fresh stage time such as B. B. Warfield to whom there has finally been devoted a synthetic explication of his thought;[1] Charles Hodge, whose relation to Scottish Common Sense Realism and alleged rationalism is being hotly discussed;[2] Cornelius Van Til, whose

1. Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010); note also the forthcoming volume by the same author, *Warfield on the Christian Life: Living in Light of the Gospel,* Theologians on the Christian Life (Wheaton: Crossway). See also the recently published dissertation by David P. Smith, *B. B. Warfield's Scientifically Constructive Theological Scholarship,* Evangelical Theological Society Monographs (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), which debunks reductionistic views of Warfield's alleged "dictation" theory of inspiration.

2. Along with Smith's work mentioned in the previous footnote, see, e.g., Paul Kjoss Helseth, *"Right Reason" and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2010); Paul C. Gutjahr,

presuppositionalism continues to gain advocates in the conservative reformed world;[3] and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to whom much recent secondary literature has been devoted.[4]

But Edwards and Bavinck stand out uniquely, especially among conservative Reformed theologians presently being rediscovered.[5] It is not a difficult case to make for Edwards, whose three hundredth birthday in 2003 brought a steady stream of study of him in the later years of the twentieth century to a climactic explosion. Bavinck has received much less attention, but the translation into English of his four-volume *Reformed Dogmatics* between 2003 and 2008 is drawing an increasing amount of attention to his thought, and rightly so.[6] Richard Gaffin suggests that the *Reformed Dogmatics* is "the most important systematic theology ever produced in the Reformed tradition."[7] My own reading of Bavinck has been impressed with the unusual integration of disciplines in his work, especially the twin disciplines of dogmatics and exegesis. For Bavinck, exegesis and doctrine, text and truth, the descriptive and the prescriptive, what it meant and what it means, were vitally wedded and mutually reinforcing.

Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

3. E.g., John Muether, *Cornelius Van Til: Reformed Apologist and Churchman,* American Reformed Biographies (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008).

4. Among which the most acclaimed has been Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011).

5. Both now have extensive bibliographies dedicated to them. On Edwards, see M. X. Lesser, *Reading Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography in Three Parts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). On Bavinck, see Eric D. Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008); and, for works since 2008, note the annually published "Bavinck Bibliography" in *The Bavinck Review*.

6. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* 4 vols., ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008); hereafter referenced as *RD*. Ron Gleason wrote a dissertation on Bavinck which will be mentioned below. Gleason also produced the first major English-language biography of Bavinck: Ronald N. Gleason, *Herman Bavinck: Pastor, Churchman, Statesman, and Theologian* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010).

7. From the back cover of *Reformed Dogmatics*.

On which Edwards would wholeheartedly agree! Nor is that the only similarity between the two. To be sure, Edwards is an American from the eighteenth century and Bavinck a Dutchman from the nineteenth and into the twentieth, and the two ought not to be overlaid in a simplistic or reductionistic way. Yet both are staunchly Reformed thinkers who are nevertheless not shy about questioning long-held categories and assumptions, blending a massive vision of God, unapologetically Calvinistic soteriology, profound saturation in the biblical text, penetrating insight into the psychology of religion,[8] and a heart for the church, to name a few similarities.[9]

It is therefore striking to note that when it comes to delineating the very heart of Christian salvation, there appears at first glance to be a fundamental difference. Edwards tends to speak of salvation as *the implantation of something completely new*. Bavinck prefers to speak of salvation as *the healing of what was there, though marred through sin*. Edwards emphasizes discontinuity between one's past and what one now is as a believer, while Bavinck emphasizes continuity. For Edwards, salvation is cast most frequently in terms of regeneration; for Bavinck, in terms of restoration.[10]

8. For Bavinck this was true especially of his later years; e.g., see Herman Bavinck, *Bijbelsche en religieuze psychologie* (Kampen: Kok, 1920); note also *RD*, 3:556–64; "Psychology of Religion," in Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society,* ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 61–80.

9. Similarities of more trivial significance could be proliferated. One that has struck me is the way both reject faith as an "instrument" in justification, seeing such a way of casting things as too mechanical; faith rather, is the actual uniting with Christ (Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 19, *Sermons and Discourses, 1734–1738,* ed. M. X. Lesser [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001], esp. 160) or receiving of Christ (Bavinck, *RD,* 4:221–22). Cf. Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal,* rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 100–1; William B. Evans, *Imputation and Impartation: Union with Christ in American Reformed Theology,* Studies in Christian History and Thought (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 102.

10. Bavinck, chronologically later than Edwards, interacts with select features of Edwards's thought in the *Dogmatics*. See *RD*, 3:100, 109–10, 121–22,

After clarifying briefly both Edwards's and Bavinck's descriptions of the heart of salvation in their own words, I will suggest four ways in which the two thinkers can be reconciled. This will lead to a brief trio of ways in which what has been unearthed in this paper can be instructive for the church today.

Jonathan Edwards

We must restrict ourselves in what follows to a handful of representative statements from Edwards and then from Bavinck on salvation.

One need not range far and wide in the Edwards corpus to get a sense of the programmatic importance to him of regeneration in making sense of the Christian life. The new birth, and its concomitant spiritually awakened taste buds, find their way into many of his sermons and treatises. We will focus here on the way Edwards highlights the radical anthropological discontinuity introduced in the new birth between what one was and what one now is.[11]

In the 1723 sermon "A Spiritual Understanding of Divine Things Denied to the Unregenerate"—the title of which captures so much of the heart of Edwards's theology—the New England pastor

350, 463, 534; 4:159; cf. Bavinck's historical assessment of Edwards's role in North American Calvinism at 1:201–2.

11. The question of whether Edwards's theology of the "new sense of the heart" is essentially continuous or discontinuous with one's pre-regenerate state has been heavily debated among Edwards scholars since Perry Miller's "Jonathan Edwards on the Sense of the Heart," *The Harvard Theological Review* 41 (1948): 123–45. I do side with those, such as Paul Helm and David Lyttle, who emphasize discontinuity; see Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9–10. Yet I cannot enter the debate here. More importantly, among interpreters of Edwards who share his supernaturalistic convictions and basic theology of original sin and regeneration, there is general consensus that there is something more going on in conversion and the new sense that accompanies it than simply a non-transcendental "perception" or "apprehension," as Miller put it. Finally, *compared with Bavinck*, Edwards is clearly emphasizing discontinuity.

writes that the Christian is so revolutionized that "he is become quite another man than he was before."[12] His new spiritual knowledge "is so substantial, so inward, and so affecting, that it has quite transformed the soul and put a new nature into the man, has quite changed his very innermost principles, and has made things otherwise, even from the very foundation, even so that all things are become new to them."[13] In a nutshell, "he is a new creature, he is just as if he was not the same, but were born again, created over a second time."[14]

Such a description of salvation is not, for Edwards, anomalous. Speaking in *Religious Affections* of the new nature wrought in regeneration, he writes that "'tis the power of a Creator only that can change the nature, or give a new nature." For this reason the biblical portrayals of salvation indicate "a change of nature: such as being born again; becoming new creatures; rising from the dead; being renewed in the spirit of the mind; dying to sin, and living to righteousness . . . a having a divine seed implanted in the heart; a being made partakers of the divine nature, etc."[15]

This fundamental change is a theme that echoes throughout *Religious Affections*. The explanation of the first sign of authentic affections is especially pertinent. "The true saints only," says Edwards, "have that which is spiritual; others have nothing which is divine, in the sense that has been spoken of. They not only have not these communications of the Spirit of God in so high a *degree* as the saints, but have nothing of that *nature* or *kind*."[16] Edwards then goes to one of his favorite texts in describing Christian salvation: John 3. "Christ teaches the necessity of a new birth, or a being born of the Spirit, from this, that he that is born of the flesh, has only

12. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 14, *Sermons and Discourses, 1723–1729,* ed. Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 81.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections,* ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 340.

16. Ibid., 203.

flesh, and no spirit (John 3:6). They have not the Spirit of God dwelling in them in any degree."[17] In short, the "gracious influences which the saints are subjects of . . . are entirely above nature, altogether of a different kind from anything that men find within themselves by nature."[18]

Edwards appeals to John 3 again in his treatise defending the orthodox doctrine of original sin, again reiterating the vast change required in salvation. Commenting on John 3:6 ("That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"), Edwards writes that Christ's language here indicates

> that what is born in the first birth of man, is nothing but man as he is of himself, without anything divine in him; depraved, debased, sinful, ruined man, utterly unfit to enter into the kingdom of God, and incapable of the spiritual divine happiness of that kingdom: but that which is born in the new birth, of the Spirit of God, is a spiritual principle, and holy and divine nature, meet for the divine and heavenly kingdom.[19]

What is needed, Edwards goes on to say, is "a renovation, a change of mind, a new heart, etc. in order to salvation."[20]

In a 1739 sermon he describes the divine wrath awaiting the impenitent: "Thus are all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life."[21] Salvation, according to Edwards, involves being brought to a "new, and *before altogether unexperienced* light and life."

17. Ibid., 203–4.

18. Ibid., 205.

19. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 3, *Original Sin,* ed. Clyde A. Holbrook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 279–80.

20. Ibid., 280. This anthropological metamorphosis is given extended treatment late in *Original Sin,* 365–69.

21. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 22, *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742,* ed. Harry S. Stout (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 411.

A Christian is fundamentally new. "Persons after their conversion often speak of things of religion as seeming new to them; that preaching is a new thing . . . that the Bible is a new book: they find there new chapters, new psalms, new histories, because they see them in a new light."[22] When Conrad Cherry writes that Edwards's view of conversion "is grounded in the conviction that an immense chasm exists between nature and grace," Cherry places Edwards in seemingly stark contradiction with Herman Bavinck, to whom we now turn.[23]

Herman Bavinck

In Ron Gleason's 2001 dissertation on Bavinck,[24] he notes that no fewer than three major monographs on Bavinck argue that "grace restoring nature" is the center of Bavinck's thought.[25] That is,

22. From "A Narrative of Surprising Conversions," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 4, *The Great Awakening,* ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 181.

23. Cherry, *Theology*, 58. Cherry elsewhere says: "In the Spirit's supernatural or saving influence . . . nature is not simply assisted. Man is now given a basis from beyond himself" (32). For more secondary literature exploring Edwards's insight into and emphasis on the new birth and the discontinuity it introduces into the convert's life, see Clyde A. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973), esp. 23; Robert W. Jenson, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Theologian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 66–73; Cherry, *Theology*, 30, 37–38, 56–70; George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 157–58, 286; Stephen J. Nichols, *An Absolute Sort of Certainty: The Holy Spirit and the Apologetics of Jonathan Edwards* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), esp. 47–75; William J. Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 124–28; Dane Ortlund, *A New Inner Relish: Christian Motivation in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008), passim.

24. Ronald N. Gleason, "The Centrality of the *unio mystica* in the Theology of Herman Bavinck" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2001). I am grateful to Dr. Gleason for sending me his dissertation.

25. The three works are: E. P. Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason in E. Brunner and H. Bavinck* (Assen: van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1959); Jan Veenhof, *Revelation en Inspiratie: De Openbarings- en Schriftbeschouwing*

the grace of God in the gospel saves a fallen race and a fallen cosmos not by scrapping them and starting over but by restoring them to their true design and purpose. My own reading of Bavinck confirms this. Christian salvation is the re-establishing of the goodness of creation. In Bavinck's words, "grace does not abolish nature, but affirms and restores it."[26] "[T]he form (*forma*), given in creation, was *de*formed by sin in order to be entirely *re*formed again in the sphere of grace" (*RD,* 2:574).

In an 1888 essay on Albrecht Ritschl's theology, Bavinck wrote:

> [W]hereas salvation in Christ was formerly considered primarily a means to separate man from sin and the world, to prepare him for heavenly blessedness and to cause him to enjoy undisturbed fellowship with God there, Ritschl posits the very opposite relationship: the purpose of salvation in Christ is precisely to enable a person, once he is freed from the oppressive feeling of sin and lives in the awareness of being a child of God, to exercise his earthly vocation and fulfill his moral purpose in this world.[27]

Bavinck went on in that essay to say, "Personally, I do not yet see any way of combining the two points of view, but I do know that there is much that is excellent in both, and that both contain undeniable truth." Over the rest of his long career, however, Bavinck would continue to wrestle with this question and move into a position that carried forward Ritschl's non-separatistic, world-affirming impulse without any of his de-supernaturalizing baggage.

In the *Reformed Dogmatics*, and a smattering of other smaller works, we find Bavinck's mature thinking on this question. In a

van Herman Bavinck in vergelijking met die der ethische theologie (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn N.V., 1968); John Bolt, "The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck" (PhD diss., Toronto School of Theology, 1982). Gleason himself argues that union with Christ is "the true 'hub' around which [Bavinck's] theology turns." "Centrality of the *unio mystica*," 1.

26. Herman Bavinck, *De algemene genade: rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School te Kampen op 6 Dec. 1894* (Zalsman, 1894), 48; quoted in Jan Veenhof, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck,* trans. Albert M. Wolters (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), 17.

27. Herman Bavinck, "De Theologie van Albrecht Ritschl," *Theologische Studiën* 6 (1888): 397; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 8.

crucial statement he says: "Grace serves, not to take up humans into a supernatural order, but to free them from sin. Grace is opposed not to nature, only to sin. . . . Grace restores nature and takes it to its highest pinnacle, but it does not add to it any new and heterogeneous constituents" (*RD,* 3:577). Christian salvation is not the adding of something new so much as it is the subtracting of that which is corrupting. "The re-creation is not a second, new creation. It does not introduce any new substance into it, but it is truly 're-formation.'"[28] Bavinck is keen throughout the *Dogmatics* to clarify that the Roman Catholic notion of "supernatural" grace is thus misleading. "Grace only works 'supernaturally' because it takes away the incapacity deriving from fallen nature and restores the capacity to do good deriving from original nature" (*RD,* 3:578; cf. 2:545, 573–76). Thus even when discussing regeneration, which is arguably that aspect of salvation that lends itself most readily to discontinuity between the pre-conversion and the post-conversion state, Bavinck writes: "Regeneration, in a word, does not remove anything from us other than what, if all were well, we should do without, and it restores to us what we, in keeping with the design of our being, should have but lost as a result of sin" (*RD,* 4:93).

Bavinck therefore speaks of the Christian as the one who is most fully human. "A priest in the Lord's temple, the believer is therefore king of the whole earth. Because he is a Christian, he is a man in the full and truest sense."[29] This restorative project is, moreover, a work of the triune God: "Christ did not come only to restore the ethical-religious life of man, and to leave all the rest untouched as though this had not been corrupted by sin and did not stand in need of restoration. No, the love of God, the grace of the Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit extend as far as sin."[30]

28. *RD*, 3:578; see also Herman Bavinck, "John Calvin: A Lecture on the Occasion of His 400th Birthday, July 10, 1509–1909," trans. John Bolt, *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010): 68, commenting on Calvin's thought.

29. Herman Bavinck, *De zekerheid des geloofs* (Kampen: Kok, 1901), 103; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 30. Bavinck sees this view (of the Christian as the true human) in Calvin; see Bavinck, "John Calvin," 70.

All this flows out of Bavinck's relentless aim to recover the doctrine of *creation*, which he found neglected in much of the conservative Dutch reformed church a century ago. Again and again he spoke of Christian salvation in terms of "creation regained."[31] "The whole re-creation, as it will be completed in the new heaven and the new earth, is the fruit of the work of Christ" (*RD,* 3:380; cf. 451–52). Christ is "the author of the re-creation of all things" (*RD,* 3:338). Salvation is re-creation because salvation is simply the elimination of sin—now, in its condemnation; progressively, in its power; and one day, in its entire presence. Thus for the individual, in the new birth "the continuity of the self, their entire human nature with all its capacities and powers, is maintained." Bavinck then connects this re-creation and the elimination of sin to the cosmos: "when the re-creation removes sin from creation, it does not deprive it of anything essential. . . . For sin is not part of the essence of creation; it pushed its way in later, as something unnatural and contrary to nature. Sin is deformity. When re-creation removes sin, it does not violate and suppress nature, but restores it" (*RD,* 4:92).

This focus on the neglected doctrine of "God's *good* creation"[32] is related to Bavinck's insistence on the inherent goodness of created matter, especially the human body. This comes through, for example, when he makes the striking statement that "creation, incarnation, and resurrection are the fundamental facts of Christianity and at the same time the bulwarks against all error in life and doctrine."[33] All three of these, we note, introduce or re-introduce blessed human corporeality into the world. The glorious physicality of these three events is explored in depth elsewhere in

30. Bavinck, *De algemene genade*, 47; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 20.

31. I draw the phrase from Albert M. Wolters' excellent book, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

32. John Bolt, editor's introduction to ch. 8, in *RD,* 2:406.

33. Herman Bavinck, *Calvin and Common Grace,* trans. Geerhardus Vos (New York: Westminster, 1909), 3.

the Bavinck corpus. Regarding the resurrection, for example, he argues that Jesus's physical resurrection is a definitive statement from God about the goodness of the original created order: "The bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead is conclusive proof that Christianity does not adopt a hostile attitude toward anything human or natural, but intends only to deliver creation from all that is sinful, and to sanctify it completely."[34] Bavinck even connects regeneration with bodily redemption (*RD,* 4:93–94). Elsewhere he draws out the corporeality and earthiness of the final judgment (*RD,* 4:701).

All this is not to say that Bavinck saw redemption as the restoring of Eden such that we are placed once more in the precarious position into which Adam was placed—which Bavinck would describe, in his thoroughly Reformed way, as discharging the covenant of works such that the probationary period of the Garden ended and eternal life was given to Adam. No, "Christ does not merely restore his own to the state of Adam before the fall. He acquired and bestows much more, namely, that which Adam would have received had he not fallen. He positions us not just at the beginning but at the end of the journey that Adam had to complete."[35] For Bavinck, the grace of Christian salvation, grace that "repairs and perfects nature" both on the individual and the cosmic level, does not replace but restores the goodness of creation (*RD,* 3:226).

Toward a Reconciliation

How then shall the two be reconciled? This is not a matter of who is "right" to the exclusion of the other so much as it is an effort to ask how these different descriptions of salvation might be wisely and fruitfully integrated. I will suggest four avenues of reconciliation. These are suggestive rather than exhaustive. As we

34. Herman Bavinck, *De offerande des lofs: overdenkingen voor en na de toelating tot het heilige avondmaal* (Gravenhage: J.C. De Mildt, 1907), 52; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 21.

35. *RD*, 2:573; Veenhof emphasizes this point in *Nature and Grace*, 24–26.

make these attempts at reconciliation, we should resist any temptation to impose a forced harmonization onto the two thinkers. If, after the dust settles, there remains legitimately irreconcilable strands of theological difference between Edwards and Bavinck, historiographical integrity compels us to submit to that.

1. Bavinck and Edwards *did* say what the other emphasized. The first thing to be said is simply a caution to restrain ourselves from exaggerating the distance between Edwards's emphasis on discontinuity and Bavinck's emphasis on continuity. For they are just that: emphases.

Consider Edwards's exploration of the *restorative* nature of salvation in a 1739 sermon:

> Christ, in coming down upon the children of men and dispensing his benefits to them, does actually refresh, revive and restore them as the rain doth the mown grass. Thus he restores poor, fallen man after he was cut down to the ground and there seemed to be no hope of his recovery. Whoever should have looked upon him then, while he remained in his fallen state, before God revealed his manifest design, would have pronounced his case past all hope and would have given him over for lost.
>
> But Christ comes down from heaven on this fallen, miserable creature and gives life from the dead. He restores that which Satan had cut down. He heals that mortal wound that he had given. . . . He restores the image of God after it had been wholly defaced. He restores spiritual life after it had been wholly extinct. He restores to God's favor. He restores, and much more than restores, to the former state of happiness, for he brings to a better paradise and a more excellent state of honor and an higher degree of communion with God.[36]

Conversely, Bavinck spoke not infrequently of the categorical *newness* of what is introduced when one is born again.

> In regeneration the Holy Spirit does not merely by the Word illumine the intellect but also directly and immediately infuses new affections into the will. (*RD,* 3:580)

36. Edwards, "Like Rain upon Mown Grass," in *Sermons and Discourses, 1739–1742*, 310. See also "The Subjects of a First Work of Grace May Need a New Conversion," in ibid., 190; *Charity and Its Fruits*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 8, *Ethical Writings,* ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 253–54.

> By faith Christ or his Spirit is the author and origin of new life in those who are called (Gal. 3:2; 4:6) so that now they are very different, new, and spiritual people. The old has gone; all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). (*RD,* 4:50)
>
> Regeneration . . . consists in dying to the "old man" that must not only be suppressed but also killed and in the rising of *a totally new person* created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.[37]
>
> Having received [the] Spirit, believers have become very different. They have become new, spiritual people. (*RD,* 4:89)
>
> There is a very great difference between the natural and the pneumatic. (*RD,* 2:564)

And so on.[38] This is not to obliterate the distinction between Edwards and Bavinck. The two often sound quite different in articulating the heart of salvation.[39] But we must be careful that in our cherry-picking of statements from each thinker we do not give the impression that this is all that either said about salvation.

2. The second avenue of reconciliation is to remember the different historical contexts of Edwards and Bavinck.

37. *RD*, 4:72 (emphasis added). Bavinck is here describing specifically the Reformed view of regeneration, but he seems (as elsewhere throughout the *Dogmatics*) to be aligning himself with this view.

38. Note esp. Aart Goedvree, "An Impenetrable Mystery: Herman Bavinck's Concept of Regeneration and Its Sources," *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 128–32, though even Goedvree acknowledges the relative brevity of Bavinck's treatment of calling and regeneration (p. 128). One might expect to find material relevant to the present essay in a series of articles by Bavinck in *De Bazuin* ("The Trumpet") in 1901–1902, translated as *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration,* ed. J. Mark Beach, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2008). But the material here does not directly address the questions we are raising; rather, the book deals with issues concerning the timing of regeneration and what can be said concerning the spiritual state of infants and children.

39. Even Bavinck's chapter on "Calling and Regeneration" closes by driving home once more that even regeneration is not something categorically new, but a return to the good created order: "At the same time," he says, "according to Scripture, regeneration does not exist either in a totally new second creation. In not a single respect does it introduce any new substance into the existing creation." *RD*, 4:92.

Edwards, for his part, spent much of his life seeking to stem the tide against an encroaching Arminianism that elevated the ability of man and softened the need for a radical, divinely wrought work of God on the human heart. Edwards engages Arminianism head-on in his *Freedom of the Will*.[40] One thinks also of Edwards's engagement with John Taylor in *Original Sin*. Edwards was arguing against Taylor's diminution of both the nature of sin and the grace required to counteract it, so an emphasis on the change required was of course natural and appropriate.[41]

Also, Edwards did much of his writing in the midst, and in the wake, of revival. When he wrote of the utterly new change that takes place in the new birth, he had in mind not least those many instances of spurious conversion which were giving the Great Awakening a bad name. Edwards was not speaking in pure theoretical abstraction when he wrote in *Religious Affections* that "if there be no great and remarkable, abiding change in persons, that think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations and pretenses, however they have been affected."[42] He had in mind specific instances of the very thing against which he is here warning. Whether it was the Spirit-quenching Charles Chauncey's on one side or the Spirit-abusing James Davenport's on the other, Edwards was insistent on being a clarifying voice for authentic conversion. Such conversion, Edwards reiterated, involves something radically and vitally new—neither the fleshly stoicism of the Chauncey's nor the fleshly enthusiasm of the Davenport's was an authentic work of the Spirit.[43]

40. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, *The Freedom of the Will,* ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). Cf. Jenson, *Jonathan Edwards*, 53–57; Allen C. Guelzo, "Freedom of the Will," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards,* ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 118–20.

41. See Clyde Holbrook's introductory comments in *Original Sin*, 68–70.

42. *Religious Affections*, 340.

43. Philip Gura, following Perry Miller, chalks up Edwards's theology of the "new sense of the heart" to the influence on Edwards of contemporary philosophies such as the Cambridge Platonists and Lockean empiricism—which is surely right to a point, but Gura emphasizes philosophical influence to the

Bavinck's battle was different. He was combating, on one front, continental Roman Catholicism; on another front, the two-kingdoms perspective of Lutheranism; on yet a third front, Pietism and Methodism.[44] All of these, despite their differences, tended to dichotomize Christian salvation in such a way that nature and grace—what we are by virtue of creation and what we are by virtue of redemption—were kept overly separate.[45] Time and again in his writings, therefore, Bavinck locks horns with this wrongly bifurcated view of the nature of the Christian. "It is really impossible," writes Veenhof, "to disengage Bavinck's own views on nature and grace from his dignified but incisive polemics."[46] To take Pietism as an example, Bavinck writes that "never do we find here genuine, true, full reformation; there is only a rescuing and snatching of individuals out of the world, which lies in wickedness."[47] We thus find Bavinck writing to a friend concerning "the separatistic and sectarian tendencies that sometimes manifest themselves in our church."[48] One sees Bavinck's rejection of such separatism in the biographical details of his own life—for example, in his decision as a young man to go to school at the University of Leiden rather than the conservative Theological Seminary at Kampen.[49]

In short, while both Bavinck and Edwards would readily ascribe to the universal transcendence of biblical truth, each was definably ensconced in his own historical context, funneling that

neglect of Scriptural influence in Edwards's theology (which I have argued at greater length in *New Inner Relish*, 109–10, n. 39). See Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America's Evangelical* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2005), 66–69, 227–38.

44. See Goedvree, "Impenetrable Mystery," 129. On Bavinck's engagement with Roman Catholicism see esp. Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 9–14.

45. See Bolt, "Imitation of Christ," 119.

46. Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 9.

47. Quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 15.

48. Valentijn Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1921), 147; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 38 n. 34.

49. See Gleason, *Herman Bavinck*, 45–68.

transcendent truth into that particular milieu. Awareness of this helps explain their respective soteriological emphases.

3. In our final two efforts at reconciliation we move to more constructive reflection—not simply explaining the difference between Edwards and Bavinck, but integrating the two. We consider, third, the *scope* that each had in mind in speaking of salvation.

Edwards, in speaking of salvation as totally new, has in mind *the life history of the individual*. The converted Christian has no previous experience of this new "sense of the heart." Bavinck, in speaking of salvation as restorative, has in mind *the life history of the human race*. The converted Christian is restored to that which he was previously *in his father Adam*. This is not to negate Edwards's own robust sensitivity to redemptive history, which comes through clearly in his *History of the Work of Redemption*.[50] It is to say that when Edwards speaks of Christian salvation, he emphasizes that which is new because he is zeroing in on the individual, not thinking of all of biblical history. In comparing the Christian with his past, Edwards has in mind mainly the pre-regenerate state, no further. Bavinck tends to have in mind the original created order in Eden. If we think in terms of the biblical-theological movements of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, we might say that Edwards tends to have in view stages two and three; Bavinck has in view stages one through four.

4. Our fourth and final point is to call in the pervasive macro-structure of the New Testament, the "already/not yet" framework of inaugurated eschatology. By this we understand that in Jesus, the latter-day endtime age has been decisively launched, while the final consummation has not been fully realized. We are now living in the overlap of the ages—the new age has begun, yet the old age has not

50. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 9, *A History of the Work of Redemption,* ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

yet ended. One thinks here especially of Ladd, taken up more recently by Schreiner and, in fresh ways, Beale.[51]

Specifically regarding salvation, perhaps Edwards focuses on the already and Bavinck the not yet. Take the motif of resurrection, for example. In *Original Sin*, Edwards says: "To be born again is to be born anew; which implies a becoming new, and is represented as a becoming new-born babes"—and then, in a clarification with which Bavinck may have been uncomfortable—"but none supposes, it is the body, that is immediately and properly new, but the mind, heart, or spirit. And so a spiritual resurrection is the resurrection of the spirit or rising to begin a new existence and life, as to the mind, heart or spirit."[52] Bavinck would probably agree with this, yet he would be eager to add that regeneration involves not only being raised spiritually now, but also being raised physically later.[53] Edwards would quickly acknowledge the latter, but Bavinck was constantly pushing for a recovery of understanding salvation as restoring the created order, which largely refers to that which is not yet. Even "spiritual redemption from sin," Bavinck says, "is only fully completed in bodily redemption at the end of time" (*RD,* 4:694).

Perhaps, then, the soteriological rubric of *new creation*, to which both Edwards and Bavinck at times appeal, is uniquely suited to satisfyingly integrate their respective emphases. Salvation introduces something utterly *new*, as Edwards reminds us; yet this something new, as Bavinck reminds us, is itself a restoration of what the human race originally experienced at *creation*. Greg Beale

51. George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament,* rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

52. *Original Sin*, 366.

53. See *RD*, 4:693–98. Richard B. Gaffin helpfully brings both together in *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology,* 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), where he usefully employs 2 Corinthians 5:7 to explain that we are raised spiritually already ("we walk by faith") but not yet physically ("not by sight").

has convinced me that new creation is the most satisfying rubric under which all the other salvific metaphors can be subsumed.[54] Might the caption of new creation be applied not only in the arena of biblical theology but also in that of historical theology in seeking to reconcile Bavinck and Edwards on salvation?

Could we say, then, that *it is that which is new, which restores*? With Edwards, the grace that floods our lives in the new birth is not reformation but transformation; not more of the same kind, but a new kind; not healing for the wounded, but life for the dead; not medication but resurrection. Yet, with Bavinck, this very newness does not land on us in such a way that we find ourselves bewildered, wondering who and where we are. Rather we experience what Jewel the unicorn discovered in *The Last Battle* at the end of all things in Narnia: "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now."[55] Regeneration does not add a new category, "a sixth sense,"[56] but rather is an overhaul of all our senses such that we now employ them as we were originally meant to—"not yet" perfectly, but "already" truly.

In brief: salvation is *new normalcy*. Utter newness; yet also a return to our true home.

54. Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, passim. Similarly William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21–22 and the Old Testament* (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer Books, 1985), who argues that five motifs that snowball through the whole Bible and are brought to culmination in its last two chapters: the new Jerusalem, the new Israel, the new temple, the new covenant, and the new creation. Dumbrell further suggests that new creation is the theme under which the other four can be subsumed.

55. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 213.

56. A phrase Marsden uses to describe Edwards's theology of the "sense of the heart." *Jonathan Edwards*, 96.

Implications for the Life of the Church Today

We close by reflecting briefly on what we can learn in the contemporary Christian church from the tension explored in this paper. Three points present themselves.

1. *Theological balance*. As with so many theological tensions, balance is crucial. Can we receive what both Edwards and Bavinck emphasize, filter it through Scripture, and emerge wiser and deeper Christian leaders on the other side? If we appropriate Edwards's soteriological emphasis to the neglect of Bavinck's, we may downplay the image of God in all people, the reality of common grace upon all people, and the presence of ongoing sin in the lives of even the regenerate. If, on the other hand, we receive Bavinck's emphasis to the neglect of Edwards's, we may downplay the deadness in sin in which all unbelievers live, the corresponding need for a radical resurrection due to natural depravity, and the availability of the new birth to get us there.

2. *Evangelistic appeal*. As we present the gospel to lost men and women in our teaching and preaching and writing, we are inviting them to become both *new* and *normal*. They are being invited into something totally new, into life itself. Yet they are also returning to their true normalcy. They are becoming human; truly human; fully human. As Bavinck said, "The Christian is the true man."[57] Christians are not odd; they are not strange; they are restored to the way humans were created to be—not yet perfectly, but truly nonetheless. To come to Christ, to be born again and made new, is to come home at last. It is to return. Can we not bear this in mind as we have our unbelieving neighbors over for cookouts? We are inviting them to Christ; we are inviting them *home*.

57. Herman Bavinck, *De Bazuin* 41 (Sept. 26, 1902): 41; quoted in Veenhof, *Nature and Grace*, 31. Veenhof comments: "Continually and emphatically, Bavinck insists that the Christian is the true man, is truly human. As directed to non-Christians, this meant: to be truly human, in accordance with your Creator's purpose, you must have faith! As directed to his fellow Christians, it meant: if you are a Christian, a Christian in the full sense of the word, then you are no peculiar, eccentric human being, but you are fully *human*. To be Christian means to be *human*. It is man's *humanity* that is redeemed." *Nature and Grace*, 31.

3. *Future hope*. I am thinking especially of Bavinck's contribution here. Despite the efforts of some Christian leaders today to recover the continuity between our physical existence in this world and that in the next—who knew that N. T. Wright and Randy Alcorn would find in one another such a vocal ally[58]—our Protestant eschatological intuitions continue to encourage us to envision the final future state as one of non-physical, ghost-like floaty-ness. Bavinck helped a generation of Dutch believers to shed an adolescent view of a boring future afterlife floating about in disembodied ethereal existence and to mature into the wonderful biblical vision of God's coming restoration of Eden and renewal of this world, ruled by a redeemed humanity of incorruptible though fully physical bodies, of which Jesus himself is the first installment. Bavinck's vision of a restored cosmos ruled by restored human beings is a word in season to us all. This world, and these bodies, will not be "left behind."[59] They will be transformed and restored. While on the one hand the new earth will be an arena in which the exquisite delights of perfect, never-ending, and ever-increasing love will be enjoyed (à la Edwards[60]), these delights will be mediated through Eden-like, though glorified, bodies (à la Bavinck[61]).

Conclusion

Jonathan Edwards and Herman Bavinck did not agree down to every theological jot and tittle, nor should they be expected to.[62] Yet in light of the massive overlap between their respective theologies,

58. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008); Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2004). Both seek to recover the earthiness and corporeality of the final future state.

59. Note Benjamin L. Merkle, "Who Will Be Left Behind? Rethinking the Meaning of Matthew 24:40–41 and Luke 17:34–35," *Westminster Theological Journal* 72 (2010): 169–79, who rightly argues that those "left behind" in the relevant passages are Christ's followers, not unbelievers.

60. See esp. Edwards, "Heaven Is a World of Love," the fifteenth and final sermon in Edwards's series "Charity and Its Fruits," in *Ethical Writings*, 366–97.

61. See esp. *RD,* 4:715–30.

and the confidence in them that has been justly won in the generations since their deaths, especially recently, it is striking to note their divergent emphases on the heart of salvation. Edwards emphasizes discontinuity, Bavinck continuity. Edwards most often makes regeneration the controlling image, Bavinck restoration.

As we respect their distinct historical contexts, and being careful not to manipulate any artificial agreement, I suggest that both emphases can be integrated. This can be done especially by remembering the distinct individual and redemptive historical lenses through which salvation can be viewed, as well as the already/not yet framework of biblical theology. It is that which is new, which restores. Christian salvation is new normalcy.

62. One interesting point of difference I have come across is Bavinck's resistance to speaking of God's "beauty," leaving this to Roman Catholicism and preferring to speak of God's "majesty" or "glory" (*RD*, 2:254–55). Edwards, as Augustine before him, was comfortable speaking not only of God's beauty but also of divine beauty or "harmony." The transference of such beauty to the elect in salvation might even be argued to be the center of Edwards's theology; cf. Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 249–50; Sang Hyun Lee, "Edwards and Beauty," in *Understanding Jonathan Edwards: An Introduction to America's Theologian,* ed. Gerald R. McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 113–26.

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Beyond the Schleiermacher-Barth Dilemma: General Revelation, Bavinckian Consensus, and the Future of Reformed Theology

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> We find ourselves at the end of the twentieth century confronted with a set of mutually exclusive approaches to theology that appear to brook no compromise.
>
> —D. Lyle Dabney, in *The Future of Theology*

> Special revelation certainly is set antithetically over against all the corruption which gradually entered into the life of the peoples, but it takes up, confirms, and completes all that had been from the beginning put into human nature by revelation and had been preserved and increased subsequently in the human race. The earlier view, which exclusively emphasized the antithesis, no less than that now prevalent which has an eye only for the agreement and affinity, suffers from one sidedness.
>
> —Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation*

The Schleiermacher-Barth Dilemma

The doctrine of general revelation in contemporary Reformed theology has too often been framed as an aporetic dilemma: divine presence as the foundation of creation *or* divine presence as the *telos* of creation; knowledge of God as a solid fixture within the self *or* knowledge of God as a lighting bolt of illumination from on high; God-language coming from creation involving ascent, or God-language coming from redemption involving descent. In other

words, a choice between Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence *or* Barth's resolute "Nein!" So the story is told.[1]

A Problematic Dichotomy

There are a number of problems with this dichotomy. In the first place, Bruce McCormick's recent research suggests that a profound resonance attains between Schleiermacher's and Barth's views of revelation.[2] On McCormick's reading of *Der Christliche Glaube*, Schleiermacher never posited a static "original revelation" that the human subject could master. McCormick states:

> "What Schleiermacher has done is to place the God-to-human relation (and the redemptive power that can be released in and through it) at a critical distance from all self-reflective human activity, such that the control of that relation always remains, at every moment, the prerogative of the divine. Ultimately, the critical difference between divine action and human action that first announces itself in Schleiermacher's distinction between immediate and sensible self-consciousness performs the same function in his theology that Barth's distinction between the Word of God and human words performs in his."[3]

McCormick suggests that Schleiermacher's formulation of internal revelation entails an *encounter* from the eternal to the temporal and that the necessity of this encounter involves real limits on the human capacity for knowing and experiencing God. Moreover, according to McCormick, Schleiermacher knows nothing of blind

1. As D. Lyle Dabney describes the dilemma: "either we begin with the human, or we begin with the divine; either we pursue an anthropological 'theology of ascent,' or a strictly theological 'theology of descent'; either we assume talk about God to be grounded in creation, or we declare such speech to belong solely to the realm of redemption; whether we claim there exists a demonstrable continuity between the creature and the Creator, or we proclaim absolute discontinuity between God and world in the name of the one who is 'Wholly Other.'" "Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit: A First Theology for a Twenty-First Century," in *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 157.

2. See Bruce McCormick, "What has Basel to do with Berlin? Continuities in the Theologies of Barth and Schleiermacher," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23, no. 2 (2002): 146–73.

3. Ibid., 157.

"thematizing." On the contrary, McCormick states that Schleiermacher's theology was a forerunner of Barth's *church* dogmatics—a communal experience of believers bringing order into the fragmentary and chaotic collection of propositions through consulting Scripture and tradition in light of their mutual encounter with absolute dependence. Theology for Schleiermacher was about working the life of the encounter into the spoken proposition, as difficult as that could be. And with this difficulty one recognizes echoes of Barth's own uncomfortable relationship with propositional revelation.[4] As we shall see below, it is also valuable to note both thinkers' quest for "a single divine decree" which focuses on the predestining God and corporate humanity rather than upon ecclesiology. Both support doctrines of corporate anthropological election: Schleiermacher believed that God's one decree was to elect all of humanity, and Barth believed that election of all of humanity was found in the one God-man, Jesus Christ.[5] Given their mutual premises, is it really a surprise that Barth responded to

4. Philip Stoltzfus writes, "This is precisely the weakness of Barth's theological program: the desire to explicate in definite and coherent language what (one wants to say) can never actually be represented in such a fashion. Theology is conceived, as with Schleiermacher, in terms of correlation between one ordinary state of being and another wholly different and extraordinary state." "Barth on Music as Timelessly Valid Form," in *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 166.

5. Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. and ed. H.R. Mackintosh and O.S. Steward (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 722. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004), II/2; hereafter referenced as *CD*. A more recent contribution to this development echoes in Matthias Gockel's work. He has argued persuasively that Barth drew heavily on Schleiermacher's doctrine of election and thereby inherits the same universalist tendencies. *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); see also Jason A. Goroncy, "That God May Have Mercy Upon All: A Review-Essay of Matthias Gockel's Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 2 (2008), 113–30. Oliver Crisp argues that, although Barth may have never wanted to solve the universalist question, his doctrine of election does require a universalist conclusion. "On Karl Barth's Denial of Universalism," in *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Thought* (Downers Grover, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

Schleiermacher's speaking about man in a loud voice by speaking about the God-man in a louder voice—that Barth answered Schleiermacher's turn to the subject through *Christomorphism* (Niebuhr's phrase) with a turn to the divine subject through *Christomonism* (Berkouwer's phrase)?[6]

In the second place, this long-standing "dilemma" has required characterizations that ignore the nuances, contexts, and unique contributions of both thinkers. On the one hand, Schleiermacher is put forward as Barth's alter ego (something that Schleiermacher would be surprised to discover) who offered a Kantian-inspired turn to the feeling subject and whose relativism erases propositional revelation. However, such a caricaturization of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic flattens the impulses and insights behind his apologetic works *On Religion* and *Christmas Eve Dialogue*. When he is stripped of his historical context and labeled the "father of modern theology," we no longer recognize that he is merely harkening to the Augustinian tradition by pointing his cultured despisers to the inescapably religious orientation of their romantic pursuits. Likewise, when he is dismissed as making all language about God to be equivocal under the guise of mere feeling, we can no longer see his resonance with Jonathan Edwards, namely, his Puritan-like spirited defense of the foundational role of pious affections in the face of the deadening moralism and rationalism that were characteristic of the early nineteenth-century German intellectual landscape. And we no longer recognize—as Brian Gerrish is quick to point out—that seeking to place the pre-theoretical at the core of our humanity as the noetic ground of all inquiry is not only Schleiermachian but also part of the heritage of Reformed theology and epistemology.[7]

On the other hand, there are problems on the Barth side of this equation as well. A serious examination of Barth's mature doctrine

6. See Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion: A New Introduction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), 212; G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 132–33.

7. *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 21–22.

of revelation calls into question a flimsy portrait of an undulating, God-abandoned, epistemic wasteland that is home to the occasional lighting bolt of revelation. On the contrary, Barth's mature development of the Light and lights in his *Church Dogmatics* reveals the genius of a theologian laboring to maintain a transcendent and free source of revelation without removing the integrity of a compatible creation (*CD* IV/3.1). As Paul Louis Metzger argues, Barth's doctrine of revelation scrupulously navigates between deification and secularization.[8] In his dialectical prose, Barth painstakingly guides his readers on an ever-alternating journey between "a mere assertion of the difference" of the Light/lights (and Words/words) and seeing "two sides, aspects or parts of one and the same truth" (*CD* IV/3.1, 151–52).

The Schleiermacher-vs.-Barth way of framing general revelation has proved unfruitful in Reformed theology precisely because it has mistaken two sides of the same coin as antinomies. This sharp binary impasse diminishes with closer inspection. The residual tension remaining is—ironically—in part the result of these two thinkers' proximity. This being the case, it is time to ask afresh: How can Reformed theology incorporate the benefits of both these thinkers while moving beyond revelation arising from *within* man as *Gefühl*-encounter or from *above* man as Word-encounter? What does it look like to work out a theology of revelation more consistent with ecclesiological election rather than election of corporate-humanity? Where can the Reformed tradition turn to draw fresh inspiration and adequate theological resources that will inspire engagement with the complexity of the Biblical testimony regarding the asymmetrical and multivalent ways that God reveals himself? In short, where do we to go from here?

Possible Solutions

At this point it might be tempting to look to Jürgen Moltmann's theology as the solution. Moltmann, a world-class theologian

8. *The Word of Christ and the Word of Culture: Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 59–82.

emerging from the Reformed tradition, seems to have internalized Barth's claim that what was needed to solve his deep disagreement with Schleiermacher was "a theology of the Holy Spirit, a theology of which Schleiermacher was scarcely conscious, but which might actually have been the legitimate concern dominating even his theological activity."[9] Regarding the dilemma, Moltmann writes in *Spirit of Life*:

> The theology of Barth, Brunner, Bultmann and Gogarten led to an alternative which today is proving to be unfruitful. The dialectical theologians began by reproaching nineteenth-century liberal and pietistic theology with starting from human consciousness of God, not from the divine Word to men and women; this, they said, was theology 'from below', not theology 'from above'. . . . I do not myself see this question as a problem, because I cannot see that there is any fundamental alternative between God's revelation to human beings, and human experience of God.[10]

In developing his both-and, Moltmann provides some valuable clues for moving beyond the Schleiermacher-Barth divide, particularly in regard to the Spirit's work. I will return to this later, but for now I wish to note the key facets in Moltmann's theology that make his project on the whole problematic for the Reformed tradition. First and foremost is Moltmann's explicit panentheism. He clearly believes that God's Spirit is *in* creation in a way that blurs the boundaries between where God starts and where creation ends. For example, he states:

> God loves his creation. God is bound to every one of his creatures in passionate affirmation. God loves with creative love. That is why he himself dwells emphatically in every created being, feeling himself into them by virtue of his love. The love draws himself out of himself, so to speak, carrying him wholly into the created beings whom he loves. Because he is "the lover of life," his eternal Spirit is "in all things" as their vital force. In the self-distinction and the self-giving of love, God is present in all his creatures and is himself their innermost mystery.[11]

9. Karl Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuse* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 134.

10. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 5.

11. *Spirit*, 50. For a critique of Moltmann's appropriation of Calvin's cosmic pneumatology, see John Bolt, "Spiritus Creator: The Use and Abuse of Calvin's

Although he attempts to avoid ontological language by appeals to a more "relational" view, it is clear that he solves the divide between a theology "from above" and a theology "from below" by rewriting the Creator-creation boundary markers and thereby enmeshes the two in a "perichoretic" emanationism.[12]

Further, Moltmann's "immanent-transcendence" proceeds on the assumption that we identify the *life* of the Spirit with the *life* of the world. The danger of this assumption becomes clear when Moltmann's politically correct assertions predicate the work of the Spirit. Once the Spirit is defined in virtue of what we experience as life giving, it is fair to wonder how we hear the Spirit's voice rise above our own. Epistemologically speaking, Moltmann's Creator-creation collapse continues by erasing the distinction between the revelational work of the Spirit in creation and the revelational work of the Spirit in redemption. His solution to what he perceives as the restrictiveness of Barth's "Word" and Schleiermacher's "Feeling" becomes a univocity of the Spirit's revelation. Lastly, and almost predictably, in a move a hair's breath from theological ventriloquism, Moltmann defends his universalism by appealing to Barth's doctrine of a supralapsarian electing of corporate humanity.[13] For these reasons and others, Moltmann's solution won't do for us.[14]

We could go on to other possibilities; however, I wish to argue that the way forward for a Reformed doctrine of general revelation

Cosmic Pneumatology," in *Calvin and the Holy Spirit: papers and responses presented at the sixth Colloquium on Calvin & Calvin Studies sponsored by the Calvin Studies Society held at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on May 6 and 7, 1987*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 1989).

12. "The personhood of God and the Holy Spirit is the loving, self-communicating, and *out-fanning and out-pouring presence* of the eternal divine life of the triune God." Moltmann, *Spirit*, 289 (emphasis added).

13. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 246–49.

14. Nor was Barth himself tempted by Moltmann's solution. For Barth's response to Moltmann's theology, see Karl Barth, *Letters 1961–1968*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 174–76.

involves reclaiming the Bavinckian consensus, namely, that the Schleiermacher-vs.-Barth divide needs to be exchanged for the Herman Bavinck and J. H. Bavinck accord. In the remainder of my essay, I will unpack this thesis in three moves: first, I will briefly sketch these two theologian's respective views of general revelation, noting their considerable consensus; second, I will explore the both-and benefits of their consensus; and third, I will consider the promise of a Bavinckian approach by sketching a possible avenue for future research.

Herman Bavinck on General Revelation

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921; hereafter HB) was the professor of dogmatics at both Kampen (*Theologische Universiteit Kampen voor de Gereformeerde Kerken)* and, later, the Free University of Amsterdam. His unique contribution to the doctrine of revelation attempts to maintain a Reformed catholicity in the midst of the challenges of modernity.[15] He believed that confusion regarding revelation was central to the crisis of theology in the modern period. For him, revelation is not one of many doctrines but an architectonic one; for, all knowledge of God is contingent on divine revelation.[16] HB's theology of revelation is trinitarian in form: in

15. This lifelong focus on the nature of revelation came not only from principle, but was driven by the pressing issue of the transition of theology departments to religious studies departments in the contemporary academy. For a discussion of the context behind the unique emphasis on revelation in HB's theology see James Perman Eglington, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of Revelation in Context," in "Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif," PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2010, ch. 5. The debate between theology vs. religious studies is still alive and well in the contemporary academy; see Reid B. Locklin and Hugh Nicholson, "The Return of Comparative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (June 2010), 477–514.

16. HB argued that each theology stood or fell on its doctrine of revelation. Jan Veenhof, "Revelation and Grace in Herman Bavinck," in *The Kuyper Center Review, Volume 2: Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 4. The centrality of revelation for HB is exhibited in his choice of this topic for his Stone Lectures: Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of*

freedom, God reveals knowledge *of* himself *through* himself *to* perform his purposes.[17] This threefold pattern corresponds with the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit *per appropriationem*.

HB argued that the work of creation through the Word and Spirit formed "the beginning and foundation of all subsequent revelation."[18] In other words, creation is not just one locus of revelation but the context and pattern for all subsequent revelations.[19] Because revelation is *within* the context of creation, it employs the *mediations* of creation.[20] This implies that humans *as creatures*—perceiving subjects in creation—do not rely on a particular *Anknüpfungspunkt* (point of contact), since all of creation is expedient. HB was a realist: these mediations did not cease as a result of sin,[21] even though sin jeopardized (but did not

Revelation: The Stone Lectures for 1908–1909, Princeton Theological Seminary (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908).

17. Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith: A Survey of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 34–35.

18. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 1:307; hereafter referenced as *RD*.

19. "In creating the world by his word and making it come alive by his Spirit, God already delineated the basic contours of all subsequent revelation." *RD*, 1:307.

20. "He reveals himself in nature and all around us, displays in it his eternal power and divinity, and in blessings and judgments alternately shows this goodness and wrath (Job 36:37; Ps 29; 33:5; 65: 67:7; 90; 104; 107; 145; 147; Isa. 59:17–19; Matt. 5:45; Rom 1:18; Acts 14:16–17). He reveals himself in the history of nations and persons (Deut. 32:8; Ps. 33:10; 67:4; 115:16; Prov. 8:15, 16; Acts 17:26; Rom. 13:1). He also discloses himself in the heart and conscience of every individual (Job. 32:8; 33:4; Prov. 20:27; John 1:3–5, 9, 10; Rom. 2:14, 15; 8:16). This revelation of God is general, perceptible as such, and intelligible to every human. Nature and history are the books of God's omnipotence and wisdom, his goodness and justice. All peoples have to a certain extent recognized this revelation." *RD*, 1:310.

21. "Now it is remarkable that sin, which entered the world by the first human beings, brings about no change in the fact of revelation itself. God continues to reveal himself; he does not withdraw himself." *RD*, 1:310. Contrast this with Johann H. Bavinck's claim that, "One can hear God's voice in nature; everything speaks of Him; but one cannot deduce His image from this whimsical,

eradicate) the perception of these mediations.[22] Yet through God's ongoing providential work in history, humanity continues to have a liminal sense of the presence of God. By God's grace, people continue to be haunted by a pre-critical awareness of these revelations. And because these revelations comprise everything and are available for all, they can be considered *general* revelation. In HB's words,

> The world itself rests on revelation; revelation is the presupposition, the foundation, and the secret of all that exists in all its forms. The deeper science pushes its investigations, the more clearly will it discover that revelation underlies all created being. In every moment of time beats the pulse of eternity; every point in space is filled with the omnipresence of God; the finite is supported by the infinite, all becoming is rooted in being.[23]

Although HB emphasizes the supernatural, broad, and robust nature of general revelation, he also highlights that catholicity requires recognizing the insufficiency of general revelation (*RD*, 1:312). He does this even as he concedes that some theologians have mitigated this insufficiency by adding the necessity of a special work of God's Spirit to illuminate general revelation (*RD*, 1:311–12). He counters this assertion by claiming that general revelation provides inadequate knowledge for salvation because of its generic content.[24] Existing within cultural contexts that dilute general

abnormal world. To be sure, this world is His creation, but in some mysterious way there rests a curse upon it." *The Church Between Mosque and Temple: A Study of the Relationship Between the Christian Faith and Other Religions* (1966; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 131.

22. HB sees all revelation as an act of grace. *RD*, 1:310.

23. *Philosophy*, 27. HB's claim that science would eventually disclose how "revelation underlies all created being" and that space is filled with the omnipresence of God seems to be prescient of Wolfhart Pannenberg's distillation of the ecstatic nature of all organisms within a force or field which he identifies as the Spirit. *Towards a Theology of Nature* (Louisville, KT: John Knox Press, 1993).

24. HB is certainly right that renderings of the experience of *general* revelation are marked by a generic element. They are variously described as a "feeling of ultimate concern" (Tillich), a "feeling of absolute dependence" (Schleiermacher), a "*mysterium tremendum*" or "*mysterium fascinans*" (Otto), a "supernatural existential" or "the one and total, universal and definitive meaning

revelation's witness further compromises its revelational potential. Therefore, for HB, general revelation must be matched with the narrative content of the Gospel since the former is *intrinsically* part of a greater whole (1 Cor. 15:3–5).[25] In other words, the answers of special revelation cannot be properly understood without the reality of creation itself. These creational realities are not merely external factors but inform questions native to the humanity. That said, HB is careful to argue that the content of scripture and the person of Christ, "who alone is the way to the Father," must be present for an actual change of something in existence. When placed together, the revelations of creation and redemption mutually confirm each other; for, the gospel addresses authentically *human* questions. Thus Christ as the living and written Word continues to exist as the "organic center" of all revelation. Without Christ, general revelation is inept, unable to bring the life-giving results (*RD*, 1:313). Here, HB's Christological center comes closest to resembling Barth's Christocentric theology—his "Nee" resembles Barth's "Nein".[26]

of the whole of human existence" (Rahner), "the basic trust" (Moltmann), "self-transcendence" (Pannenberg), the "I-Thou" (Buber), a "Bright Shadow" or simply "Joy" (C.S. Lewis), "supernatural shudders" (Ingmar Bergman), the "Alps Experience" (J.B. Metz), or the "Chernobyl Experience" (Elizabeth Johnson).

25. James Eglington shows how HB drives this point home by virtue of the disappearance and reappearance of his organic motif. In his section on general revelation in the *RD*, HB ceases to use the "organic" metaphor. But when speaking about how general revelation is joined with special, HB resumes the organic motif. General revelation is part of a larger whole that is joined in Christ. See Eglington, "The Disappearance and Reappearance of the Organic Motif," in "Trinity," 168–70.

26. Eglington, "Trinity," 157–58. The proximity is no accident. Barth not only read HB's *RD* several times and used it for a classroom text before writing his *Church Dogmatics*, but also he drew from a number of elements in HB's doctrine, the most important of which being HB's *Dues dixit*. See John A. Vissers, "Karl Barth's Appreciative use of Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 79–86; Andrew Esqueda, "Karl Barth and Herman Bavinck on the *Deus dixit,*" Die Evangelischen Theologen, published 28 September 2010, http://derevth.blogspot.com/2010/09/2010-kbbc-week-1-day-2.html. HB's influence is illustrated most clearly in Barth's example of the circle (*CD* III/1, 122–23). Barth's illustration here appears to be amending HB's idea that "Revelation, while having its center in the Person

However, this resemblance quickly disappears when placed alongside HB's predominant emphases that all revelation is trinitarian in nature, special revelation is irreversibly a work of the triune God, and general revelation itself is faintly marked by what classical theology has called the *vestigia trinitatis*.[27]

What is more, Bavinck not only views general revelation as dependent on special, but also he believes that special revelation is dependent upon general. This is, again, because the two are part of an irreducible whole:

> General revelation leads to special, special revelation points back to general. The one calls for the other, and without it remains imperfect and unintelligible. Together they proclaim the manifold wisdom that God has displayed in creation and redemption.[28]

Here, HB's motif of unity in diversity is the basis for his denial of the interchangeability of the two revelations. For although general revelation—by virtue of its antecedent position objectively—makes possible special revelation; special revelation—by virtue of its antecedent position from the lens of subjective perception—is necessary to capture the whole of general revelation (*RD*, 1:321). In other words, to account for the *whole* of God's engagement with the world: ontologically, the revelational mode established at creation must come before the revelational mode of the written and living Word; yet, epistemologically, the revelation of redemption must precede the revelation of creation in order for humanity to perceive

of Christ, in its periphery extends to the uttermost ends of creation." *Philosophy*, 27.

27. For a discussion on HB's uniquely modern approach to the *vestigia trinitatis,* see Eglington, "Trinity," 96–100. For HB's view of the *vestigia trinitatis* in relation to the transcendentals, see Robert S. Covolo, "Herman Bavinck's Theological Aesthetics: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis," *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 53–55. Oliver Davies' take on the *vestigia trinitatis* in "Christian semiotics" offers an interesting comparison to HB's organic account of "unity in diversity." *Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 97. Johan H. Bavinck also appeals to Augustine's use of the *vestigia trinitatis*. *The J. H. Bavinck Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming), 515–22.

28. *Philosophy*, 28.

the greater whole of revelation.[29] As qualitatively distinct revelations that were intended to fit together by virtue of Christ (the *Logos* of creation and redemption), special and general revelation form an organic, interlocking unit. This means that both revelations have a particular role and that something is profoundly lacking if either one is left out.

Scholars have noted that HB's distinction between general and special revelation is a *correlata* of special and common grace. For instance, Jan Veenhof writes, "Grace, both common and special, is the origin and content of revelation, general and special revelation respectively."[30] Pushing back further, these mutual graces and revelations are themselves grounded in HB's doctrine of election as limited to the church. According to him, although election is not universally aimed towards corporate humanity, the manner of the church's election has significance for the entire world. Christ has honored the human race in his incarnation by taking up the flesh and blood common to all people. It was because of his redemptive mission that Christ continued to uphold the world after the fall, giving gifts to unbelievers, illuminating everyone coming into the world (*RD*, 3:470–71). For HB, therefore, general and special revelation, like common and special grace, ultimately flow from the universal significance of the particular atonement of Christ. This split within humanity between the sheep and the goats, the lost and the found, the elect and the non-elect, has reverberations within his understanding of the irreducibly different ways God is at work in

29. HB's "one way" hermeneutic of special to general revelation provides a *via media* between an *analogia entis* and an *analogia fidei*. For HB, God always reveals himself through an act of radical immanence, but that immanence does not provide a direct pipeline of knowledge back to God by way of analogy. Thus, although *God is unlike anything else, all else is nonetheless like him*. HB's hermeneutic contrasts sharply with Moltmann's two-way *emperichoresis*—a movement by which our experiences of life become the hermeneutical template for the Spirit's. Eglington, "Trinity," 126.

30. "Revelation and Grace in Herman Bavinck," 7. Cf. Bavinck's formulation: "No creature can see or understand God as he is an as he speaks in himself. Revelation therefore is always an act of grace; in it God condescends to meet his creature, a creature made in his image." *RD*, 1:310.

the world: one way towards his elect who are organically joined together in Christ and another toward the non-elect.[31]

Johann Herman Bavinck on General Revelation

Johann H. Bavinck (1895–1964; hereafter JHB) was HB's nephew, a missionary for twenty years to Indonesia, and professor of missiology at the Free University of Amsterdam. JHB shared HB's desire to bring Reformed thought into dialogue with the modern world from an irenic and catholic spirit. Like his uncle, he had a keen interest in the growing field of psychology.[32] He traced many of HB's larger moves on the multiform nature of general revelation, particularly with an eye to the relationship of general revelation to other religions. JHB's writings pertinent to general revelation such as *The Church Between the Temple and Mosque* (1966), *An Introduction to The Science of Missions* (1954), *De boodschap van Christus en de niet-christelijke religies* (The message of Christ and the non-Christian religions, 1940), *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* (Religious consciousness and Christian faith, 1949), and *Christus en de mystiek van het Oosten* (Christ and Eastern mysticism, 1934) are written in common prose and filled with quotes and references from various philosophers (Plato, Kierkegaard, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche), theologians (Tertullian, Augustine, Schleiermacher, Barth, Troeltsch, Brunner), social scientists (Freud, Durkheim, Jaspers), writers (Kafka, T.S. Eliot), religion scholars (James, Lehmann, Tylor) and religious

31. As we see here, a theological system's doctrine of election has implications for its doctrine of general revelation. I was first alerted to this correlation by Richard J. Mouw who demonstrates this link by tracing the trajectories of Bavinck's and Barth's respective theologies of creation and election. *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 63–68.

32. On HB's interest in psychology, see "Psychology of Religion," "Trends in Psychology," and "The Unconscious," in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

traditions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.).[33] Although there are many commendable features of his scholarship, he shines brightest when writing in lucid and compelling language about the phenomenology of religious experience found in both formal religions as well as the experiences of everyday life in modern culture.

JHB's understanding of general revelation and the religions is given lengthy treatment in both *Religieus besef en christelijk geloof* and *The Church Between Mosque and Temple*. In general agreement with Hendrik Kraemer that a universal religious consciousness exists, JHB argues that this consciousness is neither reducible to any one phenomenon nor related to a particular faculty in man. Instead, he traces the empirical data of religious geography to support what he considers to be five "magnetic points" of all religious experience: a sense of totality, a norm, a connection to a higher power, a need for deliverance, and a sense of a reality behind reality.

To see the charm of JHB's five magnetic points requires some explanation. First, he recognizes that each religion has its own thematized content by which these various points are refracted in greater or lesser degrees. Moreover, these five points share unique internal relations with each other. The heart of religious consciousness is expressed through a chiastic structure of the five which results in the intersection of two lines: the external experience of totality corresponds with the issue of fate (magnetic points 1 and 5), and the internal norm corresponds with the need for deliverance (magnetic points 2 and 4). These two lines, roughly paralleling creation and redemption, converge on the third magnetic point: connection to a higher power. This third point

33. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Inleiding in de Zendingswetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1954); translated by David H. Freeman as *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1960). Bavinck, *De boodschap van Christus en de niet-christelijke religies: Een analyse en beoordeeling van het boek van Dr. Kraemer: The Christian message in a non-Christian world* (Kampen, Kok, 1940). Bavinck, *Christus en de mystiek van het Oosten* (Kampen, Kok, 1934).

therefore is in a unique relationship with the other four, being "the heart of religious consciousness" and "the essence of all religion." Because this sense of connection with a higher power is at the core of our religions condition, the ensuing secularism in our cultures (which assumes that there is no higher power to connect to) is all the more existentially troubling. "What is really lacking in our modern culture is that one aspect that we have designated as the core of religious consciousness, namely the awareness of being connected to a higher power."[34]Morever, since these magnetic points of religious experience arise from within the consciousness of the individual, they can be expressed in Martin Buber's I-Thou forms.[35]

Having developed in great detail the empirical evidence for these religious impulses, JHB moves on to explore how they are related to God. He writes that general revelation constitutes God's "voiceless speech" according to which all human talk about God (i.e., all religion) is to be understood as an answer and a response.[36] JHB is not optimistic about these "stammers," and rather than seeing in them fledgling faith that simply needs to be redirected or matured,[37] he turns to his development of psychological categories such as repression and exchange.[38] These categories come from his

34. *Reader*, 103.

35. These are, "I and the cosmos," "I and the norm," "I and the riddle of my existence," "I and salvation," and "I and the Supreme Power." See JHB, "Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith," in *Reader*, 93–95, and JHB, *The Church*, 32–33. "Religion is the way in which man experiences the deepest existential relations and gives expression to this experience." JHB, *The Church*, 112.

36. JHB, "Religious Consciousness," 318; JHB, *The Church*, 125.

37. JHB does not see a place for "anonymous Christians" in other religions. Although he acknowledges "there are a few places in the Bible that seem to indicate a somewhat different direction" he states that, by far, the general situation is portrayed in the OT as other nations being outside the domain of special revelation and therefore in a condition of "ignorance refusal, and foolishness. *Reader*, 321–25.

38. JHB believed that religions always contained elements of the "mysterious process of repression." *The Church*, 125. He writes elsewhere:

interpretation of Romans 1 and the role of the subconscious in psychology.[39]

Citing the story of Cyrus as an example (Isa. 45:4, 5), JHB acknowledges that his strong view of suppression and exchange does not match everything found in scripture and experience on the mission field. And like HB, JHB also spoke of the positive elements that general revelation engenders such as its role in conscience, a strong social drive that fosters community, mutual responsibility, and a deeper encounter with the biblical text after conversion. Moreover, he acknowledges that general revelation is not responded to in a monolithic way—that we must be careful not to "paint all pagans with the same brush."[40] For, as he goes on to say, God's presence is stronger with some, and therefore general revelation is not so easily pushed aside, thereby creating individuals who are overwhelmed and in a state of constant unrest. Here he references Calvin's statement that "scarcely one man in a hundred is met who fosters it, once received, in his heart. . . ."[41] JHB reads

"People are always more than as people they actually are. They are people with a wound that cannot be closed—they suppress. But in the most critical moments of their existence, they feel assailed by what they have with such determined certainty attempted to push away. They are people who have assaulted God, who do so every day anew, and who have some sense of what they are doing—however vague that sense may be. They can never entirely rid themselves of the truth about God that they have suppressed, held back, pushed away, sublimated, or crucified. This is what they fear; it is their tragedy." In the same passage, when speaking of the inconsistency of pagans who in rare moments of existential fear forget their gods and call out to the Supreme Being, he notes, "At such times, it is as though that repressed and maligned truth begins stirring once more, as though the foundations of the house begin shaking, as though the joists begin creaking, and as though all certainties cave in. Is that the moment that the gears of the engine of repression seize up, and when Another, stronger than individual people, discloses himself in his everlasting power and divinity?" *Reader*, 267.

39. True to his Reformed heritage, JHB emphasizes the role of Romans 1:18–30 as critical for understanding other biblical texts dealing with general revelation. *Reader*, 320–22.

40. *Reader,* 264.

41. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religions*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics 20 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960) 1.4.1 (p. 1:47).

Calvin's statement phenomenologically: "it seems to me that with this 'one in a hundred' he is thinking of those for whom suppressing only takes place accompanied by a great deal of unsettledness."[42] He interprets this exception as the mark of the Spirit's unusually strong presence by which mankind's default position of repression and exchange is undone.[43]

Bavinckian Consensus

From this brief sketch it becomes apparent that HB and JHB were working from a similar theological framework within different disciplines, emphases, time periods (HB was JHB's senior by forty years), and theological milieus.[44] However, there were also some differences between the two. One example of this is their respective ways of speaking of other religions. Although HB held an antithesis regarding the religions, he does so largely within a metaphor of fulfillment in light of the revelation of nature and history (*RD*, 1:318–19). In distinction, when JHB speaks of other religions, he is more likely to draw from antithetical images of suppression, exchange, and idolatry.[45] Paul Visser, noted JHB scholar, speaks of

42. *Reader,* 266.

43. "We can say that natural man is ever busy repressing or exchanging. But does he always succeed to the same degree? That depends on the strength with which God approaches him. God can at times, as it were, stop the noiseless engines of repression and exchange and overwhelm man to such an extent that he is powerless for the moment. There is also, always the silent activity of the Holy Spirit inside man, even if he resists Him constantly." *The Church*, 125.

44. Paul Visser sees a move in JHB's tought away from adopting HB's categories toward shifting them within the distinct influences of existentialism and Barthianism. HB died a year before Barth's 1922 edition of *Romerbrief* was published, and he never felt a need to address Barth's theology. In contrast, JHB's life (1895–1964) was encompassed by Barth's (1886–1968).

45. Whereas JHB appealed more to Hendrik Kraemer, HB's view of the religions is closer to Paul Althaus's idea of "original revelation." For a comparison of the two, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 181–90.

a trajectory in which JHB developed his own position on general revelation, one that had more capacity and tendency for a strong antithetical read than HB's. According to Visser, this was in no small part due to the growing influence of Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer.[46] Additionally, JHB's draw to existentialism invited him into a dialectic motif between the two sources of revelation. In contrast, HB's organic motif implied more of a sense of continuity between general revelation and special revelation and therefore emphasized resonance between the two.

These differences show there is wiggle room in being Bavinckian. Nevertheless, there remains a strong consensus between these two theologians regarding general revelation:

1. Both argue that, in spite of the fall, God continually reveals himself to people in the world through nature and history within mankind (*internum principium*). Additionally, in a special and irreplaceable way, God has revealed himself in the written and living Word. Both of these revelations are a work of grace through the Spirit based on the merits of Christ.

2. Both hold that the forms of revelation share the same *efficient* cause (the work of the Spirit and Word) but are distinct in

46. I would add G.C. Berkouwer as well. Paul J. Visser writes, "Investigation of JHB's understanding of the *principium internum* reveals a lengthy, gradual development in his thought. During the period in which he interpreted religious consciousness from a largely psychological point of view, he placed strong emphasis—following Schleiermacher and especially Otto—on the *principium internum* as a yearning after God. After coming into contact with Kraemer's radically biblical approach, however, in particular his understanding of the anthropological consequences of the fall of man, JHB gradually abandoned this psychologically inspired concept of the *principium internum* . . . From this time on, JHB spoke cautiously about the internal principle and placed the full accent on revelation. . . .

"On one hand, JHB wished to maintain the notion of an internal principle in line with Reformed tradition. On the other hand, he turned more and more to the I-Thou relationship for an explanation of this phenomenon." "Religion, Mission, and Kingdom: A Comparison of Herman and Johan Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 119–20.

terms of their *material* causes (nature, history, scripture, etc.) and *formal* cause (general grace or special grace).

3. Both believe special revelation has an epistemic priority in opening up the fullness of general revelation. General revelation, apart from special revelation, is qualitatively diminished.

The Benefits of Bavinckian Consensus

The Bavinckian consensus—which can be described as a both-and approach in contrast to the either-or Schleiermacher-Barth dilemma—offers several benefits. Take, for example, the Bavinckian view of the world. The Schleiermacher-vs.-Barth dilemma is framed as a choice between the enchanted world of Schleiermacher or the resolute alterity in Barth's Creator-creation distinction. The Bavinckian consensus refuses this choice. On one hand, one hears in the Bavinckian tradition a strong appeal to the enchanted nature of the world, a world in which "every moment of time beats the pulse of eternity; every point in space is filled with the omnipresence of God." Yet the Bavinckian consensus remains equally vigilant against "every hint of an essential identity between God and the world" (*RD*, 2:419).

This both-and view is critically important for the future of Reformed theology. This has become poignantly clear in the work of philosopher Charles Taylor who has demonstrated that the rise of secularism in the West has been characterized by an inability to see the world's connection to a transcendent order.[47] In spite of all of

47. "Now this Scripture-derived framework also sustained a certain kind of understanding of the world, interwoven with those underlying the cosmos ideas. The understanding of things as signs, and as signs addressed to us by God, entrenches the fixity of the cosmos in its short time scale. The world around us is God's speech act, and in the context of the Bible story this seemed to leave no room for any other story but the standard one, that the world as we see it issued in the beginning form the hand of God. Beyond the indices of change, of bewildering difference, must lie the limits laid down in the original creation. But this whole understanding, defined by this sense of limits, has been swept away. Our sense of the universe now is precisely defined by the vast and unfathomable: vastness in space, and above all in time; unfathomability in the long chain of

his efforts to find a way forward in the Age of Reason, Schleiermacher imbibed much from his Enlightenment context.[48] And there are equally strong critics of Barth who likewise see his self-referential "lights" and "words" as endorsing an implicit secularism.[49] Taylor's account of the rise of the "buffered self" in our secular age sounds strikingly similar to Barth's attempt to disconnect the anthropological from the divine. In contrast, the Bavinckian tradition supported a more enchanted world, replete with manifestations of God's ubiquitous glory and activity. Yet it does this with a strong vigilance for protecting the Creator-creation distinction. As such, the Bavinckian consensus represents a way forward for holding both together in the modern world.[50]

changes out of which present forms evolve." Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 325.

48. Schleiermacher's Enlightenment concerns are apparent in his methodology (e.g., his quest for a single, unified source of revelation) as well as his anti-supernatural conclusions. Regarding the latter, he writes in his section on angels in the *The Christian Faith:* "This conception is indigenous to the Old Testament and has passed over into the New. It contains in itself nothing impossible and does not conflict with the basis of the religious consciousness in general. But at the same time it never enters into the sphere of Christian doctrine proper. It can, therefore, continue to have its place in Christian language without laying on us the duty of arriving at any conclusions with regard to its truth." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 2nd ed., eds. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 156.

49. One of the best-known critics of Barth on this count is Langdon Gilkey. According to him, it is only a short step to move from God's otherness to God's absence. *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 55. Paul Louis Metzger acknowledges that Barth spoke approvingly of Feuerbach's critique of religion and appealed to Strauss's philosophy for those who would ground religion in history. Yet Metzger sees Barth's secularism as the only alternative between a theology which puts "perfect symmetry" between Christ and Culture. He states, "In the end, one must choose between a theology of engagement symbolized by an ellipse with two foci as Schleiermacher and these other theologians of mediation maintain, and that alternative which emphasizes the sovereignty of God in his Word, signifying an irreversible relation between God and the world." *The Word of Christ*, 80.

50. HB was not afraid to speak the language of participation. He writes, "Granted, the Scholastics wrote repeatedly about an emanation or procession of all existence from a universal cause and also occasionally of the creature's

Another benefit of the Bavinckian consensus is seen in the dilemma of commonness and ecclesiological space. On the one hand, the Bavinckian consensus on general revelation provides a basis for commonness with broader humanity, including people of other religions.[51] Both Believers and unbelievers experience JHB's "magnetic points" such as the sense of cosmic relationship or the pangs of conscience derived from a sense of norm. On this count, the Bavinckian consensus goes with Schleiermacher, claiming that unbelievers are not merely outsiders, for they already have an ongoing (even if pre-cognitive) dialogue with the voiceless speech of God through general revelation.[52] Therefore, the Bavinckian tradition is not cut off from its "cultured despisers," for general revelation connects the believer's faith to their broader existence and relationships with those in the world. For instance, HB argues quite extensively that non-Christian religions find their origin in

participation in the being and life of God. But in saying this they did not mean "emanation" in the strict sense, as if God's own being flowed out into his creatures and so unfolded in them, like the genus in its species. They only meant to say that God is a self-subsistent necessary being (*ens per essentiam*), but the creature is existent by participation (*ens per participationem*). Creatures indeed have a being of their own, but this being has its efficient and exemplary cause in the being of God." *RD*, 2:419. This is one of the reasons contemporary scholars influenced by the Dutch tradition are deeply interested in understanding and parsing the Radical Orthodox movement's attempt to reclaim a sense of creation participating in the divine. See Jamie Smith and James H. Olthuis, *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

51. This is one implication of HB's view that the whole human person images the whole triune God. See Cory Wilson, "Simul Humanitas et Peccator: The Talmud's Contribution to a Dutch Reformed Notion of the Imago Dei," in *The Kuyper Center Review, Volume 2: Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 264.

52. "See then, whether you wish it or not, the goal of your highest endeavors is just the resurrection of religion . . . I celebrate you as, however unintentionally, the rescuers and cherishers of religion." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches To It's Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman (London: Keagan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., LTD, 1893), 141. Barth countered Schleiermacher by claiming that religion was not based in an original revelation, but unbelief (*CD* I/2, 297–325).

general revelation and that therefore there is always a point of contact, even if that point is refracted through the vagaries of a religion's development (*RD*, 1:314–20). Moreover, he views the "holy pagans" of the OT as echoing the original state of the world prior to Abraham whereas "[t]he distinction between what has come to be called general and special revelation does not begin until the call of Abraham; before that the two intermingle, and so far have become the property of all peoples and nations."[53] Critical of the inadequacy of his own Reformed tradition on the religions, HB writes that the

> Reformed only spoke of natural religion, innate and acquired, but the connection between this natural religion and the [pagan] religions was not developed. The religions were traced to deception or demonic influences. However, an operation of God's Spirit and of his common grace is discernible not only in science and art, morality and law, but also in the religions. Calvin rightly spoke of a "seed of religion," a "sense of divinity." Founders of religion, after all, were not impostors or agents of Satan but men who, being religiously inclined, had to fulfill a mission to their time and people, and often exerted a beneficial influence on the life of peoples. The various religions, however mixed with error they may have been, to some extent met people's religious needs and brought consolation amidst the pain and sorrow of life. What comes to us from the pagan world are not just cries of despair but also expressions of confidence, hope, resignation, peace, submission, patience. etc. (*RD*, 1:319)

On the other hand, because of the unique status of special revelation—Bavinck's *Deus dixit*—the church has an epistemic basis for ecclesiological space. When starting with special revelation and thereby viewing general revelation, the world qualitatively opens up a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This gives the Church an *epistemic* basis for her own voice. Here, Barth's insistence on a distinct ecclesiological epistemology takes form in the Bavinckian tradition, one in which the church's encounter with

53. *Philosophy*, 188. For further development of HB's view of the religions, see 1. Robert S. Covolo, "Advancing a Neo-Calvinist Pneumatology of Religions: The Role of Recent Yongian Contributions," in *The Kuyper Center Review, Volume 2: Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 315–34.

the Word/Light enables her to demonstrably name the words/lights within culture/creation.[54] The Bavinckian tradition maintained not only a basis for commonness (Schleiermacher), but also a basis for being a new creation, something radically different from non-Christians and other religions (Barth).[55] And again, however the Bavinckian tradition fares in its details, the future of the church will require her to obtain the ambidextrous ability to speak with broader humanity by virtue of a shared epistemology and yet have her own "eyes to see" and "ears to hear" by virtue of the Spirit of redemption working through the written and living Word.

Finally, the Bavinckian consensus opens up the way for both apologetic and kerygmatic theology. On the one hand, because God is already at work in the frameworks of creation and culture, Christian theology can speak *within* the grammars of various cultural texts. Here the post-liberal assumption that Christianity can remain within her own coherent language-system is challenged, for the entire world is the place where God speaks.[56] Bavinckian

54. "The more seriously and joyfully we believe in Him, the more we shall see such signs in the worldly sphere, and the more we shall be able to receive true words from it." Barth, *CD* IV/3.1, 122.

55. It is within the context of HB's discussion of Christian discipleship that he accents the metaphor of Calvin's spectacles and hence the mutual irreplaceable nature of these two revelations for a Christian's view of the world. True to the emphasis of the *Institutes*, HB sees Calvin's spectacles as essential for Christian discipleship: the Christian from within the context of the written and living word brings into focus the supernatural and revelational nature of the world. Therefore the Christian has something the world does not have and sees something that the world cannot see. For Calvin's use of "spectacles" see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Battles, ed. John McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I. vi. 1 (p. 70).

56. While I am sympathetic to George Lindbeck's fear that (as with liberalism) the language of the world absorb the language of the text, I agree with Miroslav Volf that "we need more complex ways of relating the 'world' and the 'text' than the dichotomy between conforming the text to the world and conforming the world to the text.' "Theology, Meaning and Power," in *The Nature of Confession: Evangelicals & Postliberals in Conversations*, eds. Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 47. In fact, the idea that Christian speech is "sealed off" from other languages is problematic. As others have noted, Lindbeck's appeal to the way

belief in *all of creation* as a source of the revelation of God means the written and living Word speaks in voiceless words *in* creation and history. Indeed, given the work of revelation by the Spirit in the world, the church should be about answering the questions of non-Christians. In truth, all theology is attempting to answer cultural questions whether it likes it or not. There really is no escape. In spite of Barth's theological polemic against the conditionality of apologetic theology as irreducibly tied to Schleiermacher's *Kulturprotestantismus*, his own theology was itself produced in the context of the idealism, aestheticism, and pedagogy of *Kultur*. Would Barth's Mozart still be Mozart if he were working with the banjo, washbasin, and nose harp? Mozart was playing music (a voiceless language) with instruments created in the musical tradition of Barth's *Kultur*, and it is difficult to imagine how Mozart's "timelessly valid form" could exist apart from its existence within its cultural particularity.

On the other hand, because the living and written Word is a unique revelation to the church and not interchangeable with

theological language works is itself relying on so-called "religiously neutral" (i.e., non-textual) cultural-linguistic theories of religion. Graham Ward has argued compellingly that there is no such thing as "pure texts" or even theological language that appears on the scene *ex nihilo*. In doing so, he refers specifically to Barth's theology which evolved by appropriating a particular philosophical (Kierkegaard, Heidegger) and theological (Herrmann, Stephen, etc.) context within a distinct *habitus*. See Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 16–60. Also pertinent here is Philip Stoltzfus's development of cultural practice on all theology. Again, using Barth as an example, Stoltzfus claims, "Barth must not be excused from the necessity of naming and locating himself in his theological performance." See Philip Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance: Music, Aesthetics, and God in Western Thought* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006). William Dyrness concurs: "Christians have no special cultural space, or, to put it more accurately 'our own proper territory has always already been inhabited by others.' This means further that Christians exist in an important solidarity with their unbelieving neighbors . . . what we Christians are as cultural beings with our neighbors—our language, our holidays, our workspace as well as our being fallen and being loved and sought by God—is in some ways more important than what separates us." See William Dyrness, *The Earth is the God's: A Theology of American Culture* (New York: Orbis, 1997), 82.

general revelation, the church has a strong basis for kerygmatic proclamation. The church has been entrusted with a special revelation and charged with the distinct role of proclaiming *this* revelation to a world that has no access apart from *her* stewardship (Mt. 10:27; Rom. 10:14). Apologetic and kerygmatic theologies are implicit within the Bavinckian consensus's refusal to make general and special revelation interchangeable. The Bavinckian consensus refuses to choose between proclamation (Lk. 4:18) and being ready to give an answer to every man (1 Pt. 3:15); both are necessary for the church to speak in the world with her own voice.

Perhaps the Bavinckian consensus is guilty of wanting to have its cake and eat it too. On the other hand, is this not simply a desire to be *in* the world, yet not *of* it; to speak about God's work in the world as ambidextrous rather than uniform; to seek both enchantment and Creator-creation distinction; to live in the already-not yet of both antithesis and commonness; to proclaim its own truth boldly in a language it has yet to learn from "the uttermost parts of the world?" Arguably, one recognizes in this refusal to be backed into an either-or a distinctly catholic impulse within the Bavinckian consensus.

Moving Forward: Reclaiming a Bavinckian Spirit

If indeed the Bavinckian consensus is the best way forward, how might we proceed? Before concluding, I would like to suggest one possible route.

The Barth-vs.-Schleiermacher era of Reformed theology has remained stuck in discussions surrounding two possible relationships of the sources of revelation. While some have emphasized the difference of these revelations, others have attempted to reclaim the continuity of the two by collapsing them into one. The resulting volley has vacillated between those that hold to a greater-vs.-lesser or stronger-vs.-weaker two-source approach, and those who favor abandoning the language of "general" and "special" altogether (Barth, Lindbeck, et al.). But are these two options as different as they sound? Ernst Conradie has insightfully

noted that both those who contrast these two types of revelation and those that favor abandoning a two-source approach assume general revelation is a distinctly independent source.[57] In contrast, the Bavinckian consensus refused to hold these revelations apart in a clear-cut static manner. JHB moved away from religious consciousness in terms of a faculty or the result of a single phenomenon to a more dynamic I-Thou *presence* which is empirically documented rather than anthropologically assumed. Additionally, HB was noted for arguing that the two revelations were organically connected in an asymmetrical, multivalent way such that, while one can recognize difference, it is questionable where one type of revelation leaves off and another one begins.[58] After all, he remarks, these two revelations remain the work of the one Logos.[59]

Given these claims, a Bavinckian reframing of Moltmann's imperiled attempt to ground the unified nature of revelation in the work of the life-giving Spirit provides a promising way forward. In following the Bavincks, one finds tremendous help in D. L. Dabney's essay "Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit." In this essay, Dabney retrieves Moltmann's starting point of the Spirit's presence without recourse to panentheism. For Dabney, the Spirit is not only active in the preaching of the word, but also it "haunts our dreams and disturbs our sloth, the source of our every broken intimation of

57. "In my view, the distinction between special and general revelation becomes problematic the moment it is compartmentalized as two distinct sources for reflecting on God's self-revelation (e.g., the 'book of nature' and the 'book of scripture'). Then questions on the relationship between these two sources immediately arise. . . . it cannot be portrayed in terms of two separate sources. The locus of special revelation forms part of the locus of general revelation." *Creation and Salvation: Dialogue in Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 80–81.

58. The revelation of Christ is neither "an island" that stands starkly out on the sea of general revelation nor a "drop of water" that is dissolved into general revelation. *Philosophy*, 27.

59. "[T]he foundations of creation and redemption are the same: The Logos who became flesh is the same by whom all things were made." Ibid.

an o/Other."[60] By reclaiming presence as the starting point without appealing to a static faculty or immediately turning to ontological structure, Dabney has shifted from starting with the mediums of the Spirit's work to the presence (I-Thou) of the Spirit.[61]

Equally auspicious for a Bavinckian pneumatology of general revelation is Arnold van Ruler's work.[62] His insistence on the unique structure of pneumatology offers fresh ways to conceive of the Spirit's distinct work in general revelation.[63] Following the example of Vincent Bacote's transposition of Van Ruler's redemptive pneumatology for creation and common grace,[64] we might consider how Van Ruler's pneumatology informs a Bavinckian doctrine of general revelation. In place of either the Barthian approach, which speaks of the radical freedom of the Word/Light to *assume* in an *ad hoc* fashion a word/light, or those that see the structures of creation and history as static revelational constants, how might Van Ruler's economy of the Spirit inform JHB's existential thrust and HB's enchanted view of the interrelation of general and special? Here Van Ruler's contrast between Christological structure (i.e., taking up the human into the divine) and pneumatological structure (i.e., taking form in a plurality of particular human beings) proves helpful. As he explains,

60. Dabney, "Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit," 160. Note how this language echoes JHB's existential description.

61. For a discussion on the promise of Dabney's work for adopting "something like general revelation" in light of post-liberal theology, see Richard Crane, "Postliberals, Truth, *Ad Hoc* Apologetics, and (Something Like) General Revelation," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 29–53.

62. For a distillation of Van Ruler's logic of pneumatology in light of the issue of a Reformed theology of cosmic pneumatology, see John Bolt, "The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology," *Reformed Review* 51, no. 3 (1998): 255–70.

63. Arnold van Ruler, "Structural Differences Between Christological and Pneumatological Perspectives" and "Grammar of a Pneumatology," in *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics*, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).

64. Vincent Bacote, *The Spirit in Public Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 118–33.

the Spirit works with a unique sensitivity to the specifics of the human situation.[65] Transposed to general revelation, this implies the work of the Spirit in general revelation involves an ongoing liminal presence (I-Thou) through a variety of mediations to a host of individuals. The Spirit uniquely haunts different human subjects *within* the particularities of their contextual nature and history to form the requisite premonition. Thus, by starting with a pneumatic presence, the problem of focusing on a permanent anthropological structure or simply appealing to the mediations as static and inescapable points of contact is removed.

While not intended to be comprehensive, this sketch serves as an example of how the Bavinckian consensus resources a Reformed theology of general revelation after the Barth-Schleiermacher dilemma.

Conclusion

My broad assessment of the Schleiermacher-Barth dilemma has led to a programmatic suggestion for how the Bavinckian consensus can guide the future of Reformed theology as she articulates how God reveals himself, namely, by working *within* the antinomies that the church must pursue: enchantment *and* Creator-creation distinction, commonness *and* antithesis, apologetics *and* kerygma. Admittedly, it is no small task to hold together a theology that is both from within and without, from above and below, and I am certain this general overview can sound to those trained in the Scylla and Charybdis of the Schleiermacher-Barth dilemma like

65. "The accent on the human person in the work of the Holy Spirit implies that, in thinking through and speaking about salvation and the relationship between God and us, one must take individuality very seriously. At issue is my personal participation in salvation. It is my heart, my life, my knowing, and willing that are affected. What happens in me displays a kind of unrepeatableness and once-for-all-ness similar to what happened in Christ. This does not mean that everything affected by salvation is exclusively centered on human individuality. On the contrary. Individualization is coupled with multiplicity." "Structural Differences," 33.

talking out of both sides of one's mouth.[66] But Christianity has always moved forward by holding together tensions: Christ is human and divine. The Trinity is one, yet three. Might it be that the Bavinckian consensus displays her catholicity through both voices? Even better, do not these antinomies reflect the unified witness of scripture?

Undoubtedly, some will feel that we shouldn't look to a theology that was birthed *before* a dilemma as a solution to life *after* it. Yet this charge assumes that the conditions that generated the divide remain. Clearly, the philosophical and theological voices that formed the background of Barth's theology and the Enlightenment context of Schleiermacher's nineteenth-century romanticism no longer hold. In light of the divisions in modern Reformed theology, the Bavinckian consensus calls for a greater catholicity. In the hopes of reclaiming the thrust of a both-and view of revelation, it challenges modern theology to reclaim critical insights from both Barth and Schleiermacher. And by refusing to dissect revelation on the table of modernity, it has called us to trade our scalpels for Calvin's spectacles.

66. This has caused some scholars to speak as if there were two Herman Bavincks. See 1. James Eglinton, "How Many Herman Bavincks? *De Gemeene Genade* and the 'Two Bavincks' Hypothesis," in *The Kuyper Center Review Volume 2: Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 279–301.

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Working with the Grain of Nature: Epistemic Underpinnings for Christian Witness in the Theology of Herman Bavinck

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Against theological liberalism's siphoning from Christian theology all things particular and installing in their place a generalized, allegedly more accessible and amiable approach to the Christian religion, a number of authors have underlined the particularity of the Christian faith and the disparity between it and the religious disposition of the unbeliever. For example, in his account of the human experience of faith, Karl Barth construes the *imago Dei* as a "capacity for God," a "conformity" of the human person to God, or a "point of contact for the Word of God" and contends that in the wake of the fall the image is not merely "destroyed apart from a few relics" but rather "totally annihilated." For Barth, there is no human aptitude for receiving God's self-revelation that is antecedent to the actual proclamation of the gospel and the naissance of saving faith. With Barth, it is well to emphasize that sinful humanity will only rebuff Christ and his gospel without the interior, efficacious work of the Holy Spirit. Yet, unlike more traditional Reformed theology, Barth's description of the radically disjunctive character of the word of God seems at times to embellish the dissonance between the cognitive condition of the unbeliever and the pronouncements of God's revelation. In Barth's view, there is, apparently, little place for nature in the infrastructure of saving faith, little of pre-kerygmatic human

religiosity or religious thought that carries over into the life of the Christian believer.[1]

Another example of the aversion to nature and noetic continuity in respect of embracing the Christian faith is found in the program of Stanley Grenz and John Franke. Following the "linguistic turn," these authors aver that, while there is a "certain objectivity to the world," this is not the objectivity of the world "as it is" and "existing outside of, and cotemporally with, our socially and linguistically constructed reality." Instead this objectivity is "the objectivity of the world as God wills it to be" and "what God wills is not a present but a future reality." Hence, in pursuing justification for Christian theological claims, we cannot have recourse to an objective, neutral court of appeal but instead must suggest that the Christian faith, by virtue of its doctrines of the Trinity and the *imago Dei*, rises above the others in setting forth a "helpful vision of the nature of the kind of community that all religious belief systems in their own way and according to their own understanding seek to foster."[2] With Grenz and Franke it is well to acknowledge the reality of cultural influence on religious beliefs and to be wary of placing Christian theology under the tribunal of fallen reason. However, their proposal overstretches by foregoing the mind-independent reality of the present world, undermining our responsiveness to the external world and thus our creatureliness, and reducing human noetic solidarity to the idea of community. Furthermore, there is no small irony in their disparaging human noetic solidarity only to prop up "community" as the unifying motif of all religious thought

1. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, G. T. Thomson, and Harold Knight (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2009), I.1, 238–40. To be sure, later in *Church Dogmatics*, Barth can write that, under the lordship of Christ, "man remains the man he is. His own nature and thinking and willing and feeling, both in general and in detail, is not lost" (I.2, 276). I am grateful for comments from Cornelis van der Kooi and John Webster pointing out that there is a measure of development and diversity in Barth's thinking on this matter.

2. Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 53–4.

and the neutral desideratum for the evaluation of theological claims.

In light of this thread in recent theology, this essay will explore ways in which Herman Bavinck's theology might help to illumine the intellectual condition of the unbeliever and the cognitive dynamics of Christian witness and, subsequently, to shape and galvanize the church's obedience to the Great Commission. In Bavinck, one discovers both a measure of reservation about universal rationality and a thoroughgoing awareness of the corruption of the human mind under sin, but both of these are moderated by the wisdom of ordinary experience, set in dogmatic context, and thereby kept from exaggeration. To substantiate this proposition and to begin to glimpse its ramifications for Christian mission, we will consider several elements of Bavinck's theology, particularly his expositions of "natural realism," the *imago Dei* with reference to nature and grace, general and special revelation, and faith and reason.

Nature and Noetic Continuity in Bavinck's Theology

Natural Realism and Christian Witness

In his epistemological ruminations, Bavinck makes a number of incisive statements about the viability of human knowledge. He marks that one's coordination of object and subject in scientific endeavors governs one's perspective on the character and legitimacy of human knowledge. Both rationalism and empiricism go astray here: "In both cases and in both directions, the harmony of subject and object, of knowing and being, is broken."[3] Bavinck refuses either to incarcerate human knowers within their own

3. "In beide gevallen en naar beide richtingen wordt de harmonie van subject en object, van kennen en zijn verbroken." Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing: Rede bij de overdacht van het Rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam op 20 October 1904* (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1904), 13.

minds or to bind human inquiry to the physical realm. Neither the despondence of radical subjectivity nor the insipidity of materialism is acceptable to him. On the one hand, he vitiates rationalism because, in its attempt to amplify the sufficiency of the mind, it severs the mind from reality, its *magister* and proper source of content, and thus devolves into idealism and metaphysical antirealism.[4] Thus he writes:

> [M]an is never, in any area, autonomous but everywhere and always dependent on the nature surrounding him. . . . Just as with our own hands we prepare food and clothing while nevertheless deriving the materials for them from nature outside of us, so with our intellect we also receive the material from without. Here, too, the intellect is an instrument, not a source. Idealism equates the organ of knowledge with the source of knowledge, as it were making the eye into the source of light, deducing the thought from the process of thinking. (*RD*, 1:217)

Although Bavinck focuses here on the mind receiving its material content from without, he also rejects the Kantian position that one can neatly distinguish between matter and form at this point and can safely locate the formal aspect of knowledge within the mind itself (*RD*, 1:215, 225). For him, neither the material content nor the formal structure of human knowledge should be attributed solely to the mind; instead, both are informed adventitiously by reality itself. Hence rationalism and its outworking in idealism are contrary to experience:

> By nature we are all realists, including, even in practice, the idealists themselves. . . . [Idealism] does not explain how and why every human automatically and spontaneously gets to ascribing objectivity and independent reality to the things perceived, instead of viewing them purely as inner states of consciousness. (*RD*, 1:217)

Because of its sharp division between thought and world, idealism ought to concede that the world, even the human subject himself or herself, is simply an illusion. However, instead of contentedly recreating in the playground of subjectivity, idealists, not least Hegel, move from rational thought back into the sphere of

4. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 1:214–17; hereafter referenced as *RD*.

objectivity. The hard separation of thought and world gives rise to an identification of thought as the world, as the proper object of human consciousness, and, instead of resisting this separation, idealism eventually asserts that rational thought does indeed produce the world. What began as dissociation from reality morphs into reification. Yet, Bavinck opines, absolute thought cannot "produce being in all its fullness and riches. The living world cannot be explained from that sterile abstraction" (*RD*, 1:218). For him, holding that our impressions of the world are distinct but not separate from the world retains the externality or objectivity of the world as well as the potential objectivity of human thought and hence enables discrimination between truth and illusion. The idealist, however, foregoes the externality of the world, amalgamates truth and illusion, and cannot filter out the latter. In the end, Bavinck says, rationalism and idealism are undone by a simple distinction between objects as the *cause* of our impressions and concepts on the one hand and our sensory and intellectual apparatus as the *condition* or *occasion* of our impressions and concepts on the other (*RD*, 1:218–19).

Bavinck also takes issue with empiricism because, in its concentration on the sensible world, it excludes the supersensible from the field of knowledge. The *that* and the *how* of the features and operations of the world are accessible to us, but the *what* and the *why*— things of the noumena in general—are evicted from the house of scientific inquiry. From here it is a short distance to materialism: the reduction of the mind itself to matter. Though emphatic about the mind's deference to the outside world, Bavinck repudiates the doctrine of the *tabula rasa*, insisting on the active disposition of human apprehension and knowledge. There are not merely senses that passively receive data but rather conscious persons who receive impressions *through* the senses, persons preemptively furnished with the necessary and foundational truths of logic according to which scientific findings are assessed and utilized. In his view, empiricism runs aground on the reality and exigency of the immaterial and, by means of an untenable conception of science itself, needlessly precludes scientific investigation of causation, essence, and teleology (*RD*, 1:219–22).

If philosophy from Descartes to Bacon has gone astray, it is to the life of the common person that we must turn in order to reorient ourselves: *primum vivere, deinde philosophari*. For Bavinck, therefore, ordinary experience precedes philosophical sophistication, and in ordinary experience the human person is certain of the mind-independent reality of the world and the general reliability of his or her perceptions of the world. This "natural certainty" is neither inferred nor demonstrable but an immediate and spontaneous attendant of perception itself. The representation of things in the mind "points directly back to reality. As representation it includes the essential distinguishing mark indicating that it represents that reality ideally" (*RD,* 1:223). For the realist, the "world is, in an ideal sense, given in the representations of itself. It does not deny the distinction that exists between representation and the thing but at the same time maintains the inseparable connection between the two because it takes the representation as it presents itself" (*RD,* 1:223–24). Bavinck calls such mental representation of an object a "faithful ideal reproduction of the object outside of us" (*RD*, 1:227). Although the object and the perceptual image are distinct, and although the mind has an active bearing in generating the image, modern philosophy's "ever-growing gap between a thing and its representation," which precludes verifying the accuracy of the representation by comparing it to reality, is untenable. In every instance of perception there appear neural processes for the formation of a representation of some object, but these processes do not cause the representation. For, Bavinck writes, these neural processes are purely physical phenomena, while the representation is a "psychic mental act" (*RD*, 1:227–28). Hence the two are of a different order, and the former cannot cause or sufficiently explain the latter. Indeed, the neural modifications do not precede and ground the consciousness. For the neural modifications and perception are concomitant, and perception is itself a psychic mental act. "Accordingly," Bavinck writes,

> the object of perception is not any phenomenon within myself but the thing outside myself. The mind that sees the object is the same mind that forms the representation. Both of these are psychic acts. There is

> therefore no reason to doubt that in the representations we have a faithful, ideal reproduction of the objects outside ourselves.[5]

Against idealism, there is no need or possibility here for an extrapolation from thought to existence; likewise, against empiricism, there is no need or possibility of grounding this certainty in scientific demonstration.[6] Rather, natural certainty, a certainty of self-evidence and faith, is inextricably woven into human life and study. Therefore, any epistemology that "does not explain the cognitive faculty but instead destroys it and, failing to understand cognition, turns it into an illusion, is judged by that fact" (*RD*, 1:223). Once more against idealism, the *veritates aeternae* of logic and argumentation are not embedded in the mind according to the doctrine of innate ideas. Instead, the human person from the inception of life encounters external reality and, by way of a God-given innate disposition to acquiesce to certain principles and to form certain notions, finds himself or herself automatically and spontaneously bound to the laws of thought. Because the intellect is bound to the body and thus to the cosmos, experience of the world activates the intellect's compliance with and deployment of the laws of thought. In addition, the logical or essential dimension of objects in reality governs the nature and scope of the intellect's abstractive endeavors. Thus, ratiocination is less creative than responsive. In Bavinck's words, "Observation is the source of all real science" (*RD*, 1:226). Yet, once more against

5. *RD*, 1:228. Cf. Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 15–16: "Als wij de wereld buiten ons waarnemen, dan zijn de gewaarwordingen en voorstellingen, die wij daardoor ontvangen, niet het voorwerp van onze kennis, maar zij zijn de kennis zelve, die wij door waarneming onmiddelijk van de dingen buiten ons hebben verkregen." (If we perceive the world outside us, then sensations and representations, which thereby we receive, are not the object of our knowledge, but they are the knowledge itself, which we have obtained by immediate observation of things outside us.)

6. Bavinck regards Aristotle as "the first to see clearly that knowledge (ἐπιστημη) is in the final analysis built on indemonstrable self-evident truths" (*RD*, 1:224). Evidently, Bavinck situates the necessary truths of reason too under the notion of natural certainty. Apparently, then, natural certainty respects the existence of the world, our apprehension of the world, and the principles of logic, to which, upon encountering the world, we begin to adhere.

empiricism, while the mind must never lose contact with reality, it has its own nature and operations and must never be barred from pondering the ideal and discerning the essence of things (*RD*, 1:223–33). Thus Bavinck urges that, because the divine Logos has authored both external reality and the human mind and thereby established an "organic connection and correspondence between the two," the human mind is able to apprehend universals in things. Universals exist *in rebus* (though not *ante res*) and, by virtue of the light of nature, which may be taken as the active intellect in its participation in the divine light or Logos or as "the fund of general concepts" accumulated by the active intellect, are apprehensible to us (*RD*, 1:231–33).

At first glance, it may seem that such ruminations are far removed from the task of Christian witness, but a moment's consideration suggests otherwise. We have noted that Grenz's and Franke's description of theology in *Beyond Foundationalism* is pervaded by a commitment to linguistic constructivism. This is not unlike the idealism contested by Bavinck a century ago; it appears to be, roughly, idealism with a linguistic tilt. Here, then, is a recent account of human knowing in relation to Christian theology that distances communities of human persons from a shared and knowable external world. If taken seriously, the forfeiture of the past and present external world, of our generally reliable apprehension of the world, and of our connection with others on the basis of inhabiting and knowing that world together discourages Christian witness. For cross-cultural interaction would, at least in theory, have no reference to extra-mental reality, no reference to an objective course of history in which Christ was crucified and raised from the dead. The persuasiveness of the Christian message would suffer, for it would, again at least in theory, announce not so much the objective action of God in Christ in the first century but the Christian community's linguistic constructs, which, though thought to be somehow informed by God himself, are nevertheless humanly manufactured. Furthermore, while we have reason to doubt that anyone would actually allow a theoretical endorsement of systemic social construction to govern his or her daily life, it is well to acknowledge that the phenomena of contemporary technology

supply new opportunities and temptations for endeavoring to construct one's own world. With the advent of Facebook, online religious communities with online worship services, and the like, one can play virtual creator and strive to detach oneself from objective reality. At this point, the pertinence of Bavinck's epistemology becomes even clearer. All persons are dependent on and cognizant of the external world and are bound by God through nature to view that world according to certain rational principles. Perhaps for many who are doing evangelism throughout the world this will seem rather obvious (and that would be in keeping with Bavinck's point in sketching natural realism). Nevertheless this provides indispensable theoretical grounding for the evangelistic mission of the church. With the help of Bavinck's conception of natural certainty, we may, with greater confidence and resolve, call unbelievers to face the reality of sin and death and call them to trust in the objective action of God through Christ in the Spirit in history.

The Imago Dei and the Nature-Grace Relation

If the material considered up to this juncture has the appearance of general, pre-dogmatic reflection, one need not look far in Bavinck to ascertain that his understanding of the work of God as Creator and Redeemer, together with various related theological themes, nurtures and presides over his view of human knowing. Though Bavinck's coordination of nature and grace has been duly noted as an integrative theme in his work, it is germane to outline its essential features once more here in order to trace how this coordination bears on the cognitive dynamics of Christian witness. One helpful pathway into his cartography of nature and grace runs through his treatment of the *imago Dei*.

In Bavinck's rehearsal of the history, there have been, broadly speaking, two major perspectives on the image of God. The first is a naturalistic perspective in which the image of God consists in a childlike innocence or neutrality with freedom of choice for the attainment of perfection before God. The second is a supernaturalistic perspective predominant in Roman Catholic theology. According to Bavinck, there are two seminal theological

commitments underlying Roman Catholic supernaturalism: (1) the construal of the state of glory as a condition in which believers transcend the state of nature and reach a *visionem Dei per essentiam* and (2) the doctrine of meritorious good works funded by infused grace granted in baptism. With these theological implements in hand, supernaturalism ventures that nature, or the condition of being a human creature of God and as such obeying God, is insufficient to outfit human persons for their beatific *telos*. Given the inadequacy of nature and natural human righteousness, God bestowed upon Adam a *donum superadditum*, the image of God, by which Adam was brought into a state of grace and equipped for meritorious works unto the achievement of deification. With the fall, this supernatural gift was lost and humanity became dependent upon the reinstatement of supernatural grace in baptism, by which one can again pursue meritorious works en route to physical participation in the divine nature (*RD*, 2:539–42).

Bavinck catalogs several criticisms of this supernaturalistic portrayal of the image of God and the life and destiny of the Christian believer. First, it neglects the continuity of the state of glory with our present enjoyment of communion with God, which is characterized by Christ's mediation and by an ethical (rather than physical) conformity of the human person to God. Second, in Scripture the state of glory contrasts less with our original condition than our fallen condition. Christ has acquired for us the same blessings which Adam also, by obedience in the sphere of nature, would have acquired for himself and his descendants. Third, that fallen persons journey to the state of glory by way of the state of grace does not mean that prelapsarian humanity had to take the same road. Even if fallen humanity were now in fact obliged to arrive at its beatific destiny by means of a *donum superadditum* and merit of condignity, it is incorrect to apply this economy to Adam in his original state. While it is true that the image of God restored for us is none other than the image enjoyed originally by Adam, and while the spiritual blessings that Christ obtained for us are none other than what Adam himself would have obtained by obedience, this correspondence does not signal that Adam in his original state was to receive a *donum superadditum* to animate his

obedience. For Bavinck, such a theological maneuver "transforms everything into grace and so ensures that there is no longer any grace at all" (*RD,* 2:544).[7] Moreover, after this hyperextension of grace, Roman Catholic theology only emaciates grace by means of meritorious good works: *posse ex Deo, velle ex homine*. Against Roman Catholicism's merit theology, Bavinck states that the possibility of Adam obtaining eternal life by obedience is underwritten not by merit *ex condigno* but by merit *ex pacto*: merit regulated by the covenant of works in which Adam's obedience *per se* would not be adequate to the spiritual blessings he might obtain but would be considered as such according to the covenantal arrangement. Fourth, the notion of the *donum superadditum* leads Roman Catholicism to an unbiblical distribution of humanity into three tiers (the natural, preternatural, and supernatural) and to a reduction of original sin to the loss of the *donum superadditum* and a return to the natural state. Bavinck views this formulation as a devolution of the biblical sin-grace ethical antithesis into an unbiblical nature-grace metaphysical antithesis. Fifth, the matter of original righteousness being both natural and amissible is not alleviated by the notions of preternatural and supernatural righteousness, for on Rome's view one can still lose natural righteousness and yet remain a human being. Even for Rome natural righteousness is an accidental property. The true function of the *donum superadditum*, then, is to address the Catholic matter-spirit antithesis according to which human beings must overcome the defect of physicality. Sixth and finally, just as the superadded gift was allegedly granted to Adam prior to the fall in order to elevate him above nature, so in Catholic thought it is dispensed now by the church, a point which yields the unfortunate implicate that grace is qualitatively the same before and after the fall. Here Bavinck is simply arguing that, if there were grace before the fall, it seems odd that it should be identical to the grace that appears after the fall. Indeed, inasmuch as grace is "the essential element in Christianity," this means that, in a sense, Christianity existed before the fall. It means also that, in the grace proffered by Christianity,

7. Nature and grace are distinct but not inimical as are sin and grace.

the atonement is merely incidental (*RD,* 2:542–48). Thus in Bavinck's sixth criticism he objects to both the constancy of grace before and after the fall and to the supernatural character of that grace.

In Bavinck's positive account of Protestant and, in particular, Reformed reflection on the image of God, he earnestly maintains that the image respects human nature itself rather than only a supernatural state and that in redemptive history there is an opposition not between nature and grace but between sin and grace. In other words, nature itself does not elicit grace. It is sin that, on supposition of God's will for some still to partake of eternal life, elicits the reparative power of grace. The human predicament, then, is not physical but ethical.

Bavinck narrates that, perceiving the intensiveness of our sin and corruption, the Reformers spurned the notion that in the fall the natural qualities of humanity remained untainted even as the supernatural gifts such as immortality were abdicated. Instead, in the despoliation of the *imago Dei*, humanity underwent a holistic corruption indicative of the image belonging to the very nature of human persons. Yet the Protestants did not regard the image as absolutely necessary or inamissible in human nature. They did not discard the distinction between the substance of the human person and divine gifts bestowed upon the human person, between natural and supernatural attributes. Rather, they opposed the Roman Catholic characterization of this distinction wherein there are two essentially different planes of human existence, one natural and the other supernatural, and wherein being human and being Christian are incommensurable. Hence, the Reformation theologians positioned the image of God within human nature and judged that its infirmity entails the infirmity of human nature itself. The Reformed especially upheld the image of God in its broader and narrower senses, that is, in respect of the natural qualities of humanity as well as the supernatural gifts. After the fall humanity abides in the image of God and yet has "lost the primary content of the image of God (i.e., knowledge, righteousness, and holiness) and only regains these qualities in Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10)" (*RD,* 2:550).

In Bavinck's view, this union of the substance of the human person and the supernatural gifts prevents antagonism between nature and grace. Although increated righteousness does not emerge automatically from human nature and may be called a gift of God's grace broadly conceived, the Reformed urged that Adam's original righteousness was natural and could not lie above his humanity. Original righteousness belongs to the "normal state" or "health of a human being" and hence is natural (*RD,* 2:551). Thus the corruption of the *imago Dei* and original righteousness does not entail the annihilation of human nature altogether but does entail the loss of its integrity. The reception of Christ's righteousness by faith secures for us a benefit that belongs (albeit accidentally) to human nature itself. From here, Bavinck invokes Holy Scripture, observing that the biblical text knows nothing of original righteousness being overridden by supernatural righteousness. By nature human beings were granted communion with God and required to obey God. In Scripture there is no double morality stratified for different classes of persons; with his one holy law God claims each of us and each of us *in toto*. This universal divine claim undermines the notion that God bestows upon some a supernatural grace and holds them to a higher ethical standard. Therefore, since one cannot place original righteousness above human nature, one must place it within human nature. Indeed, while Rome itself teaches that original righteousness is properly conceived as supernatural righteousness, it does acknowledge that natural righteousness is amissible. The Reformed repudiated the concept of supernatural righteousness, but there is in fact agreement between Rome and the Reformed concerning the existence of a righteousness both natural and amissible. Thus the Roman Catholic objection to Protestant formulations of the *imago Dei* is misguided. In reality, Rome's construal of original righteousness as supernatural righteousness is contoured to facilitate a Neoplatonic depiction of human destiny. By contrast, the Protestants rejected this rendition of the end of humanity and determined that the loss of original righteousness does not entail the loss of substance or nature but does entail the loss of natural moral qualities and of humanity's "health and harmony" (*RD*, 2:548–53).

Though Bavinck credits Protestantism in general with a theological breakthrough in the doctrine of the image of God, he judges that in Lutheranism this breakthrough could not reach its full flowering. For the Lutherans tended to relegate the image to the moral quality of righteousness so that human nature itself is segregated from the image and the image is entirely lost in the fall. This, Bavinck writes, severs the connection between nature and grace. For, when God accomplishes our salvation, his grace undertakes to restore not our nature but only a certain quality alongside of it. In contrast, the Reformed preserved the connection between substance and quality, nature and grace, by recognizing the *imago Dei* in both its broader and its narrower senses. Broadly considered, the *imago* respects the whole person and his or her nature; narrowly considered, it respects humanity's original righteousness and ethical conformity to God. In the broad sense the *imago* has been corrupted by the fall, and in the narrower sense it has been lost by the fall. Therefore, according to the Reformed view, the restoration of the *imago* heals the whole person even as it has to re-create humanity's righteousness before God. Nevertheless, the union of the substance of the human person and the gifts of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness is not to be mistaken for a triumphalism about the *imago Dei*; these gifts were not originally fully actualized but were meant to be cultivated by Adam in time. Indeed, only with God's providential assistance could Adam have done so (*RD*, 2:553–54, 558).

In sum, against Roman Catholicism, Bavinck insists that the destiny of the elect is not such that God must bypass or combat human nature in order to lead humanity to that destiny. The image of God is not a superadded gift calibrated to transcend nature; rather, it is imparted to humanity in its creation and belongs to its nature. Accordingly, inasmuch as grace pursues the soundness and flourishing of the image, it does not subvert nature but restores it and facilitates its proper fulfillment. Hence Bavinck dissolves the nature-grace antithesis and replaces it with the sin-grace antithesis. Against the Lutheran theologians, he clarifies that the image of God concerns not merely humanity's righteousness before God but the substance of the human person as well as the amissible qualities

such as righteousness and immortality. Therefore, redemption is neither against nature nor adjacent to nature; it respects human nature itself.

In relation to the epistemic aspect of Christian witness, Bavinck's identification of the aim of divine grace as the restoration and perfection of nature significantly entails that God's saving work is received by means of a faculty of human nature, namely, the mind in its fiduciary *habitus*, and that this natural faculty is thereby sanctified and perfected. To be sure, the darkness of the human mind and the initiatory character and immediacy of regeneration preclude claiming that the application of redemption in its entirety must come through the checkpoint of human consciousness and reason. Nevertheless, that God does not endeavor to overthrow human nature serves as a theological backdrop to persuasive verbal proclamation of the gospel. For it assures us that, in the proclamation of the gospel, God means to address our intellect. He intends, by the working of the Spirit, not to deactivate human reason but to purify it. At this point we may recall that, for Bavinck, human persons even after the fall successfully employ their apprehensive and dianoetic capabilities. This fact, paired with God's intention to restore human nature in all its dimensions, encourages evangelists, pastors, and laypersons to share the gospel in the knowledge that their articulation of it is, in the hand of God, an instrument of great exigency for the salvation of others. Precisely how Bavinck relates the restorative work of God to the human intellect is the subject of the next two sections.

General and Special Revelation

The significance of the nature-grace relation for the cognitive dimension of proclaiming and hearing the word of the gospel is elucidated in Bavinck's treatment of revelation. According to him, while Roman Catholics devise a nature-grace dualism in respect to revelation, and while Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Socinians disparage the sphere of nature and general revelation, Reformed theologians hold that it is vital to reiterate the compatibility and complementarity of nature and grace vis-à-vis revelation. To

accomplish this, Bavinck carefully plots the distinctions between natural and supernatural revelation and general and special revelation. The natural-supernatural distinction concerns not the origin of revelation, which is always supernatural, but the manner of revelation. Rightly construed, natural revelation denotes God's self-disclosure *per naturam*, that is, self-disclosure through the ordinary realities and processes within nature and history. Supernatural revelation denotes God's self-disclosure *extra naturam*. The *extra* here does not imply that God's self-revelation is located outside of the created order and its history or that we must transcend our creatureliness in order to receive it. Rather, it indicates that this mode of revelation is not given merely by means of the ordinary course of the natural world and its history. In the case of this supernatural mode of revelation, God still does not present himself immediately to the creature (*finitum non est capax infiniti*) but employs creaturely means such as physical appearances in Old Testament theophany or human speech in the prophetic word. In his supernatural revelation, God's self-presentation is a divine act answerable to divine omnipotence and as such is extrinsic to the ordinary course of nature and history. According to Bavinck, both natural and supernatural revelation are found in nature and grace, and both occur before and after the fall. In Eden, God revealed himself not merely by the beauty of nature but verbally as well. After the fall, God's self-revelation obtains in creation and the ordinary course of history and is not replaced by supernatural revelation. In the postlapsarian estate divisions sever communities of human persons from one another, and thus there arises the distinction between general and special revelation, which distinction respects not the origin or manner of revelation but the availability or audience of revelation. General revelation is God's self-revelation available to all human persons. Special revelation is God's self-revelation available to only certain human persons. Both general revelation and special revelation may be either natural or supernatural. On the one hand, Bavinck suggests, God's discourse with Adam and Eve in Genesis 2–3 was supernatural, but given their place as the first humans and the transmission of this discourse via tradition, this revelation was accessible to all persons

and is therefore an instance of general revelation. On the other hand, Jesus's physical death on the cross occurred without any extraordinary divine action and was therefore an instance of natural revelation, but it was accessible only to a small group of persons in the first century and thus belongs in the field of special revelation (*RD*, 1:303–12, 355–57).

Bavinck utilizes the general-special distinction as he identifies continuity and discontinuity in divine revelation throughout redemptive history. To him, it is obvious that the fact of revelation is unchanged by the fall: God continues to reveal himself in creation and supernaturally as well. Furthermore, general and special revelation have God as their common author and content. God is always the subject, the one revealing himself, and the object, the one whom the revelation reveals. To be sure, because of the fall, special revelation distinctly focuses on the grace of God according to the need of fallen persons. Yet the *telos* of revelation remains the same: the perfection and flourishing of human beings for the glory of God. Because this perfection includes the human mind, and because the human mind is dark and dull under the power of sin, special revelation addresses the intellect. It does not address the intellect only, but, precisely because the aim of special revelation is soteriological and doxological, it must drive home cognitive content to remedy the falsehood of sin (*RD*, 1:310–11, 340–46, 350).

In God's common grace, general revelation even after the fall yields some knowledge of the truth of God among human persons. In pagan religion there remain certain elements of truth preserved by "an illumination by the Logos, a working of God's Spirit."[8] In fact, Bavinck surmises, when Christianity is seen to affirm whatever truths are present in paganism, Christianity may even be called "paganism's fulfillment."[9] However, general revelation admits of a

8. Bavinck lists a number of biblical texts in support of this: Genesis 6:17; 7:15; Psalm 33:6; 104:30; Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 3:19; Proverbs 8:22ff; Malachi 1:11, 14; John 1:9; Romans 2:14; Galatians 4:1–3; Acts 14:16, 17; 17:22–30.

9. At various points Bavinck qualifies this and confirms that Christianity does not naively assume the tenets of pagan philosophy. To counter the shortcomings of religion and philosophy outside the sphere of special revelation,

twofold inadequacy. Objectively, it is inadequate because it tells nothing of the sinner's greatest need, namely, the grace of God and its historical enactment in the triune missions. Subjectively, it is inadequate in three ways. First, whatever measure of effort fallen persons invest in attaining to the knowledge of God, the mind is still warped by sin and susceptible to suppression and distortion of spiritual truth. Second, when one examines the loci of general revelation, one cannot escape the uncertainty overshadowing one's consideration of them. Ultimately, uncertainty about knowledge of God is abated only by the *autopistia* of Scripture and the internal testimony of the Spirit. Third, too few human beings have the time and resources required to scrutinize these loci and with scientific attentiveness extract all that can be known of God though them. The limitation of direct study, then, is overcome only by the accessibility and disseminative advantages of testimony that are given in Holy Scripture. At the same time, the import of general revelation is not lost. For with the guidance of verbal revelation in Scripture, believers are able to exegete general revelation and make use of it in sharing the gospel. They can commandeer Christian insight into general revelation and forge a link between the unbeliever's knowledge of God and his attributes in general revelation, however stifled or flaccid this may be, and the revelation of God in the gospel. "No one escapes the power of general revelation." Again: "General revelation preserves humankind in order that it can be found and healed by Christ and until it is." In this sense (and only in this sense), Bavinck judges, natural theology serves as a *praeambulum fidei* (*RD,* 1:321–22). Subjectively, the knowledge of God in special revelation is acquired by the believer first and then he or she can rightly understand general revelation. Yet, objectively, nature precedes grace. The knowledge of God presented in general revelation precedes the knowledge of God presented in special revelation. Therefore, in bearing witness to Christ, we may build on the unavoidable testimony of nature as we

God has provided "andere kenbron in de autoriteit" (another source of knowledge in authority) and faith as "tijdelijk medicijn" (temporary medicine) for fallen reason. *Christelijke wetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1904), 13–15.

seek to communicate the gospel (*RD*, 1:304–5, 312–14, 318–22, 577–90; 2:74–76; 4:33–34).[10]

Added to Bavinck's discussion of general and special revelation is his description of the *cognitio Dei insita*. Christian theology, he writes, has repudiated various philosophical accounts of innate ideas. There are no preformed truths embedded in the mind which need not be informed but only occasioned by sensory experience. The mind is not privileged to be a source of truth in its own right and hence is never independent of the world. We cannot deduce or distill from the materials of the mind a clear knowledge of God. In light of this conviction, Christian theologians have been happier to speak of an inborn capacity or disposition to form certain ideas upon encountering and perceiving objects in the world. "God in no respect causes humans to enter the world as adults but lets them be born as helpless infants in need of care. . . . Yet, concealed in those children is the full-grown adult of the future. And this is true intellectually, ethically, and religiously as well" (*RD,* 2:71). Thus, the *cognitio Dei insita* denotes humanity's natural aptitude to become spontaneously aware of God's existence and ultimacy upon experiencing the world as a locus of God's self-revelation. While we are bound to objective revelation in the spheres of nature and grace, the doctrine of the implanted knowledge of God reminds us that human persons automatically and inexorably arrive at some knowledge of God without coercion and without scientific intentionality or proof.

Against the theory of innate ideas, Bavinck argues that human beings still arrive at this knowledge of God "mediately, by the interior impact of revelation upon their consciousness." Against empiricism, "this revelation of God speaks so loudly and so forcefully and meets with such resonance in everyone's heart that it can be called uniquely appropriate to, and increated in, humans" (*RD,* 2:72). Revelation in the created order precedes human consciousness of God. God "exerts revelatory pressure upon

10. On a related note, Bavinck also insists on receptivity and gratitude among believers for non-believers' progress and findings in science. See *Christelijke wetenschap*, 31–32.

humans" and thus adventitiously activates our innate capacity for knowledge of God. "While the 'seed of religion' is indeed inherent in humans, it takes the whole field of human life to make it germinate and grow" (*RD,* 2:73). In this connection, the implanted knowledge of God can broadly be characterized as acquired knowledge of God. Still, God gifts us with innate ability to receive and appropriate his revelation and leads us to an awareness of God without compulsion or argumentation. This *cognitio Dei insita* is thus noetic and apprehensive rather than dianoetic and discursive. It is less specific and elaborate than the *cognitio Dei acquisita* and is therefore less subject to doubt and debate. Humanity always seeks by protracted study and reasoning to journey to the acquired knowledge of God, but we always carry with us the implanted knowledge of God and are therefore able and willing to participate in cross-perspectival dialogue and debate. If Bavinck's formulation of natural realism depicted a material noetic solidarity with respect to perception of the world as well as a formal noetic solidarity with respect to the laws of thought, then here he expands material noetic solidarity to include apprehension of God as well (*RD*, 2:63–76).

This alcove of Bavinck's theology contains a number of clarifications and implications for Christian witness. That both natural and supernatural revelation occurred before the fall suggests that the supernatural and verbal revelation of the gospel inscripturated and expounded in the biblical text and proclaimed by the church is suitable to human nature. The revelatory mode of the gospel does not impose upon us the task of asking unbelievers to become other what they are as human beings; rather, it urges us to call unbelievers by faith to shift back toward true humanity as creatures living not by bread alone but by every word of God. This is corroborated by the continuity of the authorship, material content, and *telos* of general and special revelation. While the fall occasions an emphasis on grace in special revelation, the goal remains the same: human thriving to the praise of God's glory. Just as divine speech before the fall proceeded through the rational mind to affect the whole human person, so too special revelation runs through the head to the heart, urging the importance and usefulness of well-ordered verbal witness on the part of evangelists, missionaries,

pastors, and laypersons. Finally, general revelation and the *cognitio Dei insita* encourage us that in attesting the grace of God in Christ we build from and leverage unbelievers' consciousness of God under the aspects of his supremacy and righteousness. While this consciousness is deformed by sin, it abides as a rudimentary religious point of contact with which we may connect in the missionary activity of the church. Just how the human mind, or reason broadly conceived, relates to the immediate aim of this missionary activity, the inception of faith in Christ among those estranged from God, is taken up in the next section.

Faith and Reason

Bavinck's coordination of faith and reason is replete with insight for Christian witness in the modern world, but we confine ourselves to four observations here. First, in Bavinck's view, reason and faith are not placed in entitative juxtaposition: these are not two discrete *things* existing alongside one another but are distinguished as faculty and disposition or faculty and act. Reason is not the source of truth but in faith apprehends that truth which is presented to it. This is the first step toward debunking the faith-reason antithesis in which faith and reason are concerned with utterly incommensurate strata of reality or are openly hostile to one another, the former being concerned with imaginative projections of felt human needs and the latter with facts and truth. For, if in this case there are not even two different faculties at all, then there are certainly not two different faculties at odds with one another. Indeed, that faith is a *habitus* of the mind, or reason broadly defined, entails that faith is not the end of serious reflection but rather that it has an intrinsic propensity toward theological study. Second, faith is original and natural to humanity, not a superadded gift. In all the spheres of thought, faith with its immediate, indemonstrable certainty proves to be the bedrock upon which further inquiry and reflection take place. By faith we consent to the first principles basic to human thought and interaction and basic to scientific investigation. "[B]elieving as such is so far from being inimical to human nature and the demands of science that without

it there cannot be normal people and a normal science" (*RD*, 1:568; cf. 564–68, 616–17).

To be sure, faith as certain knowledge of creaturely things and faith as certain knowledge of heavenly things differ in respect to their objects, their relationships to their objects, their bases, and their origins. The former concerns belief in the external world, specific objects in the world, the general reliability of our perception of the world, and the laws of thought whereas the latter concerns the revelation of the grace of God in Christ. The former is related to its objects immediately, while the latter is related to its object mediately. In other words, faith as certain knowledge of creaturely things relates to creaturely objects *per se* while religious and saving faith relates to its spiritual object through created media *sub specie revelationis Dei*, even if such knowledge is still noetic rather than dianoetic and includes personal appropriation of that which it apprehends.[11] The former is based on firsthand experience while the latter draws its material content from testimony. The origin of the former lies in the interface of human nature with external reality while the origin of the latter, though not against nature, is not nature (as this is now corrupted) but the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, even religious faith is original and natural to humanity and must now be given as a gift to human beings only incidentally and on account of sin (*RD*, 1:568–71; 4:100–1).

Third, saving faith is apprehensive of cognitive content. When Bavinck distinguishes between historical faith and saving faith, he insists that they are different in essence as well as degree. However, he adds, the knowledge of historical faith is materially constant even when it is taken up in saving faith. The change consists in that the knowledge of historical faith becomes esteemed as the truth of God vital to one's eternal well-being. "The knowledge and assent inherent in historical faith, which were sometimes a person's intellectual property at an earlier stage, are later grafted onto saving

11. At this point, Bavinck clarifies that the physicality of the life and mission of Jesus does not entail that religious faith is related immediately to its object, for its object is not Jesus's words and deeds in themselves but rather these as media of the grace of God (*RD*, 1:568–69).

faith as onto a new root and as a result draw better nourishment from them" (*RD*, 4:126–28). Finally, when the Holy Spirit works faith in the human person in regeneration, illumination, and the internal call, he does not bypass or supplement the determinate content and meaning of the word of God written and preached. For Bavinck, while Lutheranism tends impersonally to enclose the Spirit in the word by saying that the Spirit works *per verbum*, and while the Anabaptist tradition tends to imply that the Spirit works *sine verbo*, the Reformed strike the right balance in asserting that the Spirit works *cum verbo* to bring salvation to human beings. The Spirit adds nothing to what Christ has provided but only administers what Christ has already provided (John 16:13–15). The Spirit implants new life, enables us to perceive the spiritual truth and consequence of the gospel, and leads us to heed the external call in faith. The regenerative work of the Holy Spirit is immediate in the sense that the Spirit directly affects the fallen heart and will without operating through our consent or affecting the mind and assigning to the mind the task of reforming the heart and will. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit does not discard the word of Christ as the instrument of our salvation. Furthermore, this work is called irresistible in the sense that it is effectual, not in the sense that it circumvents reason and coerces the unbeliever into the kingdom of God.[12]

Bavinck's account of faith and reason possesses a number of resources for the church's missionary endeavors. His construal of the relationship between the two suggests that Christians need not hesitate to deliver the gospel to the intelligentsia of our own culture and of others. Faith is a disposition or operation of the mind and, though saving faith is supernatural in origin, it demands of no one a suspension or stifling of increated rationality. Though the gospel confronts the warping of rationality under sin, it appeals to reason and invites the agreement of it as well as the heart. As in the exposition of the *imago Dei*, that faith is original to humanity assures the missionary that they seek not the introduction of

12. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:382–85; 4:80–4, 457–60; Herman Bavinck, *Roeping en wedergeboorte* (Kampen: Ph. Zalsman, 1903), 188–245.

something alien to humanity but rather the recovery of something truly and profoundly human. The importance of Christianity's factual, historical content to saving faith reminds us that evangelism must be both doctrinally faithful and intelligible to the hearer. This reinforces the value of theological education for Christian mission and the consequence of conscientious articulation in sharing the gospel with others. The same is verified by the way of the Spirit's activity in guiding persons to Christ. The Spirit acts to bind the unbeliever to the word of the gospel and does not undertake his own program of salvation. Hence we are responsible to enunciate the gospel with intelligence and care even as we trust that the efficacy of this lies not in our power but belongs to the Spirit who glorifies Christ and opens the heart hardened by sin.

Conclusion

As the contemporary church in dissent to both atheism and religious pluralism seeks to be faithful to Christ and the mission that he established for his disciples, it is crucial that we observe the wisdom of our spiritual and theological forebears. To give Bavinck a place in this undertaking is to gain a theological erudition sated with good judgment and useful in grounding and enlivening the evangelistic mission of the church. Bavinck's rendition of natural realism substantiates that all humanity is connected to a shared reality and a shared assemblage of rudimentary rational principles and that we therefore have epistemic traction for intercultural dialogue and witness. His account of the *imago Dei* in relation to nature and grace authenticates that the application of salvation does not deactivate nature and reason but rather presupposes and rehabilitates them. His sketch of general and special revelation and the *cognitio Dei insita* assures us that Christian witness links up with a knowledge of God that is already present among unbelievers. Finally, his configuration of faith and reason prods us to take seriously the congeniality of Christian belief and logical thought and to practice diligence in articulating the gospel with doctrinal fidelity. To the extent that we allow theological acuities such as these in Bavinck's thought to inform the mission of the church, we

will grow in discernment and fortitude in proclaiming the gospel, and our witness will become more conducive to the divine work of bringing human beings to see “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4).

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Herman Bavinck, Lesslie Newbigin, and Reformed Mission in the Global Workplace

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What possible relevance could the Reformed tradition have for the working lives of a computer programmer in Mumbai, an artist in Shanghai, a banker in Sao Paolo, or a marketing executive in Cairo? What sort of Reformed community could hold, shape, and equip these urbanites for faithful lives in today's increasingly complex vocations and growing global cities?

Today, for the first time in history, the majority of humanity lives and works in a city. By the year 2030, the world's cities will hold an astonishing five billion people. The terrific pace of global urbanization and professionalization is presenting missionaries with a radically new mission field unimagined by their nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors.

I will argue that today's church planters need to be equipped with three vital elements if they hope to establish vibrant communities of faith in mission fields that are increasingly urban and professional. First, they need to develop a rich theological understanding of the modern workplace. Second, they need new ecclesiological models capable of connecting the working lives of urban professionals to the *missio Dei*. And third, they need new flesh and blood models of churches that are currently engaged in outreach to urban professionals. Toward that end, I will argue that, by creatively combining Herman Bavinck's robust theology of work, Lesslie Newbigin's vocational understanding of ecclesiology, and Redeemer Presbyterian Church's model of professional missions in New York City, today's urban church planters can creatively

imagine how to develop culturally engaged communities of faith within professional contexts.

My ancillary goal is to demonstrate that theological scholars both of Herman Bavinck's neo-Calvinism and those of Lesslie Newbigin's missional theology have traditionally ignored each other's important contributions to the detriment of both groups. A careful reading of Bavinck's trinitarian theology could provide the missional movement with a rich and historically grounded theology of cultural engagement. Likewise, a careful reading of Newbigin's missional ecclesiology could help neo-Calvinists to creatively imagine how the institutional church can inform and enrich the cultural vocations of the laity in the world—something they have left largely unexplored. That said, I will argue that both theological schools can benefit from a more praxis-oriented theology that investigates how their ideas actually take shape in local church contexts like Redeemer's.

Herman Bavinck's Theology of Culture and Vocation

Herman Bavinck's trinitarian theology of cultural engagement is marked, not surprisingly, by three significant aspects: a traditional neo-Calvinist passion for the exploration, development, and enjoyment of God's creation; a nuanced commitment to the imitation of Christ in daily life; and a generous understanding of the Holy Spirit's pervasive work of common grace in culture. In the following section I will briefly explore the contours of these three aspects and their relevance for the life and work of a Christian professional.

Bavinck's enduring commitment to the neo-Calvinist tradition's vision of culture and creation can be witnessed throughout his writings. God's creation is painted as a fertile garden bursting with potencies for humankind to both develop and enjoy. God is depicted as a skilled designer—a lover of color, beauty, complexity, and order who takes particular delight in the diverse ways his creatures explore and enjoy God's beloved garden. The pluriform

vocations of artist, scientist, farmer, and builder are each, according to Bavinck's scheme, intrinsically valuable to the development of creation and the ultimate glory of the creator.

On the basis of this rich theology of vocation, Bavinck argued, one's faith in God can never be separated from one's creational or cultural activity. Faith, he argued, "embraces the whole man in his thinking, feeling, and activity, in his whole life everywhere and at all times."[1] According to Bastian Kruithof, who wrote at length on Bavinck's theology of culture, Bavinck was convinced that Christian's confess their faith "not only on Sunday, but also throughout the week in the family, the school, the church, at his work, in society and state, in science and art." Thus, Bavinck was convinced that, in one's cultural life, "religion is not something added on, *but life*, life that must be serving, praising, and glorifying of God."[2] In Bavinck's words, "culture and cultus, go together from the beginning, belong together, and constitute the great, holy, and glorious destiny of man."[3]

Bavinck therefore vigorously defended the work of the laity in creation and culture as central, and never ancillary, to the kingdom of God. He lamented the fact that, in the modern Reformed churches, the

> ordinary man who honorably fulfills his daily calling before God hardly seems to count anymore; he does nothing, or so it is thought, for the kingdom of God. . . . In the view of many today, to be a real Christian requires something extra, something out of the ordinary, some supernatural deed. . . . And so it is that the power and the worth of Christian faith is not appraised according to what a man does in his common calling but in what he accomplishes above and beyond it.[4]

1. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 268.

2. Bastian Kruithof, "The Relation of Christianity and Culture in the Teaching of Herman Bavinck." (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1955), 297, 124 (emphasis added), respectively.

3. Herman Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei: Onderwijzing in de Christelijke Religie naar Gereformeerde Belijdenis* (Kampen: Kok, 1909), 9; cited in Kruithof, 122.

4. Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (1989), 62.

Bavinck's frustration with the theological devaluation of work arose from what he believed to be a deeply Calvinist conviction "that the husband as father of the family, the wife as mother of her children, the servant girl in the kitchen, and the laborer behind the plough, are as truly servants of God as the missionary and minister and Sabbath-school teacher."[5]

The more one explores Bavinck's robust theology of creation the more one can see how it could quickly begin to both inform and inspire the working lives of today's urban professional. Vocations in management, investment, design, production, imagination, and construction could be recognized as service and worship rendered to the Creator. For, according to Bavinck, God claims the whole of a person—"mind, heart, soul, body, and all his or her energies—for his service and his love."[6] Spiritual apathy and indifference towards one's work would be off the table for anyone bathed in Bavinck's theology of creation.

Unlike his neo-Calvinist colleague Abraham Kuyper, whose theology of culture tended to lean heavily on the first and third persons of the Trinity, Bavinck's theo-cultural vision was purposefully trinitarian in its inception and articulation. Through Bavinck's careful exploration of how the life and teachings of Jesus should inform a Christian's cultural activity, he opened new vocational vistas for the neo-Calvinist tradition.

The first and arguably most important aspect of Bavinck's Christo-centric cultural ethic is the intimate and unbreakable link he forges between the divine work of creation and redemption in the person of Jesus Christ. Within this twofold work of Christ, Bavinck hopes to resolve the centuries long struggle in Christian thought between tradition's that emphasize creation (nature, law, and the Old Testament) and those that emphasize redemption (grace, love, and the New Testament). He rejects the claim that a choice or an artificial hierarchy between creation and redemption

5. Herman Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5 (1894), 21.

6. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 552.

need to be made.[7] In the person of Jesus Christ, creation, law, and the Old Testament are not replaced or superseded but restored, renewed, and fulfilled in his life, death, and resurrection.

According to Bavinck, Christ's work of redemption restores and redeems our creational activity in the world. Christ is not interested in canceling or rescuing his disciples from this cultural activity; rather, he wants to help them to walk faithfully within it. It is certainly "much easier," Bavinck writes, "to reject all culture, than it is to walk in all these areas as a Child of God and to imitate Christ."[8] And yet "Christ came not to do away with the world and the various spheres of life but to restore and preserve them."[9] Those who wish to truly follow the creator and redeemer Christ, Bavinck argues, must imitate his own participation in and restoration of the created order.

With Bavinck's emphasis on a Christlike participation in creation and redemption of culture, it is easy to see how the language of "imitation" would play a central role in his cultural ethic. From the beginning to the end of his career, Bavinck was

7. Bavinck captures this integrated understanding of Christ as creator, redeemer, and consummator succinctly when he argues that "the preaching of Jesus cannot be separated from what has followed after the cross. The gospel goes back in the past to creation, and even into eternity, and stretches forward to the farthest future. Christ, who was the Word created all things, and bore the cross as the Servant of the Lord, is the same who rose again and ascended into heaven, and will return as Judge of the quick and the dead." Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*: *The Stone Lectures for 1908–1909*, *Princeton Theological Seminary* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 267. In another place he adds, "The Divine Being is one: there is but one Being that is God and that may be called God. In creation and redemption, in nature and grace, in church and world, in state and society, everywhere and always we are concerned with one, same, living and true God. The unity of the world, of mankind, of virtue, of justice, and of beauty depends upon the unity of God." Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 158.

8. John Bolt, "Christ and the Law in the Ethics of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993), 71, citing Herman Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus en het Moderne Leven," in *Kennis en Leven* (Kampen: Kok, 1922), 144.

9. "Common Grace," 64.

fascinated with the question of how a contemporary Christian could faithfully imitate Christ's life and work in the modern world.[10]

Bavinck's first article on the subject begins with a careful reading of a number historical and contemporary models of the *imitatio Christi*. In this analysis Bavinck demonstrates a careful appreciation of the "martyr", "monk," and "mystic" paradigms for imitation, but for two important reasons he ultimately concludes that they are each insufficient models for contemporary imitation. First, each of these models mistakenly focuses on a single, and rather narrow, aspect of Christ's life and makes it a ruling ethical norm for all cultural activity. Second, each model creates an unnecessary and destructive dualism or hierarchy between the true imitators of Christ (martyrs, monks, and mystics) and the ordinary laity who can never measure up. Imitation thus becomes the calling of the few and remains an irrelevant ideal to the rest.

Convinced that the call to imitation is given to all disciples, Bavinck moves on from these prohibitively narrow historical models and considers two modernist visions. He begins by exploring what he calls the "literalist vision." This paradigm is a rather flat-footed and wooden vision of imitation in which the modern disciple engages in a rigorous mirroring of Christ's first-century life. This vision, Bavinck argues, lacks the theological imagination and flexibility a modern disciple needs to respond effectively to a cultural context quite distinct from ancient Palestine. With that, Bavinck turns toward the other side of the modernist spectrum to what he calls the "rationalistic vision" of discipleship. According to this view, the concrete particularities of Christ's life and teachings are too removed and too radical to be of use in modern life. Thus modern disciples need to boil the life of Jesus down to a more palatable and rational core essence, spirit, or

10. My understanding of Bavinck's ethic of imitation is deeply indebted to the interpretive work of John Bolt; see "The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College (Toronto School of Theology), 1982) and "Christ and the Law in the Ethics of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993), 45–73 (hereafter cited in text).

set of principles. Once Christ's more scandalous rough edges have been removed, then, and only then, can he serve as an acceptable moral ideal for modern life and work (58–59).

Convinced that Christians in all times, places, and vocations are bound to the demands of imitation, Bavinck works to develop a vision of discipleship that takes the concrete life and teachings of Jesus seriously while still being able to imagine new and unforeseen acts of imitation in modern life and work. He begins his alternative vision by rooting it firmly not in the virtue, moral character, or willpower of the particular imitator but in the grace-filled activity of the imitated. According to Bavinck, modern disciples who see Jesus only as a moral example whom they must rigorously follow are quickly "overwhelmed," "discouraged," and feel "powerlessness to truly imitate him." He therefore insists that "[o]nly when we know and experience him as Redeemer, as the one whose suffering covers our guilt and whose Spirit fulfills the law of God in us, only then do we dare to look at him and consider him our example" (60). For Bavinck, imitation must *begin with and be governed by* the gracious and mystical union Christ initiates with his disciples. It is only from one's initial standing in Christ's grace that a modern disciple can begin to take the first tentative steps of imitation in her life and work.

Bavinck's notion of imitation differs in an important aspect from that of his neo-Calvinist colleague Abraham Kuyper. While Kuyper tends to speak of Christ as a risen king who judges, transforms, and rules culture in glory and power, Bavinck's depiction of Christ is tempered with Christological suffering, submission, and sacrifice. For, in Bavinck's mind, the true imitator will follow Christ in *both* his kingship and his cross.

Regarding the practical question of how one goes about imitating Christ in modern life and work, Bolt argues that Bavinck's frequent use of terms like "concrete," "illustrative," and "clarification" aim to articulate "a mediating position between the Scylla of spiritualizing and the Charybdis of literalism" (65). Bavinck argues for what we might call a *concrete relativizing* of Christian witness for modern life and work. Against the rationalists,

Bavinck argues that modern disciples must wrestle with the concrete words and acts of Jesus. Against the literalists, he argues for the free responsibility of the modern imitator to both interpret the life of Christ and embody the mystical union they have with Him in their specific vocations and cultures. The modern imitator, according to Bolt, "does not have the freedom to accept or reject" Christ's teachings, but she does "have *the freedom to apply* the moral virtues and principles" she espouses "in different ways depending upon the circumstances" (66).

Returning to our urban professionals, we can easily see how Bavinck puts their daily lives and work into intimate and immediate conversation with the lordship of Christ in four specific ways. First, the witness of Christ is understood as having a deep, pervasive, and irrefutable authority in their working lives. According to Bavinck,

> Christ did not come just to restore the religio-ethical life of man and leave all the rest of life undisturbed, as if the rest of life had not been corrupted by sin and had no need of restoration. No, the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit extend even as far as sin has corrupted. Everything that is sinful, guilty, unclean, and full of woe is, as such and for that very reason, the object of the evangel of grace that is to be preached to every creature. Therefore Christ has also a message for home and society, for art and science. Liberalism chose to limit its power and message to the heart and inner chamber, declaring that its kingdom was not of this world. But if the kingdom is not of, it is certainly in this world, and is intended for it. The word of God which comes to us in Christ is a word of liberation and restoration for the whole man, for his understanding and his will, for his body and his soul.[11]

Second, Bavinck reminds today's urban professionals that their daily acts of imitation in the workplace must emerge from Christ's initial act of grace and not from their own enduring moral stamina. They must live and work out of that grace and joy and not from any manufactured willpower or self-righteousness. The grace they experience in mystical union with Christ must be the exclusive engine that drives and informs their life in the modern workplace. Third, their vocation will not always be marked by an inspiring

11. "Common Grace," 61–62 (hereafter cited in text).

amount of kingship, creativity, and cultural transformation; rather, because of the powers of sin, boredom, opposition, oppression, and even failure will be an inevitable aspect of the imitation experience. As stated earlier, the urban professional who takes discipleship seriously will receive, in this dispensation, both a crown and a cross. Fourth, because disciples are given the freedom to interpret and embody the example of Christ in their unique vocations, they are not bound to a rigid set of rules that crack when their dynamic vocational circumstances shift. Instead, disciples are expected to imitate Christ in their own dynamic vocational contexts.

The third and final piece of Bavinck's theo-cultural vision is that of the Holy Spirit's cosmic work of *common grace* in the world. Bavinck uses this term to describe the pervasive, providential, and generous "working of the Spirit in all creation" (51) as the "author of all life, of every power and every virtue" (41). He argues that the Holy Spirit refuses to

> leave sin alone to do its destructive work. He had and, after the fall, continued to have a purpose for his creation; he interposed common grace between sin and the creation—a grace that, while it does not inwardly renew, nevertheless restrains and compels. All that is good and true has its origin in this grace, including the good we see in fallen man. The light still does shine in the darkness. The spirit of God makes its home and works in all the creation. (51)
>
> He fills the hearts of men with nourishment and joy and does not leave himself without a witness among them. He pours out upon them numberless gifts and benefits. Families, races, and peoples he binds together with natural love and affection. He allows societies and states to spring up that the citizens might live in peace and security. Wealth and well-being he grants them that the arts and sciences can prosper. And by his revelation in nature and history he ties their hearts and consciences to the invisible, supra-sensible world and awakens in them a sense of worship and virtue. (60)
>
> For these should be considered gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is true the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of sanctification, dwells in believers only, but as a spirit of life, of wisdom and of power He works also in those who do not believe. No Christian, therefore, should despise these gifts; on the contrary, he should honor art and science, music and philosophy and

> various other products of the human mind as *praestantissima Spiritus dona*, and make the most of them for his own personal use.[12]

Bavinck's articulation of the pervasive work of the Holy Spirit in all creation, culture, and people provides the urban professional with a theological foundation from which she can allow the world to inform, enrich, and even bless her life and work. She can enter her city and her particular vocation with the knowledge that the Holy Spirit has gone out before making cooperation, compromise, and dialogue with non-Christian co-workers possible. She can be grateful for her city's cafés and parks, she can learn from non-Christian professors, and she can work diligently for a company knowing that, despite perhaps many appearances to the contrary, God's Spirit is some how active even there. "For," Bavinck reminds her, "Moses was reared in all the wisdom of Egypt, the children of Israel decorated the house of the Lord with the gold and silver of Egypt, Solomon used the services of Hiram to build the temple, Daniel was trained in the science of the Chaldeans, and the wise men from the East laid their gifts at the feet of the baby in Bethlehem."[13] Such an understanding of God's generous common grace gives her a spirit of peace that cultural transformation is not ultimately up to her, it gives her a spirit of openness for those around her, and it gives her a spirit of hope in the promises of God to remain active in her workplace long after she is gone.

In sum, Bavinck's trinitarian theology provides modern professionals with a robust theological interpretation of their vocation in the global city as part of a larger *missio Dei* and its accompanying renewal of all things. His emphasis on creation affirms the eternal significance of their work. His nuanced vision of imitation binds their vocations to the concrete life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who guides their daily work and chastening any pretenses they might have of cultural triumphalism. And finally, his doctrine of common grace provides them with a pneumatological foundation from which they can live and work within their city

12. Herman Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," *The Princeton Theological Review* 7, no. 3 (1909), 13.

13. Bavinck, "Common Grace," 64.

while remaining cognizant of God's active and providential hand in everything around them.

That said, Bavinck's theology of cultural engagement, like that of many neo-Calvinists, fails to answer a second question vital to the future of Reformed theology and mission in today's global city: how might the urban church in its preaching, worship, and communal life both inform and shape its members for faithful lives in the workplace and the broader cultural *missio Dei*? What, in other words, would a neo-Calvinist church committed to serving God in all vocations practically look like? How would it encourage, challenge, and equip its disciples for work in the new global city? Would it take place in the suburbs or in the city? What sort of songs would it sing? What would its preaching be like? These seem, to my mind, very natural questions that follow from Bavinck's theo-cultural vision, and yet when one examines the writings of neo-Calvinists like Bavinck, one finds shockingly little in the way of concrete ecclesial guidance.

This neo-Calvinist silence on the connection between one's liturgical and cultural life has historically been grounded in a firm separation between what neo-Calvinists call the church as "institute" (the formal institution of the church) and the church as "organism" (the people of God actively working in the world). The idea being that the institute should respect a division of labor between itself and the organism by not dogmatically dictating every facet of a Christian's public and vocational life. After all, it is said, a pastor cannot be expected to tell a congregation's artists how to paint, its surgeons how to cut, or its stockbrokers how to invest. The institute, it is said, should stick to its assigned task of worship and preaching while leaving cultural and vocational matters to the discerning freedom of the church as organism.

In the spirit of Bavinck it seems that, while a neo-Calvinist *distinction* between one's liturgical and vocational life between the church as "institute" and the church as "organism" is both wise and extremely helpful, any *separation* between these two is neither. While it is certainly true that pastors in the institute must humbly respect the complexity and diversity of the laity's work, the institute

must never surrender its vital connection to and responsibility for the theo-cultural imagination of the organism. In other words, the liturgical and communal life of a truly neo-Calvinist church institute should reflect, support, encourage, and challenge the organism's dynamic imagination of how the gospel it preaches should inform and renew every corner of one's vocational life. For if a church's preaching, worship, and communal life fail to solidify any connection between faith and work for its members, that stark separation will undermine any hope the laity have of connecting faith and work for themselves.

Thus, while Bavinck provides us with an undeniably rich theological understanding of work, he does not give us a vision for how the church can communally and liturgically pass this theo-cultural imagination on into the weekly lives of its members. The intellectualist assumption here seems to be that if Christians are simply *taught* that there is a connection to faith and work, at some point in their lives the work of the church will have been finished. For an answer as to how the church as an institute can proactively play a role not only in informing its members of the connection between faith and work but also in shaping and sustaining this vision on a weekly basis, we need to turn to Lesslie Newbigin's creative, imaginative, and no doubt controversial proposal for a vocationally-based missional church.

Lesslie Newbigin's Vocational Ecclesiology

A Reformed minister from Great Britain, Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998) spent the first thirty years of his professional life serving as a missionary in southern India. Through his international writing, speaking, and leadership activities, Newbigin gained significant notoriety for his contributions to Christian understandings of inter-religious dialogue, cultural hermeneutics, ecumenics, and missional theology and practice.

Upon his eventual return to Great Britain, Newbigin became increasingly critical of the Western church's withdrawal from the public, cultural, and specifically vocational lives of the laity.

Newbigin's creative proposals for how the church could reengage these secular spheres, particularly the modern workplace, are the subject of the following section. It will become clear that while he would most certainly agree with Bavinck's assertion that the modern chasm between faith and work is a direct result of a stunted theology, Newbigin would want to add that it is the direct result of a stunted ecclesiology as well.

Newbigin's enduring conviction that the church was never meant to be a static institution but a dynamic cultural movement is shot through the entirety of his life and work. He never tired of quoting Emil Brunner's famous dictum: "The Church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning."[14] In Newbigin's eyes, the western church had disastrously traded in its dynamic public calling of cultural transformation and mission for a passive one of cultural chaplaincy. The structures and practices of this domesticated church, Newbigin argued, betrayed a cultural impotence that made any pervasive engagement with modern society impossible.

A truly missional church, Newbigin writes, "will be a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world." "The Church gathers," he argues, "to renew its participation in Christ's priesthood . . . not within the walls of the Church but in the daily business of the world."[15] The proper role of clergy is not didactic but most clearly illustrated in Christ's washing of his disciple's feet. Their ministerial calling is therefore to "help the members of the church to go out into their places in the world and there perform the healing, regenerating, teaching, saving, leavening ministries among mankind. Ministers are to be servants of the servants of God."[16]

14. Emil Brunner, *The Word in the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), 11.

15. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 229–30.

16. Lesslie Newbigin, "Ministry and Laity," *National Christian Council Review* 85 (1965): 481.

According to Newbigin, one of the most tragic consequences of the Western church's withdrawal from modern culture was its deafening silence on the professional lives of its members. For

> how a Christian should act in his business, in politics, in professional life, the Churches have had almost nothing to say. Each man has been largely left to find his own way. If you ask for books on how a Christian should conduct a Sunday School you will find plenty. But if you ask for guidance to a Christian banker, or a Christian lawyer, or a Christian farmer as to 'how a servant of Jesus Christ understands and exercises these jobs', you will find almost nothing . . . she has left her members largely to fend for themselves. [17]

If the Western church had any hope of becoming the public and cultural movement it was called to be, Newbigin argued, it would need to radically re-imagine its approach to the cultural and vocational lives of its members.[18] The traditional church, he argued, "must find ways of expressing solidarity with those who stand in these frontier situations."[19] Out of this conviction he began to imagine and articulate the beginnings of a vocation-based ecclesiology.

To truly understand the foundations of his experimental ecclesiology, we must return to Newbigin's formative missionary sojourn in southern India. Carved in the heat of the long Indian summer, a steadfast commitment to the radical locality of the church became a central pillar of Newbigin's ecclesiology. The church must be local, he argued, in design, ownership, worship, structure, and leadership. This was "the simplest of missionary principles."[20] Newbigin stood firmly against European models of

17. Lesslie Newbigin, "The Christian Layman in the World and in the Church," *National Christian Council Review* 72 (1952): 187.

18. A more thorough exploration of Newbigin's argument can be found in Matthew Kaemingk, "Lesslie Newbigin's Missional Approach to the Modern Workplace," *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (2011).

19. Michael W. Goheen, *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J.E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2000), 311.

20. Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 112.

mission that advocated the establishment of large, centralized, and distinctively western "mission stations" in which indigenous peoples were treated as passive recipients of a ministry and message not their own.

Inspired by this desire for radical locality, Newbigin traveled through hundreds of small Indian villages ordaining elders, establishing local churches, and granting scandalous amounts of local autonomy and responsibility. International missions officers monitoring his work back in England regularly questioned and outright challenged the freedom Newbigin granted the indigenous churches he had planted in these local villages. They argued that only thoroughly Western and seminary-trained clergy should be given such levels of ecclesial and sacramental control. In defense of his methods, Newbigin shot back that their ecclesiologies had fallen captive to the broken paradigms of Christendom that were neither biblical nor effective. The apostle Paul, he would remind his opponents,

> never stayed in one place for more than a few months, or at most a couple of years . . . as soon as there was an established congregation of Christian believers, he chose from among them elders, laid his hands on them, entrusted to them the care of the church, and left. . . . What must be done if the gospel is to be truly communicated? . . . [T]here must be a congregation furnished with a Bible, the sacraments, and the apostolic ministry. . . . The young church is then free to learn, as it goes and grows, how to embody the gospel in its own culture.[21]

What possible relevance could Newbigin's practice of rural church planting in India have for the development of a new urban ecclesiology that can connect with the working lives of urban professionals? Newbigin makes the connection for us.

> I am sure that [my] Indian experiences are not irrelevant to the situation in western industrialised society. I have met, for example, [English Christians] working on the shop-floor in a big factory . . . who have come to a fresh experience of Christ and who are eager to share their faith. The question which immediately arises is whether they can develop a living Christian community with their [coworkers] conforming to the language, style and culture of their community, or whether they have to emigrate

21. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 146–47.

> from their culture, attach themselves to one of the middle-class congregations in the neighborhood, and depend permanently for leadership upon men trained in the style of a typical English college or seminary.[22]

Just as Newbigin entered the Indian villages establishing churches wherever he went, so also he advocated church planters to enter modern workplaces establishing new communities of faith as carefully and as quickly as possible.

Why is such a radical effort necessary? Newbigin argued that the sort of deep vocational discipleship that theologians like himself and Herman Bavinck desired simply could not be sustained by individuals working in isolation. It is not enough simply to preach a theology of work in a suburban church and expect urban professionals to faithfully sustain it for an entire career. The faithful imitation of Christ in the workplace depends, according to Newbigin, upon the *radical locality* of the Word, the Sacraments, and a community of faithful believers *where* they actually work.

Those who would argue that a suburban church can serve as a sufficient community for working disciples simply do not, in Newbigin's eyes, understand the new missionary challenge that modern life presents. According to Newbigin, the West has developed into "a highly complex organism of differentiated but overlapping communities in each of which men and women have to live their working lives, interact with others and make daily and hourly decisions on highly complex and difficult issues."[23] If modern societies are not uniform, Newbigin argues, but comprise a vast pluriformity of social spheres with their own languages, issues, and moral challenges how can a single church be truly local to all of these spheres at the same time? How can the leadership of a church hope to adequately equip disciples for moral spaces it neither inhabits nor understands? Because of the undeniable complexity of modern life and society, Newbigin argues that a myopic suburban ecclesiology

22. Lesslie Newbigin, *Sign of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 66.

23. *Sign*, 67.

> can no more be the sole basis of a congregation. For secularized urban man, even more than for his predecessors, to live in the same place does not mean to inhabit the same world. . . . The Church must be where men are, speak the language they speak, inhabit the worlds they inhabit. This is the simplest of missionary principles. In obedience to it, Christians are reaching out in new forms of presence, trying to manifest the reality of the life of Christ in the many varied idioms of the worlds which men inhabit. There are 'cells' in factories and in offices... But these missionary experiments have, until recently, left untouched the position of the local congregation as the definitive form of the Church, the place where the word is preached, the sacraments dispensed, and godly discipline administered. These other activities have been seen rather as non-ecclesiastical or at best para-ecclesiastical activities which were the outworks of the Church rather than its main structure, the scouting parties rather than the main column.[24]

In essence, Newbigin argues that if the Western church truly wants to engage and strengthen the vocational lives of its members, it needs to honor these vocationally-based communities of faith with the title of "Church." The mere establishment of a workplace prayer group or Christian association of flight attendants, lawyers, or teachers simply will not do. If the Western church truly wants to engage the modern workplace as a mission field, Newbigin argues, it needs to appoint local elders and give them control over the scriptures and sacraments like the village churches in India.

The limiting of the Word and Sacrament to the suburbs sends a powerful liturgical message, Newbigin argues, concerning the cultural power and relevance of the gospel. No trinitarian theology of culture, no matter how robust, could ever overcome the powerful symbolism of reserving the Lord Supper exclusively for residential communities of faith miles away from the workplace. The liturgical separation between the suburbs and the city, he argues, has solidified the theological separation between faith and work.

Newbigin never asserted that these workplace churches should compete with or replace residential churches as new form of "niche church" in which people only gather with "their own kind." Rather, he held that these new fellowships could be a valuable partner and

24. *Honest Religion*, 111–12.

force of renewal for suburban churches: vocational churches would become a "dynamic way of opening up the traditional local congregation for a much deeper involvement with the life of the world.[25] Newbigin advocated for a system of multiple and overlapping memberships at home *and* at work that would renew and cross-fertilize the missions of both institutions with inspiring narratives of Christian mission and engagement in all areas of modern life. These diverse forms and locations of church would express the complex pluriformity of the *missio Dei*—not its separation.

Newbigin argued that these vocation-based congregations would also serve as a unique opportunity for ecumenical cooperation and dialogue.

> Go to the great new industrial complex of Durgapur in India, where thousands of Indians are being thrown together from every part of the country into the melting-pot of a new kind of society. Can you really try to turn [these workers] into Anglicans, or Methodists or Canadian Baptists or Danish Lutherans? Wherever you come from, and through whatever tradition you learned Christ, you have only one thing to do there: to empty yourself for Christ's sake in order humbly to learn what kind of a community can truly represent his intention for that industrial community. . . . It would, of course, be possible to erect a series of fishing stations around that pool and fish for proselytes; but that is not mission. That will not create in Durgapur a community which is the first-fruit for Christ of the whole, an earnest of his purpose and a sign of his victory. Already the missionary experience of the past two centuries has helped powerfully to bring home to the Churches the scandal of their division. It is even more certain that a serious attempt at missionary penetration of the structures of a secularized society will make our divisions look ridiculous.[26]

Newbigin reminds those uncomfortable with or outright against his vocationally-based congregations that worship services have been safely held in hospitals, universities, and military units for centuries. If the gospel can be proclaimed and the sacraments administered properly in these social spheres, why not in the

25. *Sign*, 63.

26. *Honest Religion*, 118.

workplace?[27] He openly acknowledges that false steps will most certainly be made in these workplace communities just as they were routinely made in his churches in the Indian countryside. But that, he argues, is hardly an argument for why it should not be done.

Missionary work on the frontiers of the faith, whether it be in India or the modern workplace, calls for ecclesial creativity, openness, and imagination. Nevertheless, Newbigin reminds his fellow missionaries that they should not imagine themselves to be flitting about this brave new missionary world without a foundation. For,

> [t]he more we stress the need that the Church should develop a new openness to the world, a new flexibility in its structures, . . . the more necessary it is to stress the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ. . . . With the kind of openness and flexibility which I have advocated, it may be difficult to say where the boundaries of the Church lie; this does not matter provided we are clear and make clear to others where the center lies.[28]

While Newbigin's vision of the vocationally-based church never achieved a full and complete articulation, his efforts represent an important contribution to a conversation that needs to occur in the field of global urban missions. Those who simply refuse to buy into his radical proposals of ecclesial reform may indeed find convincing reasons to substantiate their concerns. That said, Newbigin's argument that the Western church can no longer ignore the working lives of the laity in its ministry stands as a profound challenge that demands an answer. Church planters working in the new global city simply must ask the question: how can the body of Christ challenge, encourage, equip, and be radically local to the working lives of its members?

Redeemer Presbyterian Church (NYC)

Unbeknownst to them, Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City has creatively combined many of the elements of

27. *Sign*, 61.

28. *Sign*, 68.

Bavinck's theo-cultural vision and Newbigin's vocational ecclesiology in their visionary founding of the Center for Faith and Work. Established to serve as the "cultural renewal arm of the Redeemer movement" the Center's mission is to "equip, connect, and mobilize" the church's members "in their professional and industry spheres toward gospel-centered transformation for the common good."[29]

In the service of that mission, the Center offers courses, public lectures, and retreats on a wide variety of faith and work topics; it connects young professionals with experienced Christian mentors in their fields; it mobilizes groups of Christian investors and entrepreneurs for common good initiatives within the city; and it organizes vocationally-based fellowship groups in finance, marketing, the arts, theatre, medicine, and more.

While they have yet to appoint vocational elders or hand over significant control of the sacraments, Redeemer's pastors refuse to dictate to these vocational groups the specifics of what Christian discipleship should look like in their specific realms of work. They see their role as one of theological support, encouragement, warning, and challenge. Here one can imagine a leader asking a host of difficult questions regarding how a one might follow Christ in a particular vocation all the while allowing the community to confer about how they might actually embody an answer in their particular workplace. Here a *distinction* between the theological calling of the pastor and the cultural calling of the laity is respected while an absolute *separation* is completely dissolved.

Participants in the activities of the center regularly speak of how fellowship with other Christians in their vocations has strengthened their own faith, informed their working life, and renewed their commitment to the Redeemer movement as a whole. The Center has come to serve not only as a space for education and fellowship but also as a launching pad for missions and evangelism in the workplace itself. Many new members at Redeemer report

29. See http://www.faithandwork.org.

finding their way to the church's doors through the various ministries of the Center.

Redeemer's Center represents a creative and visionary model for urban church planters around the world as they too begin the conversation of how they might engage the working lives of the people in their cities. Hoping to reach an urban populace that spends upwards of seventy hours a week at work, Redeemer's founder Tim Keller understood from the very beginning that he needed to find creative liturgical, educational, and institutional ways to minister to New York's working professionals.

In its abiding desire to seek the justice, peace, and common good of New York City, Redeemer recognizes, as Newbigin did before them, that "the major role of the Church in relation to these great issues of justice and peace will not be in its formal pronouncements but in its continually nourishing and sustaining men and women who will act responsibly as believers in the course of their secular duties as citizens."[30] For as Bavinck reminds us, "What we need in these momentous times is not in the first place something extraordinary but the faithful fulfilling of the various earthly vocations to which the Lord calls his people."[31]

30. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 139.

31. "Common Grace," 63

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Johan H. Bavinck's Missiology and Its Implications for the Term Question in Korean Bible Translation

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It can be argued that September 11, 2001, provoked a growing negative bias against Islam among Western Christians. Conversely, the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq Wars aggravated the antagonism of Muslims against Western Christians. As a result, the tension between two religions has become a general obstacle to the modern Christian mission in Islamic countries and other non-Christian areas. However, Johan H. Bavinck's missiological understanding of non-Christian religions, including Islam, suggests that Christians should stand "between Temple and Mosque" in order to attempt a dialogue with other religions on the basis of what they share in common.[1]

In this essay, I explore the implication of Bavinck's missiological understanding of non-Christian religions for the resolution of the Term Question debate in Korean Bible translations. The Term Question was a theological controversy among Western missionaries about how to translate the name of God in the Korean Bible. Specifically, I will argue that, in harmony with Bavinck's missiology, the Scottish and American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries showed a respectful attitude towards Korean religions and that this led them to translate the name of the Christian God as *Hananim*, the Supreme God of the Korean religion. In addition, I will show how using the name *Hananim* in the Korean Bible provided a cross-cultural point of contact with the

1. R. Pierce Beaver, "Preface" to Johan H. Bavinck, *The Church between Temple and Mosque* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 6.

Christian God and contributed to the remarkable growth of Korean Protestant Church.

Bavinck's Missiological Understanding of Non-Christian Religions

A Sympathetic Attitude

The eminent Dutch Reformed missiologist Hendrik Kraemer, under the influence of Barthian theology, asserted in his *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (1938) that there should be a sharp discontinuity between Christianity and other faiths.[2] Accordingly, he criticized the idea of general revelation as a "misleading term," saying that it is "tainted by all kinds of notions, which are contrary to the way in which the Bible speaks of revelation."[3] Following Kraemer's theological position, many of his contemporary missiologists generally underscored the clear distinction between Christianity and other religions, especially after the Tambram Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1938.[4]

Kraemer's contemporary, J. H. Bavinck, also a prominent Dutch missiologist, published a summary of Kraemer's *Christian Message* in which he pointed out that Kraemer had made "too sharp a distinction" between Christianity and other religions.[5] Instead, Bavinck suggested that Christians should have a

2. Hendrik Kraemer, *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1963)

3. Hendrik Kraemer, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 341.

4. Johannes van den Berg, "Johan Herman Bavinck 1895–1964: Understanding Religion in light of God's Revelation," in *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson et al., American Society of Missiology Series 19 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 171–75.

5. Van den Berg, 174; the reference is to J. H. Bavinck, *De Boodschap van Christus en de Niet-Christelijke Religies* (Kampen: Kok, 1940).

sympathetic attitude to other religions "because of the common sharing in the universal religious consciousness among men and because of the reality of general revelation or the work of God among all peoples and all religions."[6]

Primitive Monotheism

Starting in the eighteenth century, a controversy between two competing theories of the history of religion arose among missiologists. On the one hand, the degeneration theory (or primitive monotheism theory) argued that the original religion of humankind was monotheism and that it had degenerated into polytheism, pantheism, or idolatry. On the other, the evolutionary theory argued that religion had evolved from a lower polytheistic form to a higher monotheistic form.[7]

Bavinck appears to hold the degeneration theory. Specifically, on the basis of his sympathetic attitude towards other religions, he argued that "the vestiges of God's presence" (i.e., primitive monotheism) can be found in the world of religions.[8] That is to say, he asserted that "belief in a Supreme Power or High God who ordered the world and maintains this order" is found in various primitive religions.[9] However, he thought that this primitive monotheism had degenerated into polytheism, pantheism, or a form of idolatry. Thus, he supported several prominent religious

6. Beaver, "Preface," 6; cf., J. H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960).

7. See Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories* (London: Methuen, 1931); Ninian Smart, *The World Religions*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34; Helmer Ringgren and Ake V. Ström, *Religions of Mankind Today & Yesterday,* ed. J. C. G. Greig, trans. Niels L. Jenson (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), xxiii–xxiv; Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 64; cf. William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 189–207; Norman L. Geisler, "Primitive Monotheism," *Christian Apologetics Journal* 1 (1998): 1–2.

8. Van den Berg, 174.

9. *The Church*, 56.

scholars such as Andrew Lang and Nathan Soederblom who asserted that primitive monotheistic belief in a Supreme Being had existed among aboriginals in southeast Australia and China.[10] Moreover, Bavinck opposed the evolutionary theory. In particular, he criticized Sir Edward B. Tylor's (1832–1903) animistic theory of religion which held that animism, an original form of religions in ancient time, gradually evolved into a form of monotheism.[11] Additionally, he argues that the Bible needs to be translated into every language and, in particular, that, on the grounds that the Supreme Being can be a vestige of the Christian God, the name of the Christian God can be translated by the name of a local Supreme Being.[12]

The Term Question in China

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, in most mission fields, including China and Korea, no issue has been more controversial in the history of Christian missions than how to translate the name of God into vernacular languages. This issue is known as the Term Question because the progress of Christian missions has essentially depended on the ability of indigenous people to acknowledge the Christian God in terms that made sense within their traditional worldview.[13]

10. *The Church*, 99–100.

11. *The Church*, 39. In fact, this theory originated from the ghost theory initiated by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) and was elaborated by Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 4th ed., 2 vols. (London: Murray, 1903). Cf. Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 34; Ugo Bianchi, *The History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 71; Walter H. Capps, *Religious Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 84–87; Ninian Smart, *The World Religions,* 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 34; Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of Mankind Today & Yesterday* (Edinburgh; London: Oliver & Boyd, 1967), xxiv.

12. *The Church*, 13–14.

13. Bong-Rin Ro, "Communicating the Biblical Concept of God to Koreans," in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, eds. William David

Before we will delve into the Term Question in Korea, we will survey the same issue in China; for, there is a historical and theological connection between the two.

Roman Catholics in China

The Term Question in China first emerged among Roman Catholic missionaries from 1637 to 1742 as one of the two major issues of the famous Chinese Rites Controversy.[14] The first issue was to decide which term was suitable for the name of God: either the name of the Chinese Confucian deity, *Shangti* (上帝: the Supreme Lord of the Confucianism), initiated by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) of the Jesuits in 1603; or a neologism, *T'ienzhu* (天主: the Lord of Heaven), coined by the Spanish Dominicans and Franciscans.[15]

The Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1553–1610) translated the name of God (*Deus*) as *Shangti* in *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (天主實意; hereafter *TMLH*).[16] Because of the analogy between the monotheistic attributes of *Shangti* and those of the Christian God, *TMLH* was one of the most influential books for Chinese Confucian literati.[17] Ricci's adoption of *Shangti* from the Confucian Classics[18]

Spencer and Aída Besançon Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 214–15; Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 192.

14. See George Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy: From Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985); David E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994).

15. Matteo Ricci, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, trans. Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1985), 10; hereafter referenced as *TMLH*.

16. Ibid.

17. Sangeun Kim, *Strange Names of God* (New York, Peter Lang, 2004); Paulos Huang, *Confronting Confucian Understandings of the Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2006), 88–130, https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/21564.

18. The Chinese Confucian Classics refer to the Four Books and Five Canonical Books: *The Four Books* (Sishu 四書) refers to the canon of Confucian

as the name of God in the *TMLH* can be attributed to his sympathetic attitude towards Chinese Confucianism and his conviction that the ancient Chinese people had a monotheistic belief in the Confucian Supreme Deity (i.e., "Confucian monotheism") which was compatible with Christian monotheism.[19] In other words, he believed that a concept of God that was compatible with Christian doctrine had existed among the ancient Chinese people before the arrival of foreign missionaries in China. In contrast, the neologism *T'ienzhu* was an attempt by the Spanish orders to establish a form of orthodox Christianity that would avoid being tainted by Chinese paganism.[20]

The second issue of the controversy was whether Chinese believers' practice of ancestor rites should be permitted as a cultural and moral veneration to their sages and forefathers (the Jesuits' position) or forbidden as idolatrous worship (the Dominicans' and Franciscans' position).[21] The Dominicans and Franciscans

Classics finally established under the philosopher Zhu Xi 朱熹(1130–1200) that includes *Great Learning* (Da-xue 大學), *Doctrine of Mean* (Zhong-yong 中庸), *Analects* (Lun-yu 論語), and *The Book of Mencius* (Mengzi 孟子); *The Five Canonical [Sacred] Books* (Wu-jing 五經) refers to the canon established during the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 8) consisting of *Book of History* (Shu-jing 書經), *Book of Songs/Poetry* (Shi-jing 詩經), *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chun-qiu 春秋), *Book of Changes* (Yi-jing 易經), and *Book of Rites* (Li-ji 禮記). All of these books were written during the *Zhou* 趙 Dynasty (1027–256 B.C.); cf. Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XLV, 1999), 20.; Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2001).

19. Erik Zurcher, "Jesuit Accommodation," in Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 50; Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B. C. Oh, *East Meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1988), xx; Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 147.

20. Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 26.

21. See Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy* and Mungello, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*.

complained to the Vatican that the Jesuits were encouraging heterodoxy.

Several papal decrees issued by the Vatican finally brought the Chinese Rites Controversy to an end: Pope Clement XI (1704, 1710), the bull *Ex illa die* issued by Pope Clement XI (1715), and the bull *Ex quo singulari* issued by Pope Benedict XIV (1742).[22] Ruling in favor of Dominicans and Franciscans, the decrees prohibited all Roman Catholics in China from using *Shangti* or *T'ien*, prohibited the practice of ancestral rites, and prescribed the use of *T'ienzhu*.[23] As a result, the Roman Catholic faith in China has been called *Tienzhu Jiao* (天主教) ever since.

However, the term *T'ienzhu* did not attract the Chinese people because it was foreign to their religious traditions.[24] Furthermore, the papal decrees provoked hostility from the Q'ing Emperors—Kang-Xi (康熙: r. 1661–1722), Yung-Cheng (雍正: r. 1722–35) and Ch'ien-Lung (乾隆: r. 1736–96)—against Roman Catholicism. In reaction to the decrees, these emperors issued mandates that prohibited Christian missions in China (though a few Jesuits remained in Beijing). Furthermore, the imperial mandates were followed by the great persecution of Roman Catholic missionaries from 1746 to 1748.[25]

22. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003), 3:515*. Mianmiki explains that the making of these decisions involved "a half seven popes and two apostolic delegates; two Chinese emperors and their courts; the kings of Portugal, Spain, France; the Jesuit confessor of Louis XIV; the Holy Office and the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, the theology faculty of the Sorbonne; the Jansenists; preachers like Fenelon and Bossuet; writers like Voltaire and Leibnitz; the missionaries, their congregations and superiors." *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, ix–x.

23. Minamiki, *The Chinese Rites Controversy*, 43–76; *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 3:515.

24. David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 13.

25. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 166.

In contrast, the Jesuits' use of *Shangti* based on the accommodation method (along with their attractive intellectualism and scientific technology) facilitated the effective transition of the Confucian scholars from their impersonal theistic notions to a form of theism congruent with Christian belief. As a result, the Jesuits gained a large number of Chinese believers, mainly from the upper classes of Confucian literati, including the Three Pillars.[26] Furthermore, the Jesuits eventually attained an Edict of Toleration from the Emperor of the Q'ing Dynasty, Kang-xi, who is considered one of the greatest emperors in all of China's history. On 22 March 1692, an edict permitted the legality of the Roman Catholic missions in China.[27] This edict of 1692 is often regarded as the climax of Roman Catholic (actually Jesuit) missions in China, and it can be validly compared with the Edict of Milan (AD 313) issued by Emperor Constantine.[28]

Pope Clement XIV ordered the dissolution of the Jesuit society in 1773.[29] The dissolution provoked confusion and a vacuum of authority among the Roman Catholic community in China. Only a few Jesuits were allowed to remain in the imperial government in Beijing for communication with Vatican. Furthermore, additional persecutions followed in 1781, 1784, 1805, and 1811. As a result, the door of China was actually closed to foreign missionaries until Robert Morrison of the London Missionary Society arrived in Canton in 1807. Nevertheless Christian literature produced by the Jesuits and other Roman Catholic missionaries circulated among Chinese believers.[30]

26. Ibid., 37, n. 32; cf. 78–127.

27. Ricci, *TLMH*, 39.

28. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, 176.

29. Ibid., 198.

30. Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 2, *1500 to 1900* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 132–33.

Protestants in China

As a result of an argument between the *Shangti* party, consisting of a majority of British missionaries, notably James Legge (1815–1897) of the London Missionary Society, and the *Shen* (神: a generic term for god) party, consisting of a majority of American missionaries, the Term Question in China resurfaced among Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century.[31] Legge, a monumental missionary scholar who produced an English translation of the Confucian Classics and was appointed Professor of Chinese Languages and Literature in Oxford University, argued as the spokesman of the *Shangti* party that the name of the God of the Bible should be translated as *Shangti*; for, he believed that the Chinese had held a primitive monotheistic belief in *Shangti* within the framework of Confucianism from the twenty-fourth century BC. He thought that this ancient monotheism had degenerated into an atheistic Neo-Confucianism or idolatry as it had been increasingly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism. In contrast, the *Shen* party claimed that *Shen*, a generic term for god, should be used; for, they believed that such a monotheistic belief had never existed among the ancient Chinese.

Despite protracted missionary endeavors to produce an agreeable Chinese term for the God of the Bible, the Protestant version of the Term Question lasted for one hundred years (1807–1890) with the result that two Protestant versions of the Bible came to co-exist in China: the *Shangti* edition published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1854 and the *Shen* edition published by the American Bible Society in 1863.[32]

As indicated in the following usage statistics, it is important to note that the *Shangti* edition was dominantly favored by the Chinese Christians in the early twentieth century, whereas usage of the *Shen* edition declined.

31. Jost O. Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 1999), 81–2.

32. Thor Strandenaes, *Principles of Chinese Bible Translation* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987), 48–50.

Usage of the Shangti edition vs. the Shen edition[33]

	1894	1908	1913
Shangti 上帝	38,500 (11.6%)	299,000 (78.9%)	1,708,000 (99.7%)
Shen 神	229,500 (68.9%)	80,000 (21.1%)	5,000 (0.3%)
T'ienzhu 天主	65,000 (19.5%)	-	-

Based upon the history of the Term Question among both Roman Catholic and Protestant missions in China, we come to the important conclusion that the term *Shangti* that was used by the Jesuits and the British Protestants according to their belief in a primitive monotheism among the Chinese played a significant role in building a bridge between the Chinese people and the Christian God.

The Term Question in Korea

American Protestant missionaries—mainly Presbyterians and Methodists—began to arrive in Korea from 1884 onwards, and they became the dominant Protestant missionary groups on the Korean mission field.[34] After their arrival, a minority of Canadian Presbyterian, Australian Presbyterian, Anglican (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and other missionaries commenced their mission work in Korea. One of the primary and urgent tasks in early Korean missions was to translate the Bible into Korean for the common people, including women, who could only read the Korean alphabet. Additionally, in cooperation with the Bible societies, missionaries distributed Chinese Bibles for benefit of Korean men

33. John Hykes's (the China secretary of the American Bible Society) letter to American Bible Society on May 12, 1914; cited from Jost Oliver Zetzsche, *The Bible in China* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XLV, 1999), 88.

34. Dae Young Ryu, *Early American Missionaries in Korea 1884–1910* (Seoul: Institute for Korean Church History, 2001), 91–93.

in the upper Confucian classes whose education was based on the Confucian Classics.[35]

The Korean missionaries found that the Korean Bible had already been translated by John Ross of the United Presbyterian Church in Manchuria from 1877 to 1887 (i.e., the UPC version).[36] In particular, they observed that Ross used *Hananim*—the Supreme Being of Korean indigenous religion that corresponds with *Shangti*—as the term for God. Moreover, they found that another version of the Korean Bible was translated by Su-Jung Lee in Tokyo from 1883 to 1885 with support of the American Bible Society (i.e., the Su-Jung Lee version). Lee translated the Bible's God as *Shin*, a generic term for god (Chinese *Shen* 神).[37] However, since the missionaries found many translating errors in these Bibles, they stopped using them and decided to translate their own version instead. Hence, in cooperation with the British, Scottish and American Bible societies, the missionaries formed a series of translation committees—the Permanent Bible Committee of Korea in 1887, the Permanent Executive Bible Committee of Korea in 1893, and the Bible Committee of Korea in 1904—and appointed a board of Bible translators who produced a number of translations with a variety of terms for God. As a result, the chief dispute which arose among the

35. Charles A. Clark, *The Nevius Plan for Mission Work* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1937); Man-Yol Yi, "한국교회의 성장과 그 요인 (The Korean Church Growth and Its Factors)," in 한국기독교와 민족통일운동 (*The Korean Christianity and the National Unification Movement*), ed., Man-Yol Yi (Seoul: IKCH, 2001), 207; Yi, 한국기독교문화운동사 (*The History of the Korean Christianity Cultural Movement*) 3rd ed. (Seoul: Korean Christianity Publisher, 1992), 87; Sung-Deuk Oak, *The Indigenization of Christianity in Korea* (ThD diss., Boston University, 2002), 190.

36. See Sungil Choi, *John Ross and the Korean Protestant Church* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1992); Mahn-Yol Yi and Sung-Deuk Oak eds., *The History of the Korean Bible Society*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Korean Bible Society, 1994), 32; James H. Grayson, 'A Spark in North East Asia: A Personal Hagiography of a Scottish Missionary to Manchuria: John Ross (1842–1915)', in *Sainthood Revisioned*, ed. Clyde Binfield (Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press, 1995) 96.

37. Yi and Oak, *History*, 125–34; cf. Sung-Deuk Oak, 초기한글성경번역에 나타난 주요논쟁연구 (*Studies on the Major Disputes*) (ThM thesis, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Korea, 1993), 27–28.

Bible translators was over which term is most suitable for the name of the God of the Bible. Hence the so-called Korean chapter of the Term Question arose.

The translators could choose to translate it using *Hananim* as Ross had done in his UPC Version. Alternatively, they could simply transliterate the biblical name *Jehovah* as *Yohowa*, or they could coin a new word compounded from biblical sources, or they could use other names that were compatible with the biblical meaning. The attraction of *Hananim* was that it would enable Koreans to understand "God" within their pre-existing religious framework; however, this translation also ran the risk of syncretism. The other options had the virtue of distinguishing "God" from one who was merely the highest of local deities, but they ran the risk of being wholly alien to Koreans. Hence, the question of whether *Hananim* could be adopted as the name for the God of the Bible became the crux of the Term Question in Korea.

In order to find a solution, the young Korean missionaries referred to the precedent of the Term Question in China. They made use of comparative studies of Sino-Korean ancient history and religions, and they became influenced by the awareness that China and Korea were contiguous countries that had shared religious and cultural traditions since 1122 BC.[38] Subsequently, the Korean missionaries noted that the common central issue underlying the Term Question in both China and Korea was the question of whether Chinese and Koreans in the pre-historic period (ca. 2332 BC) were originally monotheists who worshipped a Supreme Being who was the same God as that proclaimed by the foreign missionaries. The answer to this question then dictated whether the name of the local highest being—*Shangti* in China and *Hananim* in Korea—could be adopted as the term for God in the vernacular

38. James S. Gale, "A History of the Korean People, Chapter I," *Korea Mission Field* (July 1924): 136; Horace G. Underwood, *Religions of Eastern Asia* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1910), 96; Clarence N. Weems ed., *Hulbert's History of Korea*, vol. I, 2nd ed., (1905; repr. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 1–15; Daniel L. Gifford, *Every Day Life in Korea* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898), 88–89.

Bible translations or whether these names should be rejected on account of the risk of syncretism. For this reason, the missionaries sought to illuminate the Term Question in Korea in the light of the experience gained in China.

In referring to the precedent of the Term Question in China, the majority of the Korean missionaries followed the pioneering use of *Hananim* in John Ross's UPC Version. He argued that *Hananim* was an analogous theological term to *Shangti*. Yet, a handful of missionaries, notably Horace G. Underwood of the PCUSA, opposed it and argued instead for the use *Ch'onzhu* (천주: the Lord of Heaven: Chinese *T'ienzhu* 天主),[39] *Shangje* (上帝: the Sovereign on High)[40], *Shangzhu* (上主: the Lord on High), *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*) and so on. This was because Underwood firmly regarded *Hananim* as a name of heathen deity in East Asia.[41]

However, the research of early Scottish and North American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries into ancient Korean history led them to discover a remarkably close analogy between local primitive monotheistic belief in *Hananim* and Christian monotheism.[42] Furthermore, the missionaries observed a much closer similarity between the so-called Korean Trinity and Incarnation seen in the attributes of *Hananim* in the Korean ancient myth (i.e., Dan-Gun) and Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, than was the case with *Shangti*.[43] The Korean

39. 천주, the Korean transliteration of the Chinese word *T'ienzhu* 天主, can be *Ch'onju* or *Ch'onzhu*. However, I will use *Ch'onzhu* as it is closer to the Chinese pronunciation *T'ienzhu* than the case of *Ch'onju*; for, my aim is to show how the Term Question in Korea was theologically and historically related to that in China.

40. *Shangje* is the Korean pronunciation of the Chinese character *Shangti* (上帝).

41. Lillias H. Underwood, *Underwood of Korea* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1918), 123.

42. Gale, "A History," 136; Underwood, *Religions*, 96; Weems, *History*, 1–15.

43. For the further study on this issue, see the following two articles to which this section is indebted: Sung-Deuk Oak, "Shamanistic Tangun and Christian

missionaries assumed that this phenomenal similarity was attributed to a migration to East Asia by Noah's descendant after the Deluge (Gen. 10–11) that brought the revelation of Yahweh to Korea. Thus, the missionaries held that *Hananim* was a vestige of the Christian God and that this God had already been revealed as *Hananim* before the arrival of foreign missionaries to Korea. As a result, the Korean missionaries eventually affirmed *Hananim* as the official name of God in the first authorized version of the Korean New Testament in 1906 and in the entire Korean Bible in 1911, thus resolving the Korean Term Question.

The Rapid Growth of the Korean Church

It should be noted that the early twentieth-century Korean missionaries, particularly those of the Bible Translation Committees, argued that one of the significant reasons for the remarkable growth of the Korean church could be the term *Hananim*; that is, this term prepared the Koreans' mind to be more ready to receive the God of the Bible within their existing religious framework than was the case with *Shangti* in China.[44]

Hananim," *Studies in World Christianity*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2001): 42–57; Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding of the Tangun and Kija myths of Korea, 1884–1934," *Acta Korea* 4 (2002): 1–16. See also Homer B. Hulbert, "Korean Survivals," *Transaction of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1 (1900): 1–24, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 5; "Editor's Forward" in Weems, *History,* 10–11; James S. Gale, "Korean History," *Korea Repository* (Sept. 1895): 321, cited in Oak, "Shamanistic Tangun and Christian Hananim," 44; Gale, "Tan-goon," *The Korean Magazine* (Sept. 1917): 404, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 11; George H. Jones, "The Spirit Worship of the Koreans," *Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, no. 1 (1901): 35–41; W. D. Reynolds, "Here and There," *The Bible in the World* (Oct. 1911): 318, cited in Oak, "North American Missionaries' Understanding," 9; Charles Allen Clark, *Religions of Old Korea* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1961), 143; Spencer J. Palmer, *Korea and Christianity: The Problem of Identification with Tradition* (Seoul: Hollym Corp., 1967), 6, 14–15.

44. See Horace G. Underwood, "Address," *Report of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the AISMA* (Pittsburgh: Murdoch, Kerr & Co., 1892), 53–4; Underwood, "The Golden Opportunity in Korea," *Missionary Review of the*

In line with the early twentieth-century Korea missionaries, a number of modern foreign and Korean Christian scholars conventionally argue that the adoption in a Christian form of the native term for the Supreme Being, *Hananim*, facilitated the Koreans' smooth acceptance of the God of Christianity with the result that it prompted more rapid and massive influx of converts into Protestantism than was seen in China.[45]

World (Sept. 1902): 665–66 in *Horace G. Underwood Papers*, vol. 3, 516–17; Underwood, "The Need for Workers in Korea," *World-Wide Evangelization* (New York: SVM, 1902), 403–06 in *HGUP*, vol. III, 649–50; Underwood, "Twenty Years of Missionary Work in Korea," *Korea Field* (Nov. 1904): 205–10, cited in *HGUP*, vol. III, 655–66. See also World Missionary Conference, *World Missionary Conference, 1910* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1910), 80; John H. Ritson, *Abroad for the Bible Society* (London: Robert Culley, 1911), 164; William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society 1884–1904* (London: John Murray, 1910), 219; James Moulton Roe, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905–1954* (London: British and Foreign Society, 1965), 150; William C. Somerville, *From Iona to Dunblane: The Story of the National Bible Society of Scotland to 1948* (Edinburgh: National Bible Society of Scotland, 1948), 91; James C. F. Robertson, *The Bible in Korea* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1954), 32–3, 35; John Fox, "Report of Korea Mission Field on 24 December 1907," in *HGUP*, vol. III, 488.

45. Man-Yol Yi, "한국교회의 성장과 그 요인 (The Korean Church Growth and Its Factors)," in 한국기독교와 민족통일운동 (*The Korean Christianity and the National Unification Movement*), Man-Yol Yi, ed. (Seoul: IKCH, 2001), 173–217; Yi lists recent Korean research into this issue at 173, nn. 1–2. See also Bong-Rin Ro, "Communicating the Biblical Concept of God to Koreans," in A. B. Spencer and W. D. Spencer, *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 229–30; Bong-Rin Ro & Marlin L. Nelson, eds., *Korean Church Growth Explosion*, rev. ed. (Seoul: Word of Life Press, 1995); Sebastian C. H. Kim ed., *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130–34; Arthur J. Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 515–23; Mark A. Noll, "Evangelical Identity, Power, and Culture in the 'Great' Nineteenth Century," in *Christianity Reborn*, ed., Donald M. Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 49; Daniel H. Bays and James H. Grayson, "Christianity in China, Korea and Japan," in *Cambridge History of Christianity,* vol. 8, *World Christianities c.1815–c.1914,* eds., Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 508; A. W. Wasson, *Church Growth in Korea* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1934); R. E. Shearer, *Wildfire: Church Growth in Korea*

Conclusion

We have seen that the mission strategy of the early Scottish and American Reformed (Presbyterian) missionaries in Korea was in harmony with Bavinck's missiology. In the first place, these missionaries rarely underscored the sharp distinction between Christianity and the Korean indigenous religions, as Kraemer did. Instead, they displayed a sympathetic attitude towards Korean indigenous religions, as Bavinck did. In the second place, the missionaries' respectful attitude led them to settle the Term Question by translating the name of the God of the Bible as *Hananim*, the Supreme Being of the Korean religion. They chose this translation because they held that monotheistic belief had already existed among the Korean people under the name of *Hananim*. Thus they determined that the Koreans were being preparing to accept the God of Christianity long before the arrival of foreign missionaries in Korea.

The adoption of *Hananim* in the Bible enabled the Koreans to make a smooth transition from their indigenous idea of the Supreme Being to the Christian idea of God. Further, the translation contributed to the higher rate of growth of the Korean churches compared to that of Chinese churches even though fewer Protestant missionaries worked in Korea for a much shorter period than in China. In the Korean missionaries' view, the term *Hananim* constructed an effective point of contact between the Korean religious culture and the imported Christian faith. The Korean

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966); Kenneth M. Wells, *New God, New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea, 1896–1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1–9, 19–20. On the relation of Protestantism with Korean nationalism, see Wells, "Yun Chi-ho and the Quest for National Integrity," *Korea Journal* 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1982); Wells, "The Rationale of Korean Economic Nationalism under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1922–1932: The Case of Cho Man-Sik's Products Promotion Society," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 4 (Nov. 1985); Wells, "Civic Morality in the Nationalist Thought of Yun Chi-Ho, 1881–1911," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 28 (Sept. 1983), cited in Jung-Shin Park, 한국기독교사인식 (*A New Understanding of Korean Church History*) (Seoul: Hye-Ahn Publish, 2004), 17–37.

missionaries understood that the resonance of this term was uniquely suited to pave the way for an understanding of the monotheistic, incarnational, and trinitarian God of Christianity as being both the God of traditional Korean belief and the God of the universe. As a result, Koreans responded more positively to Christianity than did the Chinese.

These findings suggest that Bavinck's missiology is consistent with using the name of an indigenous supreme deity to translate the term for the biblical God in order to contextualize Christianity within a local religious framework. Moreover, Bavinck's missiological understanding of other religions, including Islam, may help the modern global missiological enterprise to situate itself "between Temple and Mosque" and to thus embrace a respectful posture toward other religions while it pursues its mission.

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The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl*

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[369] There has been a significant change in the relationship between theology and philosophy since Descartes and also thanks to him. Prior to this time, theology was the mistress with unlimited authority; she fashioned for herself a philosophy or appropriated an existing one such as that of Aristotle as she had need of it and could use it without doing harm. In more recent times, however, the roles were reversed. Theology lost its undisputed control and became dependent on philosophy. Consequently, it experienced the influence of Descartes and Wolff, of Kant and Fichte, and of Hegel and Schelling. It has now come so far that it is impossible to know and understand theological positions without serious examination of the philosophical positions to which they have attached themselves. One could almost say that the study of philosophy is as essential for understanding the principles of contemporary theology as that of the theology itself.

*Translation of Herman Bavinck, "De Theologie van Albrecht Ritschl," *Theologische Studiën* 6 (1888): 369–403. Original pagination is provided in square brackets: [ ]. Careful readers will observe that the translation is slightly longer than the original and that it contains many more footnotes. The added notes provide explanations and bibliographic information absent from the original. Beginning at p. 381 in the original, where Bavinck starts to engage Ritschl's *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* in some detail, for the sake of clarity I have chosen to insert numerous additional direct citations from the standard English translation of Ritschl's *magnum opus* rather than to provide my own translation of Bavinck's compact and dense summary—in the Dutch language!—of Ritschl's German text and technical vocabulary. I have retained Bavinck's occasional repetitions. All additional notes not found in the original are set apart by square brackets. My editorial insertions into the text in order to provide transitions or clarifications are placed in curly brackets: { }.

As is generally acknowledged, neo-Kantianism is currently the highest authority in the arena of philosophy. No single school of Kantians, either in a narrower or broader sense, has arisen since Liebman in his *Kant und die Epigonen*[1] and F.A. Lange in his well-known *Geschichte de Materialismus*[2] issued the rallying-call: "Back to Kant." However, every person who is busy with philosophy feels obligated to start with Kant and as a result there has arisen a volume of literature about Kant that is already beyond anyone's mastery [370] and it grows daily. It took no prophetic gift to foresee that this turn in philosophy would also soon affect theology. It required only one man, with the sufficient training in philosophy and theology alike, to apply the principles of neo-Kantianism purely and rigorously to all the areas of theology and set forth a coherent theological system. Such a person arose in the person of Göttingen Professor, Albrecht Ritschl, whose clear insight and powerful intellect, which he demonstrated in his historical and dogmatic studies, proved that he was superbly qualified for the task.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Ritschl's theology rose to prominence so quickly and continues to make progress. Ritschl achieved something that is extraordinary in our time: he started a school. Thanks to the generosity of Minister Falk,[3] numerous [university] chairs are now occupied by men who are Ritschlians, and in Emil Schürer's *Theologische Literaturzeitung,*[4] Ritschlian theology has a superbly edited organ. Ritschl's followers are

1. [Otto Liebmann, *Kant und die Epigonen: Eine Kritische Abhandlung* (Stuttgart: Schober, 1865).]

2. [Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart,* 2 vols. (Leipzig: Kröner, 1875, 1876).]

3. [Paul Ludwig Adalbert Falk (1827–1900) became Minister of Education in Otto von Bismarck's Prussian government in 1872 with responsibility for Bismarck's *Kultuurkampf* against the Roman Catholic Church. He was responsible for the "May Laws" or "Falk Laws" of 1873 which gave responsibility for training and appointing clergy to the state. Nearly half the seminaries in Prussia were closed by 1878. Information obtained from *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Adalbert Falk," accessed May 04, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/200739/Adalbert-Falk.]

accepted within Germany and outside of it, and the literature that has arisen, both for and against, receives an enormous reception. The reasons for this are not to be found, in the first place, in the newness or originality of this theology but rather in the close link with the spirit of our age that drives it. On the one hand, people are sated with the idle and useless speculation that came from the philosophical idealism which dominated the first half of the nineteenth century. There is a general aversion against metaphysics and dogmatics; skepticism, doubt that we can know anything about that which transcends our senses, is in the very blood of our generation. Distrustful of all attempts idealistically to rise above reality, our age is characterized by empiricism and realism. On the other hand, we also shrink back from naked materialism. As a result, [371] many phenomena in the social and political arena—socialism, anarchism, nihilism, and so forth—point to the necessary conclusions to which people must come.

A reaction against these movements is therefore not unwelcome and can be observed in many areas. Many people once again place a high value on religion and morality as goods to be maintained and defended. The question arises: how can these two—empiricism and rationalism on the one hand and these ideal goods on the other—both be maintained so that they can remain standing together without constantly colliding with each other?

It is to answer this question—once it was seen that Hegel and Schleiermacher offered no resolution—that people reached back again to Kant. After all, he had distinguished the theoretical from the practical reason and completely separated them from each other. In the *First Critique* [of *Pure Reason*], he concluded that the super-sensible world was completely unknowable. The only subjective certainty that we can have about it is not scientific in nature but moral. In our innermost being we feel the absolute duty of obedience to the moral law. This obligation impels us to accept the existence of God, freedom, and immortality, not as scientific conclusions, but as moral postulates. In this way, as Kant himself

4. [Founded by Schürer in 1876 and co-edited with Adolf von Harnack from 1881–1910.]

declares in the Preface to the Second Edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, "I have found it necessary to deny *knowledge* (*Wissen*), in order to make room for *faith* (*Glaube*)."[5]

And it is exactly this that is so in tune with and echoes the dominant spirit of the second half of the nineteenth century. At first glance it might appear that Kant's apriorism and idealism has little in common with the dominant empiricism and realism of our age. But one must recall that Kant's apriorism is completely *formal*, that only the [372] *forms* of observation and thought are apriori; the *content* is not apriori but comes completely from without. That is why various scientific investigations, especially those involving sense impressions, can be fully brought into line with Kantian ideas. Following in his footsteps, one had to give up all knowledge of super-sensible reality, which then left an important and inviolable place for faith. The key here is the separation of believing and knowing, {faith and science}. A full-blown empiricism reigns on the level of the sensible, observable world and gives rise to genuine science. This science can never damage faith because it is restricted to the sensible and knows nothing of the super-sensible. Faith, therefore, occupies a free zone; our imaginative capacity can fill this unknown world to our heart's content and {philosophical} idealism can find complete satisfaction. Faith and knowledge—separated for good—can live happily together.

This principle, that is, as it were, part of the air we breathe and that influences everything, has been worked out and applied better and with more talent by no one than by Albrecht Ritschl. He articulates this as the necessity of totally and permanently separating theology and metaphysics. Nonetheless, this formula is quite inadequate for us to understand the distinctive character of his theology. Metaphysics itself is an idea that is not static and is regularly reconceived. Ritschl takes metaphysics to be the investigation of the general conditions of all being, the doctrine concerning the essence of things, without [373] making any distinction in those things between nature and spirit and therefore

5. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* translated by Norman Kemp Smith (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1965 [1929]), 29.

without distinguishing their value. In this sense, metaphysics includes both ontology and cosmology; that is, the apriori concepts by which the multiplicity of observable things are gathered together and ordered in the unity of the world.[6] In this way Ritschl banishes metaphysics not only from theology but abolishes it altogether although he does not clearly say this. Indeed, according to Ritschl, as we have noted, there is no knowledge of that which transcends the senses and therefore no metaphysics. Yet, in another sense Ritschl still does retain metaphysics. That is why he claims that he is not expelling all metaphysics from theology and that the debate between him and Frank[7] is not about *whether* metaphysics is to be used in theology but about *which* metaphysics.[8]

Ritschl defines metaphysics in a unique manner. After initially claiming that metaphysics is concerned with investigating the general conditions of all being, on the very same page, without any acknowledgment, he turns these general conditions into "conditions of knowledge" (*Erkenntnissbedingungen*) that are common to perceptions of the natural and spiritual worlds; namely, in the elementary and formal capacities by which humans simply designate things as such and in the forms by which the knowing spirit designates the objects of its knowledge.[9] In this manner, metaphysics becomes nothing more than epistemology (*Erkenntnistheorie*), and it is in this sense that Ritschl is able to claim that he has not abandoned metaphysics. On the contrary, he claims that all differences between him and his opponents are rooted in a different epistemology,[10] and places before all scientific theologians the impossible demand that they must become self-

6. Albrecht Ritschl, *Theologie und Metaphysik* (Bonn: A. Marcus, 1881), 6, 7, 28.

7. [The reference here is to Franz Herman Reinhold Frank (1827–1894), professor of theology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremburg and an important figure in the neo-Lutheran "Erlangen School." For more on Frank, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 1:525–35; hereafter referenced as *RD*.]

8. Ritschl, *Theologie*, 38.

9. Ibid., 6.

consciously aware of the epistemologies they use to defend their legitimacy scientifically.[11] Ritschl accomplishes two things: on the one hand he eliminates metaphysics on the level of any knowledge [374] concerning the transcendent; on the other, he inserts an altogether different metaphysics into theology, a metaphysics that is nothing else but a particular epistemology taken over from Kant and Lotze.[12]

What exactly is Ritschl's epistemology? He says that a popular understanding {of the world} believes it is possible, by investigation, to know things as they are in themselves. One then distinguishes things as they are in themselves, outside of any relation to our observation, from things as they are for us. But this is a grave error. Things as they are to us as knowing subjects are always and necessarily part of the relationships within which we perceive things. We have absolutely no ability to know things as they are in themselves. Our ordinary perception may consider things as they appear to us to be less than real and over against this seek certainty in the effort to know things in themselves. However, this is simply impossible; the perception of many has established that things are exactly as they are for us.[13]

A second mistake of the popular understanding is to believe that we form a permanent, unchangeable image of things from recalled perceptions and that this image remains neutral over against all changes and gives evidence of an established series of characteristics and properties in the midst of others that are accidental and constantly changing. The remembered image is thought to lie behind our occasional perceptions and distinguished

10. Ibid., 30, 43ff.

11. Ibid., 38.

12. It would be very valuable to demonstrate the extent to which Ritschl is in agreement with both of these philosophers and in what way he departs from them. To avoid getting too expansive, the preceding will have to suffice. [Rudolf Herman Lotze (1817–1881) was a German philosopher whose work in metaphysics and logic led him to a form of monism. Bavinck refers to him in *RD*, 2:81, 115.—Trans.]

13. Ritschl, *Theologie*, 30ff.

from them. Essentially, this is the understanding of Plato, who considered the ideas that exist in their own place, behind and above the perceptiable world that is subject to all occurring change, to be the only real world. Ritschl considers this entire presentation to be in error. What our perceptions [375] deliver cannot be regarded as something quiet and unchangeable but only as a relation, as movement, in our remembering. The idea, the image of a thing is definitely not its real, true reality, but rather is in conflict with that which is changeable and variable in each thing. It is an error to believe that one can get behind and above the appearances of things and arrive at a sure and clear knowledge in a mental category. No matter what it is called, this sort of image or idea has no reality; it exists only in our mind and exists as a mere shadow of appearances in our memory. There is nothing behind the appearances and perceptions, and every attempt to get behind them to know things as they are is vain and fruitless.[14]

How do we then form concepts about any one thing that remains the same in spite of the many changes it undergoes? According to Ritschl, this can be explained by the fact that we regularly receive impressions of things from a definite place and in a fixed order. For example, when we receive a series of impressions from our senses of touch, sight, and taste, then we organize all these impressions into the idea of an apple. This idea is not something distinct from the impressions, but we always and only know a thing in its relationships; there is nothing behind or outside of them. The subject is {contained} only in the predicate; the thing is itself its own origin in its relationships; it is itself its own goal in the fixed series of its changes. The impression that something retains its identity in the midst of changing characteristics can be explained by the fact that we organize appearances in a manner analogous to our own soul; even when our awareness {of things} changes, we feel that we remain unified selves. From this analogy we are able to consider things as both origin and end; I feel myself as the origin and goal of all my initiated and intended actions. In this way, [376] Ritschl sets aside the entire Platonic metaphysics that considers

14. Ibid., 32ff.

pale, removed ideas—which are themselves unchangeable and unmovable—as the truly real and the origin of all changes in the things of the observable world.[15]

It is not clear whether Ritschl only denies the knowability of a reality behind the properties and functions of things or the actual existence of things themselves. From his major work one gets the impression that he only denies the former. On the one hand, he sets aside there not only the entire Platonic-Aristotelian doctrine of the knowing faculty that purports to know the things themselves as well as their properties; he also, on the other hand, repudiates the teaching of Kant who restricts our knowledge to the sensible, with the observation that a world of phenomena can only be the object of our knowledge if there is something that appears. If not, appearances are phantoms. This comment against Kant could lead us to conclude that Ritschl considers the knowability of things as part of the phenomena as well as their existence. But this conclusion would be too hasty. As he explores this further, Ritschl attaches himself to Lotze and replicates his notion that in the phenomena we come to know a thing "as the cause of its qualities operating on us, as the end which these serve as means, as the law of their constant changes."[16]

Ritschl provides an amplified explanation of all this in his brochure *Theologie und Metaphysik*. Here we get the impression, as we have already noted above, that there is no substance, no essence, no nature in things and that a thing is completely comprehended in its properties and actions, the subject [377] in the predicate. The notion of a "thing" is thus only a formal concept without content; it is a representation that is nothing more than the

15. Ibid., 30–38; cf. 17, 18, 29.

16. Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine,* 2nd ed., translated by H. R. Macintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 19–20 (quote at 20). [This work is a translation of vol. 3 of Ritschl's *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1882–1883). In the footnotes that follow, Bavinck's original references to the third volume of *Rechtfertigung* will be cited from and referenced to the English translation.—Trans.]

collective summary of our perceptions.[17] The nature of a thing consists of nothing more than a series of changes that proceed in an orderly manner, one after another. There is no *being*, only *becoming*. As with {Herman} Lotze, *being* consists only of existing in relationship.

It is undoubtedly true that we only know actors from and by means of their activities. But these activities do lead us to knowledge of the actor; the predicate brings us to the subject; perceptions draw us to essences. There has to be something behind the perceptions that comes to expression in them. Relationships presuppose realities that stand in relation to each other; predicates without subjects are unthinkable. Ritschl thus comes into conflict with himself. Against Kant he correctly observes that the reality of perceptions can only be regarded as firm when there is something actually in them; otherwise the perceptions are apparitions. Therefore, if Ritschl truly considers things as nothing more than formal concepts, then he has thereby condemned his own understanding of things. In addition, if Ritschl takes the analogy of our souls as the origin and end of our selfhood, and applies this to the reality of things outside of us, why not apply this with equal legitimacy to essence and perceptions? After all, we humans are aware of ourselves, and, even with all the changes we undergo, remain as identical subjects; and the soul, as even Ritschl acknowledges, is not merely a formal but a substantial unity with its awareness and operations.

One could possibly argue that this is all virtually innocent and takes place completely outside the realm of theology. Perhaps it is not without value, therefore, to spend a few words [378] to consider the consequences for Christian dogma that Ritschl draws from his epistemology.

If it is true that realities have nothing more than a formal unity with their perceptions, then it follows in general that theology is never concerned with the realities of Scripture, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, etc., in themselves, but only as they are *for us*. Each

17. *Theologie*, 18, 35.

phenomenon, therefore, is dependent on the observing and knowing capacity of human beings. A thing that is not observed is unknowable, is nothing; it becomes a thing only when observed, thanks to the relationship that it now has with the knowing subject. Therefore, God does not exist without his kingdom, Christ does not exist without his church that confesses him as their Lord, revelation does not exist apart from those who receive it, justification does not exist without faith, and so forth. What they might be in themselves is idle speculation.

In the area of anthropology, Ritschl concludes the following: the human person is a "self" only in the direction of his will and in the orientation of his feeling. There is nothing more real and actual "behind" human "beings" that we need to know in order to understand them. We know nothing of a "soul" in itself beyond its functions and operations.[18]

Concerning the doctrine of sin, Ritschl provides us this proposition: it is absurd to consider a general idea of sin behind individual sinful acts. A circumstance in which one passively finds himself cannot be considered a sin. There is, therefore, no original sin; sin is not an existence, not a condition, but an act of the will. A good or bad character develops as a result of the deeds that one wills.[19]

Consequently, in this epistemology, mystical union {with Christ} is simply an agreement of {a person's} inclination and will {with that of Christ}. The union of believers [379] with Christ is not an immediate personal and living fellowship but a unity of disposition and acts that are mediated by our memory of {his} word. Any union beyond this or apart from this is nothing more than imagination and hallucination, a false mysticism.[20]

The implications for the doctrine of God are even more serious. According to Ritschl, God is unknowable in himself apart from what he is for us. To identify God with the final end of the world; to

18. *Theologie*, 37, 44; *Rechtfertigung*, 3:20–21 [*Justification*, 20–21].

19. *Theologie*, 57; *Rechtfertigung*, 3:311ff. [*Justification*, 311ff.].

20. *Theologie*, 39ff., 46ff.

describe him as eternal Being, as the Absolute, to whom we then attribute other predicates; to attempt proving his existence from cosmological or teleological arguments—all this is metaphysics and must be removed from dogmatic theology. God is only active in the form of will; he possesses no inactive nature and attributes. To ascribe such to him would be to turn him into a limited personality. There is nothing that may be predicated of God apart from his relation to us.[21]

Finally, with respect to Christology, Ritschl claims that theology can say nothing about Christ's divine nature, his essential unity with the Father, or his pre- and post-existence {as human}. The question is not what or who Christ is in himself but only about his value and significance for us. The Christological dogmas are of no value in helping the church express its valuation of the person of Christ.[22]

These few examples are already enough to demonstrate the profound influence of Ritschl's epistemology on the whole of theology and on every doctrine. Furthermore, the examples we provided are implications that Ritschl himself draws from his principles and applies to the articles of Christian faith. It is relatively easy to show that not everything encapsulated in Ritschl's principles are on display in his theology. [380] If one took Ritschl's epistemology seriously, as he develops it—namely, that one must repudiate the distinction between the phenomenal and intelligible world; that things in themselves {*Ding an sich*} have no existence

21. *Theologie*, 7–10, 13ff., 31; *Rechtfertigung*, 3:232ff. [*Justification*, 232ff.].

22. *Theologie*, 22, 27ff.; *Rechtfertigung,* 3:371ff. [*Justification*, 385ff., esp. 394–95. According to Ritschl, while Luther retained the "Church formula" concerning the deity of Christ, it was in the *worth* of Christ's *work* appropriated in trust by the believer that one must measure Christ's true divinity. The "Articles of the Creed anent the Trinity and the Person of the Christ are incomprehensible to the understanding" and "Christ's Godhead is understood as the power which Christ has put forth upon *our* redemption. It is true that even in this connection Luther has no desire to dispense with the unintelligible formulas; but the very fact that they are pronounced unintelligible forbids their being viewed as other than worthless for the faith which consists in trust." *Justification,* 394–95.—Trans.]

but are only representations that have their origin in the images constructed in our memories; that every concrete thing that we observe on earth exists in our consciousness—then, without any hateful *Konsequenzmacherei*,[23] it is easy to see that all science, including theology, ends up in idealism and illusion. We never have anything to do with beings, with natures, with substances, but always only with perceptions, functions, relationships. God is not an absolute person who exists independent of my representation, but his personality is only the form within which I conceive of Him as love.[24] In himself, Christ is completely unknowable to us; to the extent that he is object of our knowing, he is an appearance [*verschijning*]. All that Scripture and church doctrine say about him does not describe his essence but only expresses the religious consciousness of the church. Christ is nothing more than the Christ-appearance in the consciousness of the church. The Holy Spirit is not a being, not a person, but the foundation of the communal consciousness of being a child of God. The case is similar with all doctrine. From beginning to end, theology becomes subjective. All that is objective is lost and becomes a mere product of our consciousness. The Ego creates and posits the non-Ego. Being is consciousness.

In addition to this noetic principle that we have just briefly described, there follows a second principle of no less significance to Ritschl's entire theology. We have seen that Ritschl believes that our knowledge is limited to perception; things in themselves cannot be known [381], in fact have no existence. This is of enormous significance for theology because it follows from this that we can know nothing about that which transcends our senses. Now, then, one of two things must be true: either no theology is possible since that which is supernatural cannot be the object of our knowledge;

23. [The term *Konsequenzmacherei* refers to the practice of drawing entailments from someone's convictions to such an extreme where people no longer recognize their own beliefs. E.g., "Since you believe in the distinction between body and soul you must be a Platonist who devalues earthly, bodily life."]

24. *Rechtfertigung,* 3:255 [*Justification*, 273–74].

or, there remains an alternative route open to us other than the way of science through the perceivable world. Ritschl holds to the latter and seeks the basis for religion and religious knowledge not in empirical reality, or speculation, or mysticism, but—in imitation of Kant—in moral and ethical principles. Thus, Ritschl adds a second principle—the radical disjunction between religion and science, between a theoretical and religious worldview—to the first principle of his theology, namely the restriction of our knowledge to the phenomenal world.

This distinction does not exist, in the first place, in the object, as if religion encompasses the world as a totality while philosophy tracks down the particular and general laws of nature and spirit, because the latter also seeks out the world as a whole, to understand it from a unitary law. Nor is the difference that religious knowing alone consists of value judgments while philosophical knowing is disinterested. "For without interest we do not trouble ourselves about anything." "All continuous cognition of the things which excite sensation is not only accompanied but likewise guided, by feeling. For in so far as attention is necessary to attain the end of knowledge, will as representing the desire for accurate cogniton, comes in between; the proximate cause of will, however, is feeling as expressing the consciousness that a thing or an activity is worth desiring, or that something ought to be put away." "For without interest we do not trouble ourselves about anything. We have therefore to distinguish between *concommitant* and *independent* value-judgments. The former are operative and necessary in all theoretical cognition, as in all technical observation and combination. But *independent* value judgments are all perceptions of moral ends or moral hindrances in so far as the excite moral pleasure of pain, or, it may be, set in motion the will to appropriate what is food or repel the opposite. If the other other kinds of knowledge are called 'disinterested,' this only means that they are without these moral effects. But even in them pleasure or pain must be present, according as they succeed or fail."[25]

25. [*Justification,* 204–5 (arrangement altered). In the original, Bavinck summarizes Ritschl's views in a few clauses and sentences that are rather dense

This philosophical knowledge[26] "is accompanied or guided by a judgment affirming the worth of impartial knowledge gained by observation. Scientific knowledge seeks to know the laws of nature and spirit through observation, and is based on the presupposition that both the observations and their arrangement are carried out in accordance with the ascertained laws of human cognition." By contrast, "in Christianity religious knowledge consists in independent value-judgments, inasmuch as it deals with the relation between the blessedness which is assured by God and sought by man, and the whole of the world which God has created and rules in harmony with His final end."[27] Now, "the intermingling and collision of religion and philosophy always arises from the fact that the latter attempts to produce in its own fashion a unified view of the world." [382] When philosophers allow themselves to be led astray this way, then they are no longer really doing philosophy but "betray an impulse religious in its nature, which philosophers ought to have distinguished from the cognitive methods they follow."[28] "Now the desire for scientific knowledge carries with it no guarantee that, though the medium of observation and the combination of observations according to known laws, it will discover the supreme universal law of the world, from which, as a starting point, the differentiated orders of nature and spiritual life, each in its kind might be explained, and understood as forming one whole."[29] Furthermore, "the opposition to Christianity which has been raised by Pantheism in its various modifications and by materialism, arises likewise from the fact that the law of a particular realm of being is set up as the supreme law of all being, though the

and difficult; to give greater clarity, the translation provides a longer direct citation in Ritschl's own words. The extended quotations in the paragraphs that follow also expand the original and have been slightly rearranged to provide a more logical flow.]

26. [The English translation uses the expression "scientific knowledge." *Justification*, 207.]

27. [*Justification*, 207.]

28. [*Justification*, 207.]

29. [*Justification*, 207.]

other forms of existence neither would nor could be explained by its means."[30] If only religion and science alike would limit themselves to their own field there would be no conflict between them.[31] Science would then yield the laws of spirit and nature but offer no interpretation of the world as a whole. Religion {for its part} would then consist only of independent value judgments, completely unreliant on science. Religion thus lies completely isolated from the realm of science; it begins only where science leaves off. Religion always contemplates the whole, designates the value of spirit over against nature and directs humanity with God's help to dominion over all creation.

At first glance, this distinction and separation of theology and science has something very attractive about it. Perhaps it is possible in this manner to reconcile the ages-long struggle between faith and knowledge. All previous attempts, up to and including those of Hegel and Schleiermacher, have shipwrecked. But if now the entire field of inner and external perception can be given to science, with religion restricted to making value-judgments about the world as a whole, perhaps we have found a solution. There are many today who fly with this hope and repeat after Ritschl: "Every cognition of a religious sort is a direct judgment of value."[32] [383] Outside of these value judgments there is no knowledge of God. "The nature of God and the Divine we can only know in its essence by determining its value for our salvation. . . . we know God only by revelation, and therefore also must understand the Godhead of Christ, if it is to be understood at all, as an attribute revealed to us in His saving influence upon ourselves."[33]

There is, however, little ground for such an expectation. In the first place, science is neither able nor willing to be satisfied with this

30. *Justification,* 208; cf. *Theologie*, 7, 9.

31. In the first edition of *Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, religion and science were described as "contrary [*entgegengestzte*] activities of the spirit" (3:170); in the second edition, they are described as "distinct" [*verschiedene*] (3:182).

32. *Justification*, 398; cf. 205.

33. Ibid.

restriction of its field. It is all well and good to say that science must be purely empirical and avoid proposing a worldview. Practically, however, this is simply not possible for the scientist is also a human being who, in addition having a mind, also possesses heart, conscience, and emotion. In addition, science itself cannot impose limits on its investigations. Rather, science wants to investigate everything and test all things by the standard of truth. Secondly, if religion is really separated from science in this manner and consists of nothing but value judgments, then we are forever finished with its objective truth. That states the matter rather starkly, but we do well to think through what it means to say that religion consists only of value judgments. This means more than simply that every religious truth must have value and meaning for life, or that all propositions which might be important for the academy but are otherwise unfruitful should be removed from dogmatics, or that all theology must be thoroughly practical. Even then, if it was only a difference of opinion—such as theologians have always debated—about whether theology was a theoretical or practical {discipline}, then the separation of religion and science as Ritschl presents it would not have met with such earnest resistance. In that case, the notion that religion only consists of value judgments would definitely be nothing new and peculiar but something that theologians of all stripes had set forth hundreds of times before.

But the intention of Ritschl's slogan is altogether different. Ritschl does not say that religion, after establishing objectively one or other reality—let us say, the person [384] or work of Christ—then, subsequently, shows us the value that the person or work has for us. Who would raise even a single objection against this? But Ritschl claims that religion consists purely and solely in value judgments; outside of value judgments there is no knowledge of the essence of God or of Christ. In other words, there is no discussion about the objective reality of dogmatic statements; these are all banned in the name of metaphysics. Who or what God is—or Christ, or the Holy Spirit—lies beyond all consideration; the only thing that can be said is that all these completely unknown great realities have value for us. To clarify this with an example, when Ritschl grants to Christ the predicate of deity, this does not mean that Christ is the

Son of God, partaker of the divine nature, but only that he has the value of God for us. Christ does not possess deity objectively, it does not exist outside of us in his person but exists only in us, in our perception and valuing of him.

Now if indeed this is Ritschl's understanding—and anyone who studies his works cannot deny it—then it is not too crass to say that this robs religion of all its objective truth. Value judgments are something in us; they do presuppose a reality outside of us about which we do the valuing, but this reality remains completely hidden, an unknown X, a mystery. A theology that consists of value judgments alone describes nothing objective; all that is present are certain subjective perceptions, discoveries, or circumstances of awareness. Now one of two things must be true: either those value judgments that certain subjects hold about one or other reality are grounded or they are simply flights of imagination. On Ritschl's own terms, the first possibility must be ruled out because one can only know the value of something when one knows the essence and nature of that thing, and, according to Ritschl, we can only know the essence and nature of Christ within the arena of the value they have for us. [385] It thus follows that value judgments only have subjective value, they are not grounded in the nature of things; in fact, they can only be considered as imaginary.

For example, if Christ is not truly God, then he cannot and may not have value of God for us. If we then still predicate deity to him, then we declare something about him that is not true. Our valuing is then nothing more than a fancy of the imagination like the Roman Catholic declaration that Mary is the Queen of Heaven. When we proceed only from our valuing, then who could say that the predicate of deity does apply to Christ but not to Mary? Value-judgments [*Wurthurteile*] must be grounded in judgments about being [*Seinsurtheile*]; if not, they are reduced to subjective fantasies; religion that has only value-judgments as its content ends up totally bankrupt.[34]

34. Whoever closely examines the theology of Ritschl has to put the public controversy that has surrounded it in recent years in an altogether different light than did Prof. Chantepie de la Saussaye in his otherwise important essay on

Apparently Ritschl himself felt and feared this danger. Even though he initially strictly separated religion and science, he did attempt to bind them together and to vindicate the scientific character of theology. In order to do this he utilized the moral proof for God's existence. He rejects all the other proofs as inadequate because they "fail to transcend the conception of the world, and therefore fall short of the Christian idea of God."[35] At best they lead us to a God who experiences himself within the world, that is to say, to pantheism.[36] In opposition to this, Ritschl places great value on Kant's moral argument with this one difference: Ritschl does not restrict himself to the practical significance of this argument but attributes definite theoretical significance to it. The proof rests on undeniable data of our life in the spirit. "[K]nowledge of the laws of our action is also theoretical knowledge, for it is the knowledge of the laws of spiritual life. Now the impulses of knowledge, of feeling, and of aesthetic intuition, of will in general and in its special application to society, and finally the impulse of religion in the general sense of the word, all concur to demonstrate that spiritual life is the end, [386] while nature is the means."[37] This is the case even though nature follows a different set of laws than spirit. "Theoretical knowledge must recognize as given the reality of spiritual life, and the equal binding force of the special laws which obtain in each realm. With respect to this, theoretical cognition must simply accept the fact that while spiritual life is subject to the laws of mechanism so far as it is interwoven with nature, yet its

Ritschl, P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, "De Theologie van Ritschl," *Theologische Studiën* 2 (1884): 262, 267ff., 270, etc.; cf. M. A. Goozsen, "De Theologie van Ritschl," *Geloof en Vrijheid* 22 (1888): 362ff.

35. [*Justification,* 215]

36. *Theologie*, 8ff.; *Rechtfertigung,* 3:200ff. [*Justification*, 229. Bavinck is referring here to Ritschl's comment about the cosmological argument: "But the thing thus fitted to be the cause of all other things is simply the world-substance, the multiplicity of things regarded as a unity." *Justification*, 216.—Trans.]

37. [*Justification*, 222 (arrangement altered). For the sake of clarity I have provided a full quotation from *Justification* rather than translating Bavinck's summary paraphrase. The remainder of this and the next paragraph are also significantly longer than Bavinck's original.]

special character as distinct from nature is signalized by practical laws which declare spirit to be an end in itself, which realizes itself in this form."[38]

Nature thus follows a different set of laws than spirit does. {Therefore theoretical reason and practical reason yield different postures toward nature.} "Now, when we mark the attitude taken up by the human spirit towards the world of nature, two analogous facts present themselves: in theoretical knowledge, spirit treats nature as something which exists for it; while in the practical sphere of the will, too, it treats nature as something which is directly a means to the common ethical end which forms the final end of the world." {Both impulses proceed from different assumptions about the relation between nature and spirit.} "The cognitive impulse and the will both take this course without regard to the fact that nature is subject to quite other laws that those which spirit obeys, that it is independent of spirit, and that it forms a restraint on spirit, and so far keeps it in a certain way in dependence on itself." {The question whether spirit is truly independent of nature cannot be avoided. Either it is superior to nature and able to transcend it or spirit's estimate of itself is illusory.} "Hence we must conclude either that the estimate which spirit, as a power superior to nature, forms of its own worth—in particular, the estimate which it forms of moral fellowship which transcends nature—is a baseless fancy, or that the view taken by spirit is in accordance with truth and with the supreme law which is valid for nature as well."[39]

The former cannot be true because our spirit would then be obligated to condemn itself as a dependent part of the world and deny its own drive for independence.[40] If the latter is true, "then its ground must lie in a Divine Will, which creates the world with spiritual life as its final end. To accept the idea of God in this way is, as Kant observes, practical faith, and not an act of theoretical

38. [*Justification*, 222 (arrangement altered).]

39. [*Justification*, 224.]

40. *Justification*, 224–26, 635ff.

cognition."[41] In fact, Ritschl believes that with the aid of the moral argument he can demonstrate not only the existence of God but also the rationality of the Christian worldview and the scientific character of theology. "Now it is the duty of theology to conserve the special characteristic of the conception of God, namely that it can only be represented in value-judgments. Consequently it ought to base its claim to be a science, when looked at in itself, on the method described above (p. 15),[42] and when looked at in its relation to other sciences, by urging that, as Kant was the first to show, the Christian view of God and the world enables us comprehensively to unify our knowledge of nature and the spiritual life of man in a way which otherwise is not possible. When we have once got a true conception of this point, a review of the moral constitution of man, based on the principles of Kant, will serve as the *ratio cognoscendi* of the validity of the Christian idea of God when employed as the solution of the enigma of the world."[43]

In this way, the moral argument takes on an all-encompassing and determining role in Ritschl's theology. We are perfectly within our rights, therefore, to ask whether he achieves what he intends with it. It needs noting, first of all, that Ritschl contradicts himself with this proof. Earlier we noted that Ritschl insists that science must limit itself to observations and discerning the links between observable data. When philosophers {go beyond this} and posit worldviews, they are no longer doing philosophy but "[betray]

41. [*Justification*, 224–25.]

42. [This internal reference in Ritschl's text points back to a passage in which he rejects biblical theology as the entry point into Christian theology. "And so we cannot reach dogmatic definitions simply by summing up the exegetical results of Biblical Theology" (*Justification*, 5). Though Ritschl insists that theological method is properly based "on the theory of knowledge which we consciously or unconsciously obey," that is to say, on metaphysics, he opposes "combining a theory of things in general with the conception of God" (ibid., 15, 17). It is worth noting that Bavinck also reject "so-called biblical theology" that fails to address metaphysical and epistemological foundations or *principia*. *RD*, 1:82ff.]

43. *Justification*, 225–26.

rather an impulse religious in its nature."[44] But now, in a scientific act, Ritschl reconciles the conflict between nature and spirit by appropriating the idea of God. Apart from this, is the moral proof any more convincing, and does it provides us with anything more than the other proofs? Ritschl proceeds from the {presupposition} of the spirit's independence from nature. "In religious cognition the idea of God is dependent on the presupposition that man opposes himself to the world of nature, and secures his position, in or over it, by faith in God."[45] Whether or not this is theoretically denied, it still must always be shown to be practically valid. But Ritschl himself acknowledges that this presupposition itself cannot be proved because it is not universally owned by all people and definitely proceeds from the Christian faith.[46]

[387] Let us grant this point, acknowledging that nothing can be demonstrated without certain presuppositions. However, what is then gained with this argument? That God exists? Ritschl hardly dares to make this claim. "{Kant's procedure} does not start dogmatically from the idea of God, nor from a preconceived idea of the world; rather, he finds the final unity of his knowledge of the world in the Christian idea of God, and that, too, expressly in such a way as to limit that idea to the sphere of religious knowledge."[47] Since it is "the task of cognition to seek for a law explaining the coexistence of these two heterogeneous orders of reality," {Kant fails because he} "abandons the attempt to discover, by the methods of theoretical cognition, a principle which will unite spirit and nature in one." {Kant is satisfied to} "bid us explain the combination of both in a single world through practical faith in God, conceived as endowed with the attributes which Christianity ascribes to Him."[48] According to Ritschl, therefore, the expression "God's existence" is not used in this argument but only a claim that

44. [*Justification*, 207.]
45. [*Justification*, 219.]
46. *Justification*, 220–21.
47. [*Justification*, 221.]
48. [*Justification*, 223.]

"the Christian view of God and the world enables us comprehensively to unify our knowledge of nature and the spiritual life of man in a way which otherwise is impossible."[49] If theoretical knowledge seeks to understand the world as a whole, it must accept the Christian understanding of God, the world, and the destiny of human beings.

But this moves us further in acknowledging the reality and existence of God because without it the problem of the world must remain unsolvable. No explanation other than the one provided by the Christian idea of God exists.[50] This entire line of argument finally comes down to this: if science is not to end up with an unsolvable problem, it has no choice but to accept the existence of God. In this way the Christian idea of God serves as a "scientific hypothesis."[51] In the final analysis, Ritschl not only says that Kant's moral argument clearly is influenced by a Christian worldview but also he utilizes it to accept the existence of God, the rationality of the Christian worldview, and the scientific character of theology. Everyone has to acknowledge that, in any case, Kant's proof cannot carry such a burden. Even if we could deduce from it God's existence as a personal, self-aware being, we are still a long ways from the fullness and richness of a Christian understanding of God. We therefore do not have much more than what was claimed in previous generations by natural theology [*Theologia Naturalis*]. This is all the more remarkable because Ritschl categorically rejects natural theology only now, as it were, to re-introduce it through the back door. If, in addition to demonstrating the existence of God, he also intends to use the proof to demonstrate the rationality of the Christian faith and the scientific character of theology, then the charges of rationalism that are often leveled against him [388] are easily understood. By far the majority and the most important aspects of the Christian faith reside a long ways away from this moral argument. These remarks should be sufficient to help us see that the divide that Ritschl created, first of all between religion and

49. [*Justification*, 225–26.]

50. *Justification*, 224.

51. *Justification*, 220.

science, with assistance from this scientific argument, is far from being overcome. Even if Ritschl distances himself from Kant and claims that the practical reason is not opposed to but is a task of theoretical knowledge,[52] nothing is changed in the basic principle that religion and science are two completely different and diverging activities of the spirit. His entire theology rests on this foundation.

In addition to the two principles we have now learned about Ritschl's theology, there remains a third and final related one about the origin and essence of religion. The restriction of science to the phenomenal world drives those who still want to maintain {the reality of} religion to a complete separation of faith and knowledge. In its own turn this dualism requires that one look for the foundation of religion outside of the field of science. One is then led to choose the origin of religion either in Schleiermacher's "feeling" {of absolute dependence} or Kant's moral consciousness. Ritschl takes his stance firmly against the former and for the latter.

We have already seen that conflict between nature and spirit is of great significance for Ritschl's theology. On its presupposition he builds the case for God's existence. It is also the source of religion. "In every religion what is sought, with the help of the superhuman spiritual power reverenced by man, is a solution to the contradiction in which man finds himself, as both a part of the world of nature and a spiritual personality claiming to dominate nature. For in the former *rôle* he is a part of nature, dependent on her, subject to and confined by other things; but as spirit he is moved by the impulse to maintain his independence against them. In this juncture, religion springs up as faith in superhuman spiritual powers, [389] by whose help the power which man possesses of himself is in some way supplemented, and elevated into a unity of its own kind which is a match for the pressure of the natural world."[53] Religion is therefore a supplement, a completion [*Ergänzung*] of the human person; it compensates for human dependency on the world by a dependence on God. For Kant, God

52. *Justification*, 217–18.

53. *Justification*, 199.

served to bring duty and blessedness [*geluk*] in harmony after this life; for Ritschl, God is the power who maintains our independence from nature and guarantees it.

Ritschl also defines the essence of religion from this perspective. He does not go to extra lengths to find a formula that could serve generically for all religion, acknowledging that his own description of God, world, and salvation carry a Christian imprint and have only comparative resemblance to other religions.[54]

> If religion in every case is an interpretation of man's relation to God and the world, guided by the thought of the sublime power of God to realise the end of this blessedness of man, advancing insight into the history of religions has forced on us the task of formulating a universal *conception of religion*, under which all the particular species of religion might find their peculiar features determined. But this task involves no slight difficulties, and contributes less to the understanding of Christianity than is often expected. The formula by which this very thing, religion in general, has just been described, makes no claim to be a definition proper of the generic conception of religion. It is too definite for that. The ideas which it employs—God, world, blessedness—have so directly Christian a stamp, that they apply to other religions only in a comparative degree, *i.e.* in order to indicate the general idea of religion, we should have to specify at the same time the different modifications which they undergo in different religions.[55]

Ritschl goes on to say that the different religions should not simply be set next to each other as different species of the same genus but as "stages" {in a hierarchy}. "For the observation and comparison of

54. [The block quotation that follows is not in the original; it is provided for clarification. The same applies to the longer citations in the following paragraphs.]

55. [*Justification*, 194–95. It may be helpful here to highlight Ritschl's distinction between a "regulative" and a "constitutive" use of a generic definition of religion: "In the investigation of Christianity the general conception of religion should be used *regulatively*. I desire to distinguish myself very precisely in this respect from those who, in interpreting Christianity, make a *constitutive* use of the general conception. For when this method is employed . . . in such a way that the influence of the general conception of religion makes one even one moment neutral towards the Christian religion itself, in order to be able to deduce its meaning from the conditions of the general conception, then the only effect of this is to undermine Christian conviction." *Justification*, 196.]

the various historical religions from which the general conception is abstracted, likewise shows that they stand to one another not merely in the relation of species, but also in the relation of stages. They exhibit an ever more rich and determinate manifestation of the chief features of religion; their connection is always more close, there aims more worthy of man."[56] Christianity claims to be the highest religion. "When, therefore, as Christians, in reviewing the series of stages presented by the religions of the world, we judge them by the principle that Christianity transcends them all, and that in Christianity the tendency of all the others finds its perfect consummation, the claim of the science of religion to universal validity many seem to be sacrificed to the prejudice arising from our own personal convictions."[57] {Ritschl's aim, however, is more modest. He does not claim scientific proof for the superiority of Christianity, only that the claim is *compatible* with the scientific study of religion.}

> But it is impossible for us, when arranging religions in a series of stages, to shut our eyes to the claim of Christianity to occupy the highest place. For those qualities in other religions by which they *are* religions are intelligible to us chiefly as measured by the perfection which they assume in Christianity, and by the clearness which distinguishes the perfect religion from the imperfect. The arrangement of religions in states, consequently, amounts to no more than a scientific attempt to promote mutual understanding among Christians; and assent to the statement that Christianity is the highest and most perfect religion is therefore no obstacle to the scientific character of the theory.[58]

{In summary}, though the more perfect {religion} sheds light on the imperfect, the former is not illumined by the latter. We should not lose sight of either of these two observations that Ritschl makes about the essence of religion.

Ritschl identifies two characteristics that are essential to religion. The first is that "they are always the possession of a community. . . . All religions are social."[59] "The various historical

56. [*Justification*, 196.]

57. [*Justification*, 197.]

58. *Justification*, 197.

59. [*Justification*, 27.]

religions are always of a social character, belonging to a multitude of persons. [390] Thence it follows that to assign to religion a merely psychological complexion, in particular to refer it to feeling, is not a solution, but only an abridgement of the problem. . . . Now the multiplicity pertaining to religion is one of distribution, partly in space and partly in time." The consequence of the latter is "that every social religion implies a doctrinal tradition. The dispersion in space of the members of the same religion is a direct obstacle to their fellowship, but it is compensated for when the religion takes real shape in the gathering for worship. Feeling, as pleasure or pain, as blessedness or suffering, is the personal gain or the personal presupposition which impels individuals to participate in religious fellowship. . . . [T]he historical religions claim service from all the functions of the spirit—knowledge, for the doctrinal tradition, i.e., for a particular view of the world; will, for the common worship; feeling, for the alternation of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, moods by which religious life is removed from the ordinary level of existence. No religion is correctly or completely conceived when one element of this succession is regarded as more important or fundamental than the others. . . . {No} explanation of the total fact of religion shall give the preference to one or other of the functions of spirit."[60]

The second characteristic "perceptible in religious conceptions" is that "they express not merely a relation between God and man, but always at the same time a relation toward the world on the part of God, and those who believe in him."[61] {It is} "from the social character of religion {that} we can gather that, in a complete view of it, its relation to the world must necessarily be included. For the majority of those who exhibit attachment to a common religion employ, in the commerce and outward expression of it in worship, such means as are characteristic of mankind's situation in the world."[62] What makes it even more evident is the way human beings rely on God in order to be set free from their dependence on nature

60. *Justification*, 198–99.

61. [*Justification*, 27.]

62. [*Justification*, 28.]

and to become spiritually independent over against nature. "Every religion, on closer examination, is found to consist in the striving after 'goods,' or a *summum bonum*, which either belongs to the world, or can only be understood by contrast with it." {Therefore} "three points—not just two—are necessary to determine the circle by which a religion is completely represented—God, man, and the world." "Theology . . . is not as a rule prepared for this. . . . {because} it states the problem of the content of religion . . . in terms of the position of the mystic, in which the soul which sees God sees Him as though it alone were seen by God, and as though apart from Him and it naught existed. [391] Schleiermacher, too, so far from abandoning this method, rather confirmed it." But it is, nonetheless, completely wrong. "For the central point is always this, that the religious community, as situated in the world, endeavors to obtain certain goods in the world, or above the world, through the divine being, because of His authority over it."[63]

For us to understand this condensed summary explanation of the origin and essence of religion correctly, the following observations surely are not superfluous. In the first place, one can raise against Ritschl the objection that applies to every psychological and historical explanation of religion's origin. Every psychological or historical explanation of religion presupposes a shorter or longer period when there was no religion and then tries to demonstrate how religion arose from elements that are not religious. In this way religion becomes a product of the human spirit and acquires the character of something accidental. This is quite clear in Ritschl. Human beings experience themselves as both dependent upon and elevated above the world; in this conflict, with God's help, humans lift themselves up. Now I do not deny that human beings truly perceive themselves as being in such an antinomy; even less do I deny that religion is the means by which people strive for a resolution of this conflict and achieve it in greater or lesser degree. However, when one looks for the origin and sole purpose of religion in the resolution of this duality, then one places

63. *Justification*, 29.

religion in the same linear continuum (albeit in greater degree) as art and science, with family life and society and state, all of which also serve to free human beings from the domination of nature. The result is that, should humanity succeed in liberating itself from this domination by the above-mentioned powers alone, then religion would be unnecessary.

But Ritschl's explanation does not deliver what it promises; he really does not clarify the origin of religion. Granted that consciousness of the world and self-consciousness stand in tension, how do human beings arrive at the notion that there is a spiritual power above the world [392] by whose help they can be liberated from the power of nature? Where does the idea of God come from? Is it not obvious that human beings who lack any idea of God are only capable of considering means that are in the world itself in order to assert their independence? Furthermore, the world does make these available. Even though the tension between our self-consciousness and our consciousness of the world might be strong and nature appear to us as a mysterious, unfriendly, terrifying power, it is also more than that. It also makes available through the probing, investigative, discovering spirit of human beings the means by which we can do battle against this power. How do humans, then, arrive at the notion that they should seek a higher power above the world, a reality about which the explanation provided knows nothing?

In addition, the essence of religion is in no small measure misunderstood in this explanation. What task is given to religion here? Religion exists for no other reason than to give human beings dominion over the world. Humans face a struggle against the oppressive power of nature and come to realize that their own powers are inadequate for the task; he runs into all sorts of dangers and faces death. And now religion arises as a powerful partner in this struggle and leads to triumph. Religion is thus an *Ergänzung*, a completion of humanity. The existence of God is assumed in order to lift human beings above nature. But this is not and cannot be the essence of religion. Religion is not an aid for morality. Ritschl himself acknowledges that religion can never be a means to another

end.[64] God cannot be merely an aid in the struggle against the world.

Nonetheless, there is a beautiful thought in the definition Ritschl provides for the essence of religion. In his definition he attempts to allow the frequently misunderstood ethical dimension of religion to fully come into its own. But this will become more clear after [393] we first consider how Ritschl uses his definition to come to a judgment about Christianity.

All religions believe in a spiritual, supernatural power by whose help people free themselves from their dependence on the world. In the pagan religions this power is in various ways tied to specific manifestations in nature, and for that reason they do not achieve the desired goal.[65] The religion of the Old Testament comes much closer to that goal since "the concrete conception of the one, supernatural, omnipotent God is bound up with the final end of the Kingdom of God, and with the idea of a redemption. But that end is conceived under the limits of the national commonwealth; while the condition of the end being realized is conceived, it is true, as purification from sin, but partly under the garb of the chosen people's political independence; partly it is accompanied by the hope of outward prosperity destined to arrive with the perfect rule of Jehovah."[66] In Christianity these limitations and restrictions fall away. In Christianity the kingdom of God is presented just as God intended it; namely, free from all the restrictions of nationality and directed to a common end by elevating all people into an ethical community. In this way Christianity became the perfect spiritual-moral religion. Thanks to the redemption of Christ, Christianity was liberated from the natural and sensuous limitations—temple,

64. At least in the first edition of his *Rectfertigung und Versöhnung*, 3:8; this is dropped in the second edition, 3:13.

65. *Rechtfertigung*, 1st ed., 3:175, 440. This is shortened or dropped in the second edition. [The English translation is based on the third edition, and apart from the few general statements about the superiority of Christianity to other religions (see nn. 55–60 above), there is no extensive discussion of "paganism" or "nature religions" in *Justification*.—Trans.]

66. *Justification*, 9–10.

sacrifice, priest, etc.—of the Old Testament and free to become the perfect spiritual religion.

> In Christianity, the Kingdom of God is represented as the common end of God and the elect community in such a way that it rises above the natural limits of nationality and becomes the moral society of nations. In this respect Christianity shows itself to be the perfect moral religion. Redemption through Christ—an idea which embraces justification and renewal—is also divested of all conditions of a natural and sensuous kind, so as to culminate in the purely spiritual idea of eternal life. Nor do the outwardly sensible circumstances, amidst which Christ's passion took place, affect its redeeming significance. That significance attaches to His willing acceptance of His sufferings, to the obedience which, under these circumstances, He displayed in his God-given vocations. And inasmuch as redemption through Christ comprises justification and renewal, what is obtained is such an emancipation from evils as, being a spiritual process, is distinct from Old Testament anticipations.[67]

These twin characteristics of religion as *moral* and as *spiritual* belong together in Christianity.

> In both these respects we have in Christianity a culmination of the monotheistic, spiritual, and teleological religion in the Bible in the idea of the perfected spiritual and moral religion. There can be no doubt that these two characteristics condition each other mutually. Christ made the universal Kingdom of God His end, and thus He came to know and decide for that kind of redemption which He achieved through the maintenance of fidelity in His calling and of His blessed fellowship with God through suffering unto death.[68]

{This duality affects the understanding of the Christian religion which should not be seen as having a central dogma but as having a dual character.} "But Christianity, so to speak, resembles not a single centre, but an ellipse which is determined by two *foci*."[69] Christ's work included both; it was a work of redemption and of establishing the Kingdom of God. For God's children, freedom in God is as much the goal of the individual as the Kingdom of God is the communal final goal. "Western Catholicism has recognized this

67. [*Justification*, 10.]

68. [*Justification*, 10.]

69. [*Justification*, 11.]

fact in its own way. [394] For it sets up not merely as an institution possessed of the sacraments by which the power of Christ's redemption is propagated, but also as the Kingdom of God in the present, as the community in which, through the obedience of men and States to the Pope, Divine righteousness is professedly released."[70] Protestantism, however, devalued the idea of the Kingdom of God. "Now it has been a misfortune for Protestantism that the Reformers did not purify the idea of the moral Kingdom of Christ from sacerdotal corruptions, but embodied it in a conception which is not practical but merely dogmatical."[71] It was Kant who once again saw the significance of the Kingdom of God. "Kant was the first to perceive the supreme importance for ethics of the 'kingdom of God' as an association of men bound together by the laws of virtue."[72] Schleiermacher also described Christianity as a teleological (i.e., ethical) religion, but he failed to work it out further in his *The Christian Faith*. "But it remained for Schleiermacher first to employ the true conception of the teleological nature of the Kingdom of God to determine the idea of Christianity. This service of his ought not to be forgotten, even if he failed to grasp the discovery with a firm hand."[73] Ritschl wants to maintain both and describes Christianity as "the monotheistic, completely spiritual, and ethical religion."[74]

70. [*Justification*, 11.]

71. [*Justification*, 11.]

72. [*Justification*, 11 (altered). Ritschl adds (in parentheses) a reference to "Kant, 1:412ff." The most likely referent is the conclusion of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* wherein he discusses the *summum bonum* as an objective reality, "not as referring to an object of an intelligible intuition (we are unable to think any such object), but as referring to the sensible world, viewed, however, as being an object of pure reason in its practical employment, that is as a *corpus mysticum* of the rational beings in it, insofar as the free will of each being is, under moral laws, in complete systematic unity with itself and with the freedom of each other." A few pages farther, Kant speaks of a "moral world (*regnum gratiae*)" leading "to a transcendental theology—a theology which takes the ideal of supreme ontological perfection as a principle of systematic unity." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* 637, 642.]

73. [*Justification*, 11.]

74. *Justification,* 13; cf. 194–97, 205–6, 543ff.

What then is the proper relation between these two marks of Christianity? It is a mistake to identify the distinction between religious and ethical dimensions of the Christian religion with the distinction between dogmatics and ethics. Neither can do without the other. "The history of theology affords only too many examples of the construction of what is either merely a doctrine of redemption or merely a system of morality. But it must also be observed that we are not to base theology proper on the idea of redemption, and ethics upon the idea of the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, so far as theology falls into these two sections, each must be kept under the constitutive influence of both ideas."[75] Nor are we to think of the religious and the ethical as two distinct fields separated from each other. Although in the religious sense where redemption takes place we are dependent on God, the subjective acknowledgement of that dependence is itself evidence of our independence. Conversely, from the religious perspective, we also believe that our willing and acting is done in dependence on God. Thus, in the religious dimension we are also independent and in the ethical dimension we are also dependent.[76]

Nonetheless, the religious and ethical ends of Christianity should not be confused with each other, and even less may they be reduced to each other. Moral decisions and acts do not follow logically and mechanically from the belief that one is reconciled with God; it requires serious struggle and an act of the will.[77] There are many people who give evidence of this such as believers whose strong consciousness of [395] reconciliation {with God} is accompanied with pride and arrogance, disparagement, and lovelessness toward those who think differently. Catholicism and Protestantism differ at precisely this point as becomes obvious in the different understandings in each tradition about justification. ". . . Catholic doctrine represents Christianity first and foremost as the form of a moral direction of the will set in opposition to sin,

75. *Justification,* 14.

76. In the first edition, which I have followed here (3:18–23), this is articulated more clearly than in the second (3:29–33) [*Justification,* 12–17].

77. *Justification,* 100–14, 140–48, 520–23.

while Protestantism represents it first and foremost as the true religion, in contrast to the operation of sin as the ground of all irreligion and false religion."[78] "The moral necessity of this connection {of faith and love}, however, follows from the fact that the same God both guarantees reconciliation and freedom from the world, and bestows the impulse to help in realizing the Divine Kingdom. The heterogeneity of the two aspects of the Christian life, however, is balanced in the subjective result—that we are blessed in the experience that all things serve for our good, and that we are blessed in doing good."[79]

It occurs to me that Ritschl offers hints here that can earn some sympathy and expresses ideas that could become fruitful for the whole of theology. The relation between religion and morality, between faith and love, remains quite unclear notwithstanding all the study that has been dedicated to it. It is easy to say with Luther that faith does not ask whether good works need to be done; before one asks the question, they are done. Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism {confesses} that it is "impossible for those who have been grafted into Christ not to produce fruits of gratitude."[80] The reality, however, displays a great divide between faith and love. It cannot be denied that lack of neighbor-love is often paired with great faith. Nor can one deny that between Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as among the various churches within Protestantism, there are differences in how each emphasizes either the ethical or religious dimension of Christianity. It is this fact that Ritschl placed under scrutiny and made known. Although he judged that both of these marks are equally essential to Christianity and should not be confused or reduced to each other, nonetheless [396] his definition placed them side by side, and he attempts to demonstrate how religion and morality both are perfected in Christianity.

78. *Justification,* 80, cf. 35–47.

79. *Justification,* 522.

80. [Lord's Day 34, Q. & A. 64.]

Although it must gratefully be acknowledged that Ritschl has so clearly and lucidly described the ethical character of Christianity, the danger is not imaginary that, having avoided the shoals of mysticism, he is nonetheless left stranded on the sandbar of moralism. His description of the essence of religion invites us to be concerned about this. According to his definition, religion cannot be understood in terms of two notions—God and humanity—but must include the world as a third term. Furthermore, the goal of all religion is, with God's help, to achieve a certain good in this world. From this the question naturally arises whether religion still has its own content, whether it retains an independent significance; or, does it risk becoming nothing more than an aid for morality?

In his definition of religion and Christianity, Ritschl has arguably gone to work in the exact opposite manner that was customary before him. Then Christianity was exclusively regarded as religion and its ethical dimension was hardly considered as a distinct topic. The assumption then was that the ethical flowed rather naturally from the religious. Over against this, Ritschl first of all insists that human beings have a distinct calling and destiny that is related to this world. We are to be lords of the world, not in a physical but in an ethical sense, just as Jesus was. We are to partake of eternal life already in this life and not only in the life to come. Humans thus stand firmly in the certainty that whatever threatens them on earth cannot harm them or overcome them because everything will be turned to their good. This applies not only to the destiny of individuals but also to humanity in general. The human race is destined to become an ethical community, the Kingdom of God, which the whole of physical nature serves and to which it is subject.

Now, in order to arrive at this destiny, human beings need religion, particularly the highest religion—Christianity. In order truly to do the good and pursue our ethical destiny [397], we need to be set free from the oppressive sense of sin and guilt—the limitations placed upon us by the world—and to partake of Christian joy, carefreeness, and independence. Therefore Ritschl is absolutely correct in maintaining the religious character of

redemption and justification.[81] However, all of this, taken together, is still considered subordinate to and as a means toward achieving humanity's ethical destiny. {The contrast, therefore, is sharply drawn.} Whereas salvation in Christ was formerly considered primarily a means to separate man from sin and the world, to prepare him for heavenly blessedness and to cause him to enjoy undisturbed fellowship with God there, Ritschl posits the very opposite relationship: the purpose of salvation is precisely to enable a person, once he is freed from the oppressive feeling of sin and lives in the awareness of being a child of God, to exercise his earthly vocation and fulfill his moral purpose in this world. The antithesis, therefore, is fairly sharp: on the one side, a Christian life that considers the highest goal, now and hereafter, to be the contemplation of God and fellowship with him, and for that reason (always being more or less hostile to the riches of an earthly life) is in danger of falling into monasticism and asceticism, pietism and mysticism; but on the side of Ritschl, a Christian life that considers its highest goal to be the kingdom of God, that is, the moral obligation of mankind, and for that reason (always being more or less adverse to the withdrawal into solitude and quiet communion with God), is in danger of degenerating into a cold Pelagianism and an unfeeling moralism. Personally, I do not yet see any way of combining the two points of view, but I do know that there is much that is excellent in both, and that both contain undeniable truth.

[398] From the preceding it is easy to determine the method that Ritschl uses for theology. Religions do not stand over against each other as true or false but are organized in stages with Christianity having achieved the highest form. All religions are therefore grounded in revelation. In Christianity, the revelation given in the Son of God is the firm core of all religious knowledge and activity. "The person of the Founder is not only the key to the Christian view of the world, and the standard of Christians' self-

81. Cf. Prof. Chantepie de la Saussaye, "De Theologie van Ritschl," 277. The professor does acknowledge, however, that Ritschl's opposition to the one-sided forms of Christianity that emphasize the understanding or feeling is not without its own one-sided emphasis on a religion of the will (280).

judgment and moral effort, but also the standard which shows how prayer must be composed, for in prayer both individual and united adoration of God consists."[82] Not only is revelation here robbed of its specific character and in Christianity restricted to Jesus, but Ritschl's epistemology also pushes him to reduce its content. Knowledge of things always depends on the impression they make on us; we do not know things as they are in themselves but only as they manifest themselves to us and exist in relation to us. The question is never about what is true in itself but only what is true for us. Divine revelation therefore is limited to what a worldview and the self-judgment that answers to it gives to us, namely, the certainty of salvation.[83] In other words, only that which is purely religious and ethical finds a place in theology; dogmatic propositions are not scientific, they are only value judgments.

In order to understand the religious-ethical content of dogmatic propositions we need to stand within the circle of the Christian community. "The immediate object of theological cognition is the community's faith that it stands to God in a relation essentially conditioned by the forgiveness of sins. . . . [T]his benefit is traced back to the personal action and passion of Christ."[84] This method differs from that ordinarily followed in the past. Then, in addition to a natural theology whose content is derived from an entirely different source, theologians also considered numerous loci in dogmatic theology—e.g., God, [399] creation, the world, humanity, sin—apart from Christ and apart from a stance within the Christian community. This method is completely wrong. "Advocates of this method, who are unaware of its defects and feel no need to get rid of them, are therefore likewise incapable of understanding and exposition of Christian doctrine which views and judges every part of the system from the standpoint of the redeemed community of Christ."[85] A natural religion—that is to say, one whose concepts,

82. *Justification*, 202–3; cf. 30ff., 536ff.

83. *Rechtfertigung,* 1st ed., 3:357. These pages have been replaced in the 2nd ed. by a polemic against [David] Strauss. [*Justification,* 413–14.]

84. [*Justification,* 3.]

85. [*Justification,* 5.]

truths, commandments, activities and expectations are (1) given to us at birth before an education or training and (2) are acquired only by reflection and speculation—does not exist and is a figment of the imagination. Metaphysics as the doctrine of God and the proofs of God's existence only introduces into theology degeneration and categorically cannot serve as a foundation and preparation for a Christian worldview. Natural reason does not lead a Buddhist to a personal, self-conscious Being but to the conclusion that this world should not exist at all, and it led the Deism of the eighteenth century to conflict with Christianity.[86]

A different method is required. One does not begin the doctrine of God, for example, with meaningless metaphysical abstractions about the Absolute in order then later to add to them other predicates but places both feet firmly in the Christian community from the outset. All theological propositions must be treated from this vantage point. God, the world, humanity, sin, the person and work of Christ, providence, and so forth, can only be understood and valued from this stance.[87] With a decided preference for this method, Ritschl appeals to Luther and Melanchthon and claims, in this way, to have restored genuine Lutheran theology.[88]

It is easy to spell out quickly and briefly the consequences that follow from this religious-ethical method for the authority and use of Scripture in theology. Ritschl rejects the traditional doctrine of inspiration categorically and unconditionally, but he does attempt to acknowledge an authority of Scripture. [400] This authority can only be demonstrated historically in comparison with later literature, and it can only be understood properly in contrast with the tradition. Theology is called to procure for us the authentic knowledge of the Christian religion. This can only be obtained from the original sources that are as close to the founding period of the church as possible. As is always the case, the principle that forms

86. *Theologie*, 11, 12, 62; *Justification,* 4–5, 534–35.

87. *Theologie*, 13ff.; *Justification,* 2–8, 13, 34, 174, 178, 197–98, 324, 387ff. (cf. 342ff. in the 1st ed. of *Rechtfertigung*).

88. *Theologie*, 4, 57ff.; *Justification*, 6–7; 212, passim.

the faith-content of the church is most distinctly and clearly set forth at the beginning of its development. That the Scriptures of the New Testament are indeed those original sources is confirmed by the fact that the writers of later pagan-Christian literature were unable to appropriate the Old Testament presuppositions of the ideas of Jesus and his Apostles for themselves. Thus the train of Jesus's thought and Apostolic knowledge of the content, goal, and origin of Christianity are mediated through an "authentic understanding" [*authentische Verständnis*] of Old Testament religion. The hallmark of Scripture's inspiration and authority is {the conviction} that "the entire range of Christian ideas is authentically shaped by the Old Testament."[89]

In actual fact, however, this authority is restricted in many ways by Ritschl. It is true that he does not take much account of biblical historical criticism, and in that respect shows himself to be rather conservative, even though, as far as I know, he was the first to draw Wellhausen's attention to the Graf-Kuenen hypothesis concerning the origin of the Pentateuch. He also frequently and correctly insists that dogmatic theology does not mine its material from religious experience or ecclesiastical confession but from Scripture.[90] He even acknowledges that the theologian must not be governed by church confession and development of doctrine in working with the material but should nevertheless be guided by them.[91] Finally, we can acknowledge with gratitude that Ritschl [401] truly makes much work of Scripture and sees much more clearly than Schleiermacher how the Old Testament relates to the New. Nonetheless, in practice he often undermines the authority of Scripture by his instructive but still frequently arbitrary and undisciplined exegesis.

A few examples can show this better than a lengthy discourse. In general, Ritschl repudiates a use of Holy Scripture that only cites texts—without even attempting an interpretation—simply to

89. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:4–20.

90. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:2ff., 7ff.

91. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:18–20.

demonstrate one or other truth as necessary for salvation [*heilsnothwendig*]. The Bible is not a textbook for all sorts of theoretical instruction; only that which reveals God's will and his goal for humanity and the world is appropriate for theology.[92] In addition, Ritschl also provides the general rule that the content of revelation is limited to that which is a development of Old Testament ideas and about which the New Testament writers are all in agreement.[93] In an arbitrary application of this subjective standard, Ritschl contends, for example, that the Psalms are products of religious experience but do not intend to reveal anything about God to us.[94] The pre-existence of Christ is not a dogma; Jesus's words in John 8:58 ["before Abraham was, I am"] were only intended to cut of discussion and have no doctrinal value for us.[95] The doctrine of original sin is presented in Romans 5:19 ["by the disobedience of one man"] as valid for God and as a mystery but not as something revealed to us and to be believed by us.[96] Paul's teaching in Romans 2 and 3 concerning the righteousness of God is borrowed from the Pharisees and is not an element of Christian doctrine.[97] The same apostle, in Romans 5:12 ["sin entered the world through one man"], attributes the death of all people to Adam as a consequence of his sin, [462] but this too is not an essential component of a Christian worldview.[98] Galatians 3:13 ["Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law"] is valid only for Jewish Christians and has no relevance for us.[99] Romans 6 contains powerful symbolism but no dogma.[100] And so we could go on. With this kind of method it requires no great artistic skill to set

92. *Theologie*, 40; *Justification*, 331 (cf. 278, 357 in the 1st ed. of *Rechtfertigung*).

93. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:14ff., 23.

94. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:105; the 1st ed. states this much more clearly (2:103).

95. *Rechtfertigung,* 1st ed., 3:357; the 2nd ed. has dropped this (3:382).

96. *Justification*, 346–50.

97. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:304ff. (cf. 3:223 in the 1st ed.).

98. *Justification*, 358–61.

99. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:246.

100. *Rechtfertigung,* 2:226ff.

aside every text in Scripture that stands in one's way and does not fit into one's system. Subjectivity here is given a completely free rein.

Nonetheless, this method does not stand on its own feet but is a necessary consequence of Ritschl's starting point. We should be grateful that Ritschl binds himself so closely to Scripture as he does and attempts to build his theology on a biblical foundation and not only on the broad lines of {the church's} history of dogma. And now, what was the one powerful principle upon which Ritschl takes his stand? It is the limitation of our knowledge to appearances; things in themselves [*Dinge an sich*] are unknowable. Science, therefore, is restricted to the sensual and observable world and does not lead us to the supersensible.

If this is indeed the case, the absolute separation of religion and science becomes necessary. All metaphysics—that is to say, all striving to know the essence of things along with that which is supersensible—must be banned, not only from religion but also from all science. Metaphysics completely disappears. All that philosophy sought to know about God and say about him is religious but not scientific.

However, can it be possible to maintain religion itself on the basis of such a division? Are we not led by necessity to deny, if not the existence of the supersensible (materialism), at least its knowability (agnosticism)? Along with other neo-Kantians, Ritschl denies this. There is, so they say, in addition to the path of observation that leads to science, another path that leads to valuing religion. Once religion separates itself from all metaphysical abstraction and [403] theoretical knowledge, then it retains its own content, namely valuing. Theology consists purely and solely of value judgments and makes no judgment about the nature and essence of God; it only deals with the value that these have for the Christian community.

Finally, in order to designate this value, the theologian must stand {within the circle of faith} in the Christian community. It is impossible to determine any objective value for theological propositions; we cannot stand in God's place {and see things from

his perspective}. It is up to us to describe the significance of theological propositions in the way that they are mirrored in the subject.[101] Everything that lacks significance for the subject (i.e., the Christian community) {therefore} is not a part of he Christian life or worldview and does not belong in theology even though it is present in Scripture.

The logic that hides in these principle is worth noting. {When} one begins with neo-Kantianism and the split between theoretical and practical reason, there is no other way to defend religion and Christianity than by the means with which Ritschl has done it—and done it with more knowledge and skill than anyone else has. Nonetheless, in my judgment, human beings, particularly religious people, can not live long with this dualism. The proposed division, however, attractive for a moment because it apparently ends the conflict, does not lead to the reconciliation of faith and science but destroys faith and degrades science.

—Kampen, October 1888

101. *Justification*, 34–35.

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Herman Bavinck on Scottish Covenant Theology and Reformed Piety

Translated and introduced by Henk van den Belt (h.van.den.belt@rug.nl), designate professor of Reformed theology, University of Groningen

In his introduction to the works of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Bavinck shows why the concept of the covenant was so important in Scottish church history.* He also shares some of his own theological ideas on preaching and spirituality. In the first place, Bavinck admires Scottish preaching because in it the idea of the covenant connects the appeal for personal renewal and conversion with an appeal for general societal renewal. Although he did not agree with the Seceders' underlying view of the relationship between church and state, he nevertheless appreciates how the doctrine of the covenant shines through their sermons. The Scottish divines consistently kept an eye on both the people and the country because they held that God's covenant is established not only with individuals but also with nations. This emphasis corresponds with Bavinck's understanding of the catholicity of Reformed faith.[1] Although in his ecclesiology he advocated for a free church, Bavinck sympathizes with the passion for the sanctification of the whole of

*The translator expresses thanks to Laurence O'Donnell for his helpful editorial suggestions.

1. In his address "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church" Bavinck emphasizes the comprehensive character of Reformed theology. "Not only the church but also home, school, society, and state are placed under the dominion of the principle of Christianity." Herman Bavinck, *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk*, [Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 18 Dec. 1888] (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1888), 32. For the English translation, see Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 238.

life that was expressed in the original concept of an established Reformed state Church.

In the second place, the introduction reflects discussions in the Reformed Churches regarding the relationship between the covenant and election. When Bavinck wrote this preface the churches of the Secession and of the Doleantie had already merged into the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (1892), but some tensions in the new church remained. Within the churches from the Dutch Secession, many people had strong feelings against the idea of a supposed regeneration as the foundation for infant baptism. The Synod of Utrecht (1905) addressed the issue, and Bavinck's advice was very important for the final consensus achieved there.

Before the synod he wrote his *Calling and Regeneration*, originally published as a series of forty articles. At a deeper level the concerns about supposed regeneration regarded preaching. Some complained that "it seems that there are no unregenerate in the church any longer. It seems as though even when a person has continued living for years in an unconverted state, he still must be considered to be regenerated."[2] They were afraid that the doctrine of presupposed regeneration would rob preaching of its spiritual power. Bavinck understood and sympathized with these cares, but he also tried to convince those from the Secession churches of the acceptability of Kuyper's doctrinal position.[3]

This tension spills over into this introduction. On the one hand, Bavinck stresses the connection between election and covenant in Scottish theology. The covenant does not stand in contrast to the doctrine of election but makes it shine all the brighter. All the benefits of election flow though the channel of the covenant. This

2. Herman Bavinck, *Roeping en wedergeboorte* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1903), 10. Cf. Herman Bavinck, *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, ed. J. Mark Beach (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 4.

3. On this treatise see Henk van den Belt, "Herman Bavinck and His Reformed Sources on the Call to Grace: A Shift in Emphasis towards the Internal Work of the Spirit," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 41–59.

intimate connection between election and covenant was an underlying presupposition of Kuyper's view of baptism. On the other hand, Bavinck shows that this doctrinal position coheres with the kind of preaching that the concerned members of the church longed for. As Bavinck says, according to the Erskines and their sympathizers, church membership and receiving the sacraments were not enough. Personal repentance was necessary, and the covenant must become true in one's own heart and life. Sound preaching descends into the depths of the human heart and places us before the face of God in poverty and emptiness. But it also addresses contrite spirits with the promises of the gospel.

Finally, the introduction also shows a growing concern with superficiality in neo-Calvinist circles. There is an important element in the sermons of the Erskines that Bavinck misses in contemporary spirituality and especially in the devotional literature and Christian novels. These writings may be true, but they are not *real* because the spiritual knowledge of the soul is lacking in them. "It seems as if we no longer know what sin and grace, what guilt and forgiveness, what repentance and regeneration mean. We know them theoretically, but we no longer know them in the awesome reality of life."[4] In some other writings Bavinck also expresses his concern about the superficiality of his day. In the *Certainty of Faith* he writes about forms of pietistic Spirituality that overemphasize the spiritual life and underestimate the earthly task of the Christian, but he also remarks that "this tradition reveals an emphasis on and estimation for the one thing needful, which we often lack today because we are too busy with this contemporary life. While Christians formerly forgot the world for themselves, we run the danger of losing ourselves in the world."[5] Gerrit Brillenburg Wurth (1898–1963) recalls a remark from Bavinck with the same tenor. Speaking at a conference for students in 1918, he said: "How much

4. See below, p. 177.

5. Herman Bavinck, *De zekerheid des geloofs*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1903), 102. Cf. Herman Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, trans. Harry Der Nederlanden (St. Catharines: Paideia Press, 1980), 94. In the quote this translation is slightly corrected.

progress did we make! How much did we advance compared to the older generation of dissenters! But they had one thing in advance of us. They still knew about sin and grace. Don't we run the risk, with all our increased knowledge and cultural insights, to forget that one thing?"[6] The older Bavinck seemed to be concerned that the neo-Calvinist optimistic world-conquering attitude would drift away from the spirituality of the Secession tradition in which he was brought up and which he once described as a "healthy mysticism."[7] At least this gem from Bavinck is important enough for the understanding of his own position to offer an English translation.

—Henk van den Belt

Preface to the life and works of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine[8]

The history of the church and theology in Scotland after the Reformation is wholly dominated by the idea of the covenant. From the beginning there was not only a deeply religious but also a national and political element in the concept of that covenant.

6. "Wat zijn wij vooruitgegaan! Wat hebben wij wetenschappelijk en cultureel op de oudere generatie van afgescheidenen veel voor! Maar één ding hadden deze mensen op ons voor: die wisten nog wat zonde en genade was. En lopen wij wel eens niet het gevaar, dat wij, bij al onze toegenomen kennis en cultureel inzicht, dat ene gaan vergeten?" Gerrit Brillenburg Wurth, "Ter gedachtenis van Dr. Herman Bavinck," *Gereformeerd Weekblad* 10, no. 24 (1954): 185.

7. Henry E. Dosker, "Herman. Bavinck," *Princeton Theological Review* 20 (1922): 450.

8. Herman Bavinck, preface to *Levensgeschiedenis en Werken van Ralph en Ebenezer Erskine*, by Ralph Erskine and Ebenezer Erskine (Doesburg: J.C. van Schenk Brill, 1905–06), 1–6. For the Dutch text see http://www.neocalvinisme.nl/hb/essays/hbvoorerskine.html. All of the subsequent footnotes are translator notes that I have added to provide brief explanations of the figures and events that Bavinck mentions in the text. Unless otherwise noted, the general information regarding persons and historical dates is taken from *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* (San Francisco: Wikimedia Foundation), http://en.wikipedia.org.

The reformer of Scotland, John Knox, brought it in. He made a distinction between pagans and Christians. Pagans are not God's people. But when a pagan people is converted to Christianity, it has entered as a people into the same relationship with God as did Israel of old, and as a people it is also obliged to obey God in public life; it must walk in the way of God's covenant and is not allowed to make a covenant with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land.

When such a Christian nation disobeys God's commandment and falls back and returns to idolatry, then the ruler of the country is primarily obliged to eradicate idolatry and restore the covenant of God. If the supreme government does not obey this calling, the duty to reform rests on the lower government, the local magistrates. If these fail to answer their calling, the people themselves are obliged to take reform in hand. This obligation, which thus rests on the people not only consists in offering passive resistance but also includes a right to resist the government actively, and, if necessary, to dismiss and replace it.[9] For the government, by not complying with the covenant, has robbed itself of its rights. In modern words, it has violated the constitution by which both prince and people were bound by a solemn oath. It has thereby voluntarily and willfully broken the bond that tied it to the people. It has dismissed itself and therefore may be dismissed by the people. If the people thus resist their government, they do not do so high-handedly and arbitrarily, but they act under the rights of the covenant, as people of God, in His name, and for the restoration of his service.

The reformation in Scotland was established according to this concept. After Knox had urged the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, to take the reformation in hand without success in May 1556, the Protestant nobility joined in a solemn covenant on 2 December 1557 to defend—with goods and kindred[10] and as the faithful

9. John Knox (c. 1514–1572) was a leader of the Reformation in Scotland. On the importance of the covenant for his ideas regarding the legitimacy of rebellion against tyrannical sovereigns, see Richard L. Greaves, "John Knox and the Covenant Tradition," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 24 (1973): 23–32.

10. The Dutch expression "met goed en bloed" stems from the Dutch translation of Luther's famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

congregation of Jesus Christ—the Word of God against the Roman Catholic idolatry.[11] When this covenant was renewed in 1559 and the Regent died in 1560, the parliament took the reformation in hand, abolished the Mass, and officially accepted a confession of faith that was drafted by Knox. Thus the Reformed Church became the established church, and the right of existence was denied to all other churches in the country.

However, the Reformed Church in Scotland soon had to defend its rights against not only Romanism but also the Episcopalian system of the English state church. Mary Stuart renounced the throne on 24 July 1567, for her one-year-old son James VI.[12] When he started to reign in 1578 at the age of twelve, he first affiliated with the desires of his people. In 1580 the first national covenant was achieved under the king to maintain the Reformed Church and its confession and to defend it against all kinds of Romanism and Episcopalianism. But soon after that his Episcopalian sympathy appeared and became even stronger when he ascended the throne of England as James I after the death of Elizabeth in 1603. Against himself and his son and successor Charles I a tenacious struggle started that resulted in a revolution that ended with the solemn renewal of the covenant, the second national covenant in 1638.[13] But even then the Scottish church did not receive a time of rest. Charles II and James II followed the footsteps of their predecessors and surpassed them in acts of violence. Thus a new revolution occurred in 1689.[14] In May of that year the parliament declared that James II had forfeited the crown and offered it to William of

11. Marie de Guise (1515–1560) was the second spouse of King James V and served as regent from 1554 to 1560 for her daughter Mary Stuart (1542–1587), the later Queen of Scots. In 1557 a group of Scottish nobles, the so-called "Lords of the Congregation" drew up a covenant at Edinburgh.

12. James VI (1566–1625) was also, as James I, King of England and Ireland in a personal union from 1603 until his death.

13. At a ceremony in Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh, a large number noblemen, clergy and others signed the covenant, it was the first time that a larger group of adult males was invited to sign the affirmation of their commitment to presbyterianism and copies were even sent throughout the country for signing.

Orange, who had already been crowned king of England in February.

A more dangerous enemy of the covenant arose in the division of the Scottish people itself. A large faction in Scotland remained in favor of Rome; others sympathized with the Episcopalian system of the English state church; yet others were attracted by the Independentism in the days of Cromwell.[15] When the government did not act against all these trends as stern as the idea of covenant demanded, differences arose among the supporters of the covenant. Some were moderate and were willing to condemn the actions of government without declaring that it had apostatized from its office, but others such as the Cameronians argued that the king, by acting contrary to the covenant, had lost the right to the throne.[16]

In this way the Covenanters themselves became divided in their opinions regarding the relationship between church and state, the right of the king, and the duty to resist. And that division deepened when at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century deism and rationalism also pervaded Scotland. The moderate faction that prevailed in the church employed the right of patronage—a right stemming from the time of Romanism that had been alternately abolished and reintroduced—to impose ministers of the moderate persuasion on congregations against their will. In January of this year, just after the Glorious Revolution, the first case of this kind occurred. In Burntisland in Fife a call was sent by decision of the synod's committee to a minister proposed by

14. The so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 that brought the Dutch stadtholder William III to the throne followed the reigns of Charles II (1630–1685), king of England, Scotland, and Ireland and James VII (1633–1701), king of Scotland, who was also king of England and Ireland as James II.

15. Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) was a political leader with Congregationalist sympathies. He ruled over the Commonwealth of England as Lord Protector and conquered Ireland and Scotland after the execution of King Charles I in 1649.

16. The followers of Richard Cameron (1648–1680) resisted attempts to install bishops in the Church of Scotland, and they formed a separate church after 1690.

the patron, contrary to the choice of the congregation.[17] On May 22 of that year, the patrons were restored in all their rights. In the same year all ministers had to swear with an oath of allegiance to the Toleration Act, which protected the Episcopal clergy and committed the king to maintain the English ceremonies.[18]

One of the ministers who refused the oath was Ebenezer Erskine (1680–1754), minister at the Third Church in Stirling since 1731. He, however, did not restrict himself to this negative protest. When he had to preach a sermon as president of the synod of Sterling and Perth in 1733, he dealt with the stone rejected by the builders. He exposed the right of patronage and many other provisions as contrary to the Kingship of Christ over his church and to the right given by Christ to the congregation to choose its own minister. The Synod, however, did not share his feelings and lined up against him.[19] So Ebenezer Erskine did not have any other option than to leave the state church. Three ministers joined him: William Wilson of Perth, Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy, and James Fisher of Kinclaven.[20] Later they were joined by several other

17. It is not completely clear what Bavinck had in mind, but George Johnston was appointed minister in the parish church of Burntisland in 1688 and was suspended later that year because of his episcopalian views. The records of the church show that James Pitcairn was also appointed in 1688 to succeed Johnston. See Iain Sommerville, "Burntisland's churches: Part 7—The Episcopal Church and George Hay Forbes," last updated November 21, 2011, http://www.burntisland.net/churches-article7.htm.

18. The Toleration Act of 1688 allowed Nonconformists to worship on the condition of pledging allegiance.

19. Bavinck does not include a discussion of the Marrow controversy here. In 1647 a work possibly written by Edward Fisher (1627–1655) titled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was published by Thomas Boston (1676–1732), who was blamed for antinomian sympathies because of the book's content. The Erskines supported Boston in this controversy. Cf. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–8) 3:461–462.

20. In Scottish church history the split is known as the First Secession. William Wilson (1690–1741) served as professor for the Associate Presbytery's theological school (1737–1747). After Wilson's death Alexander Moncrieff (1695–1761) took his place. James Fisher (1697–1775) was minister in Kinclaven at the

pastors including, in 1732, Ebenezer's brother Ralph Erskine (1685–1752), minister since 1711 in Dunfermline. On 28 December 1743 Ebenezer Erskine renewed the practice of public covenanting in Stirling, and on 11 October 1744 the Seceders united themselves in an "Associate Synod."

The national-political element, however, which originally was included in the idea of the covenant, still maintained its impact after that time. As early as 1747 the Seceders were rent over the Burgher Oath in which allegiance had to be pledged to the Protestant religion "presently professed within this realm."[21] Some thought that taking this oath included the recognition of the state church as the true church, and they separated themselves from their brethren.

In 1752 a new separation of the state church took place under Thomas Gillespie because the synodical committee again wanted to impose a minister on a certain congregation.[22] In 1796 there was renewed struggle among the dissenters over the relationship between church and state, and they became divided into supporters of the Old Light and the New Light. And in 1843 a split from the state church occurred again under Thomas Chalmers as a result of the right of patronage. True, some of the splits were healed, especially by the merge of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church some years ago.[23] Nevertheless, Protestant Scotland's

time of the First Secession.

21. The Burgher Oath caused a split in the Associate Synod Presbytery in 1747 into Burghers and Anti-Burghers; the latter rejected the rights of civil government in religious affairs.

22. The theologian Thomas Gillespie (1708–1774) disagreed with the ordination of a colleague and was deposed in 1752. He continued to preach, and in 1761 he formed a so-called "Presbytery of Relief," referring to the relief church courts and patronage. This split is also called the Second Secession. This presbytery later united with the United Secession Church to form the United Presbyterian Church.

23. The "Auld Lichts" were more orthodox and the "New Lichts" more liberal. The withdrawal of a large number of members from the Church of Scotland under the leadership of Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) is known as the 'Disruption of 1843.' Several factions of the New Light party united in the

opinions still remain divided regarding the relationship of church and state, the right of the magistrate concerning religion, and the duty of the people to resist. The content, validity, and purpose of the covenant remain in dispute constantly.

Just as in church history, the idea of the covenant also holds a central place in Scottish theology—a place not in contrast to the doctrine of election but rather one that lets it shine all the brighter in its sovereignty. All the benefits of election, as Ralph Erskine says—and as all Reformed theologians teach—flow to the believers though the channel of the covenant of the promise. Therefore predestination has been treated in Scottish theology with great love and has been strongly defended against all Pelagianism in and outside the Roman Catholic Church. The names of Knox, Boyd, Rollock, and Samuel Rutherford prove this sufficiently.[24] They were aware of the fact that the opposition to predestination in and outside of Rome came from the same error; Jameson intentionally published a work titled *Roma Racoviana* in this light.[25]

Just as the doctrine of the covenant placed election in a brighter light, so vice versa: the doctrine of election benefits the treatment of the doctrine of the covenants, which appears clearly in the works of Samuel Rutherford, Patrick Gillespie, and Thomas Boston and in the sermons of both Erskines.[26] Not only the state of the first human being, but also the whole work of salvation—the eternal plan

nineteenth century and merged with the Free Church of Scotland in 1900 into the United Free Church of Scotland.

24. Bavinck is referring to Robert Boyd of Trochrig (1578–1627), professor in the academy of Saumur (1606) and principal of the University of Glasgow (1615–1621) and of Edinburgh (1622–1623); Robert Rollock (1555–1599), first principal of the University of Edinburgh; and Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), one of the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly who was especially known in The Netherlands for his posthumously published letters.

25. William Jameson, *Roma racoviana et racovia romana: Id est, Papistarum & Socinistarum, in plurimis, iisquo maximi momenti, Religionis suae capitibus, plena & exacta Harmonia*: (Edinburgh: Andrea Anderson, 1702). In this book William Jameson (1689–1720) claims that Roman Catholicism and moderate Protestantism are forms of Socinianism. The Socinian Racovian Academy was founded in 1602 in Rakow, Poland.

of redemption, the person, the office and the work of Christ, the order of salvation, the doctrines of the church and sacraments—were treated from the perspective of the covenant. More than any other theology, Scottish theology has been covenant theology.

Perhaps this emphasis comes out more strongly in the sermons than in the theological treatises. Led by the concept of the covenant, the minister of the word in his pastoral work consistently keeps an eye on the whole people and the whole country. God did not establish his covenant with a single person or with a few isolated individuals but with all the people of Scotland. That people has repeatedly sworn to be faithful with a solemn oath of allegiance. Scotland has pledged its word to Christ. So it ought to serve and to honor him, not only in its private but also in its public life. It does not stand free in relation to Christ and His Word but has bound itself with an oath to this service. If it abandons him and breaks the covenant, it is guilty of perjury; it destroys itself and provokes the judgment of God.

While a Scottish minister addresses his whole nation in this way, he does not ignore the individual. In contrast with the Independents, however, he proceeds from the whole to the parts, from the people to the individual. Precisely from the national character of the covenant, he derives a strong motivation to insist on personal repentance, personal establishment, and renewal of the covenant. The membership of the people and of the church, the receiving of the signs and seals of the covenant is not enough. Personal repentance is necessary. The covenant must become true in one's own heart and life. This insistence on personal repentance renders the Scottish preaching its specific religious character, its practical tenor. It always moves between the two poles of sin and grace, of law and gospel. On the one hand it descends into the depths of the human heart, unreservedly taking away all apologies and excuses behind which people hide away from the holiness of God, and it places them before the face of God in their poverty and emptiness. On the other hand, it also addresses those of a broken

26. Patrick Gillespie (1617–1675) was principal of Glasgow University during the reign of Oliver Cromwell.

spirit with the promises of the gospel, draws forth the riches of these promises, looks at them from all sides, and applies them to all of life's circumstances.

In the sermons of Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, this all can be retrieved. The exegesis sometimes leaves much to be desired. The form is outdated. Human wit is not always kept within the necessary limits. There is one important element in them, however, that we lack today in many respects. This appears most strikingly if we compare the sermons of the Erskines with the devotional literature of our days, especially in the Christian stories and novels that are published. There the spiritual knowledge of the soul is lacking. It seems as if we no longer know what sin and grace, what guilt and forgiveness, what repentance and regeneration mean. We know them theoretically, but we no longer know them in the awesome reality of life. That is the reason why the devotional literature of former days leaves an entirely different impression than that of recent times. For, though it stands far from us, and its form seems old-fashioned for us, it is and remains natural in the genuine sense, while the literature of our days becomes unnatural and forced when it addresses the problems of the soul. We feel, while reading the old writers,[27] that they offer us a piece of life; it is the reality itself that is given to us to behold. If we are interested in real life instead of fantasies—also in the things of the kingdom of God—we, and in particular the Christian storywriters, can do nothing better than take classes from the Erskines and explore their writings for some time. It is not the least part of our people that still refreshes the soul by reading the devotional literature of former days.

The sermons of the Erskines are on the border between the old and modern era in Scotland. In their days Methodism arose, and the great spiritual revivals started. Wesley stirred the whole of England by his powerful preaching, and Whitefield transplanted the religious movement to America and to Scotland.[28] At first the Erskines were very favorable toward Whitefield. They invited him

27. The expression "old writers" (oude schrijvers) refers to the authors of Puritanism and the Dutch Further Reformation.

to Scotland to preach the gospel there too. Whitefield even held his first sermon in Scotland in the church of Ralph Erskine in Dunfermline. Soon, however, a split occurred. At the conference held by him with the Seceders in August 1741 he was required to preach only in their churches and thus to acknowledge only their churches as the true ones. Whitefield could not meet this requirement, and he replied wittingly that "the devil's people" needed his preaching more than the people of God. From then on the ways departed.[29] Soon afterwards the Seceders denounced the revival that took place in the church of Cambuslang under the minister McCulloch.[30] Ralph Erskine even wrote a treatise against it entitled *Faith no Fancy*.[31] But this protest did not help. Methodism almost completely conquered the Anglo-Saxon race in Britain and America, and it gave the whole church and theology in those countries a very specific character. In the Netherlands, however, a large part of the people remained faithful to the Reformed confession—a confession that is, contrary to Methodism, faithful to covenant theology. This explains the sympathy that is still cherished in this our country for the old Scottish theologians and their works.

28. John Wesley (1703–1791) and George Whitefield (1714–1770) were founders of Methodism.

29. Whitefield came to Scotland in July 1741. On August 5 he met the "Associate Presbytery," and he wrote in an account of that meeting: "I then asked them seriously what they would have me to do? The answer was, that I was not desired to subscribe immediately to the Solemn League and Covenant, but to preach only for them till I had further light. I asked, why only for them? Mr Ralph Erskine said, 'They were the Lord's people.' I then asked whether there were no other Lord's people but themselves? And, supposing all others were the devil's people, they certainly had more need to be preached to; and therefore I was more and more determined to go out into the highways and hedges ; and that if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim the righteousness of Christ therein." Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 2:89–90.

30. During the revival in Cambuslang in August 1742 Whitefield preached to 30,000 people. William M'Culloch (1691–1771) was minister during that time.

31. Ralph Erskine, *Faith No Fancy: or, a Treatise of Mental Images* (Edinburgh: W. and T. Ruddimans, 1745).

The new publication of the Erskines demonstrates that sympathy; may it also maintain it!

—Herman Bavinck
Amsterdam, Reformation Day 1904

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Pearls and Leaven

Bavinck Tributes

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It is a measure of a theologian's greatness to see what other recognized "great minds" say about him. In this "Pearl and Leaven" entry we consider what three Reformed giants said about Bavinck as a theologian and, then, what another said about his preaching.

Abraham Kuyper

When the first volume of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* was published in 1895, Kuyper penned the following paragraphs of praise in his weekly journal *De Heraut* (*The Herald*):

> The Calvinists in this country and all over the world may give themselves in to high-pitched gratitude, now that a theological work has been published, that will lift up our Reformed theology from decay, and restore her place of honor within the realm of science, a work that was lacking in this country, as well as in England and America.
>
> The thread of our theological development had already been broken in the first half of the eighteenth century, and not just with Vitringa,[1] but partly already with à Marck[2] the worm of rationalism had penetrated,

1. This is a reference to Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722), author of *Doctrina christianae religionis, per aphorismos summatim descripta,* 8 vols (Arnheim, 1761–1786).

2. This is a reference to Johannes à Marck (1656–1721), author of *Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum* (Groningen: Fossema, 1686), and *Christianae theologiae medulla didactico-elenctica* (Amsterdam:

> without generating any other reaction than repristination, fed with mysticism and pietism.
>
> Hodge's accomplishment in America [his *Systematic Theology*] was quite something, and it should neither be denied nor forgotten that he did his best to defend Reformed dogmatics apologetically over against all kinds of philosophical, heretical and naturalistic objections. We recognize this gratefully, but he did not deal with the principles. He painted the façade anew, but did not alter the basis.
>
> That is why we could not progress, simply because we constantly needed *principles*, and then, because we could not find them in our own home, gathered them from the neighbor.[3]

There are a number of very interesting details in Kuyper's tribute. The first is the "damning with faint praise" reference to Charles Hodge and the Princeton approach to theology. This is likely the first of the many published claims to follow that posited a great gulf fixed between Princeton and Amsterdam.[4] Second, Kuyper summarizes the objection he has against Hodge by resorting to his favorite methodological term: "principles."[5] Stated differently, the contrast between the Amsterdam and Princeton understanding of theology is that the former operates from a metaphysical base similar to that of Protestant orthodoxy[6] while Hodge's *Systematic Theology* presents theology as an inductive science in which the

Wetstenios, 1716).

3. *De Heraut*, June 16, 1895; translated by George Harinck.

4. Though this list is very long, it is gratifying to note that the sharp edges of this contention are being modified by more recent scholarship. See Owen Anderson, *Benjamin B. Warfield and Right Reason: The Clarity of General Revelation and Function of Apologetics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005); *Paul Helseth, "Right Reason" and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010); Fred G. Zaspel, *The Theology of B.B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); David P. Smith, *B.B. Warfield's Scientifically Constructive Theological Scholarship* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

5. Giving the English translation of the second volume of Kuyper's three-volume, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* the title *Principles of Sacred Theology* was an inspired choice; it captures the heart of Kuyper's (and Bavinck's) understanding of theology and its *principia*. (See Abraham Kuyper, *Priciples of Sacred Theology,* translated by J. Hendrik De Vries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954 [1898]).

theologian must "ascertain, collect, and combine all the facts which God has revealed concerning himself and our relation to Him. These facts are all in the Bible."[7]

The third observation has to do with Kuyper's dismissal of the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy as being shaped by rationalism and therefore nothing more than "repristination, fed with mysticism and pietism." Bavinck's judgment is much kinder. The proof can be found in the cumulative "Combined Name Index" at the end of volume 4 of the English translation of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Campegius Vitringa, dismissed by Kuyper, receives many citations by Bavinck; only Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin (in that order!) receive more.[8]

Geerhardus Vos

Geerhardus Vos (1862–1949) and Herman Bavinck came from two families that shared a common geographical and church background. "Their fathers were born in the county of Bentheim, close to the Dutch border in German and were members of the German Old Reformed Church (*Altreformierte Kirchen Deutschlands*)—a denomination closely related to the Seceder Church in the Netherlands."[9] Though their paths separated when the Vos family immigrated to the United States in 1881, the men remained life-long friends.[10] Undoubtedly because of his superior facility in the Dutch language, Vos reviewed the first two volumes of

6. See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:406–50.

7. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888[1871]), 1:11.

8. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed., John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–08), 4:827–28, 835–36, 884–85, 888–89.

9. George Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 20.

10. For more on this friendship and numerous fascinating parallels between the two men, see Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos."

Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* as they appeared. I want to highlight a couple of paragraphs from each of Vos's reviews to underscore Bavinck's historical method, his careful scholarship, and Vos's take on the famous Princeton versus Amsterdam discussion. The first comes from Vos's review of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* volume 1:

> The historic and dogmatic parts are so adjusted in Dr. Bavinck's book, that the former invariably serves the latter instead of interfering with it. The author nowhere unites the two mechanically; he endeavors throughout to place his own doctrinal conviction in the light of the historical movement of the doctrine.
>
> Another commendable feature in this dogmatic handbook is a great caution of statement. While positive in all essential matters, and nowhere avoiding committing himself, Dr. Bavinck practices moderation and self-restraint on subordinate points. His work is free from what has harmed dogmatics in the past, perhaps, more than anything else: the inordinate desire to furnish a definite, precise answer to all minute and abstruse questions.[11]

Vos points out that Reformed theology rejects the epistemological rationalism of innate ideas and insists on the primacy of the senses in human knowledge. However, this conviction is not meant in the sense of Locke's empiricism. "The essence of their gnosiology was," he writes,

> that the human mind always receives the first impulse for acquiring knowledge from the external world. But the nature of the intellect is such, they held, that in this being impelled to work, it forms of itself involuntarily the fundamental principles and conceptions which are certain *à priori*, and therefore deserve to be called *veritates æternæ*.

And then follows the conclusion that might surprise some who see a large gulf between Amsterdam and Princeton:

> This, it will be observed, is the same theory of knowledge that has been set forth in this country by the late Dr. McCosh.[12]

11. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 7 (1896): 357.

12. Ibid., 358.

I am also including here a quotation from Vos's review of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, volume 2, because the review pleased Bavinck a great deal. When he announced publication of the fourth volume, he wrote: "Among the announcements and reviews of the first three volumes no word was more pleasant to me than Prof. Vos's of Princeton," and he quoted the following passage:

> What has impressed us most is that, while Dr. Bavinck's standpoint is that of a thorough Calvinist, yet in reading him one is conscious of listening not so much to a defense of Calvinism as to a scientific vindication of the Christian world-view in its most catholic sense and spirit. This is far from saying that the work is not also a vindication of the Calvinistic theology. But it is so in the indirect and for that reason all the more telling way of showing how perfectly easy and natural it is to build on the foundations of the Reformed principles a system of Christian thought which by its very largeness of grasp and freedom from theological one-sidedness becomes the most eloquent witness to the soundness and depth of the principles underlying it. No higher commendation of Calvinism is conceivable than that it lends itself to being made the basis of a structure of truth so universally and comprehensively Christian in all its lines and proportions.[13]

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield

Benjamin Warfield reviewed another Bavinck classic, *De zekerheid des geloofs* (*The Certainty of Faith*) in 1903.[14] He seems to concur with Bavinck that "certitude as to the truth of the gospel is never to be attained except along the path of personal saving faith. And just like knowledge, faith does not come to certitude regarding itself by logical reason. . . . [Rather] certitude flows to us immediately and directly out of faith itself; certainty is an essential

13. G. Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," 29–30; cf., H. Bavinck, "Dogmatiek," *De Bazuin* 26 (April 1901). The original text by Vos is quoted from his review of Bavinck's *Dogmatiek*, vol. 2, in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 10 (1899): 694.

14. *The Princeton Theological Review* 1 (1903): 138–48; page references in square brackets in the text are to this review. Herman Bavinck, *De Zekerheid des Geloofs* (Kampen: Kok, 1901), translated as *The Certainty of* Faith, trans. Harry der Nederlanden (St. Catharine, Ont.: Paideia, 1980).

quality of faith, it is inseparable from it and belongs to our nature" [141–42]. At the same time, Warfield is not satisfied with what he perceives to be a shortchanging of the role of "evidences" in Christian apologetics.[15] Notwithstanding what Warfield refers to as his "confusion of mind as to the exact sense in with the word certitude is to be taken here and there" [142], he does conclude his review with this strong affirmation:

> We must not close without emphasizing the delight we take in Dr. Bavinck's writings. In them extensive learning, sound thinking and profound religious feeling are smelted intimately together into a product of singular charm. He has given us the most valuable treatise on *Dogmatics* written during the last quarter of a century – a thorough wrought out treatise which we never consult without the keenest satisfaction and abundant profit. And the lectures and brochures he from time to time presents an eager public are worthy of the best traditions of Reformed thought and Reformed eloquence. Not least among them we esteem this excellent booklet on "the certitude of faith." [148]

Nicholas Steffens

Our final tribute comes from Nicholas Steffens, a prominent minster in the Reformed Church in America, who wrote the following about Bavinck's preaching during the latter's visit to America in 1908:

> Calvinism is not dead wherever it has representatives such as our dear brother. And the pulpit need not complain of sterility whenever such men mount it who are conscious that as preachers they are ministers of the divine Word. We are particularly elated that his sermons are so clearly understandable, which is so intimately tied to their sublimity and certifiable truthfulness. In our opinion, his sermons were precisely what people expect Reformed sermons to be. That proclamation of the Word must be the result of healthy exegesis is never forgotten. His introductions were excellent, and their connection with what followed

15. For a helpful overview of the ongoing discussion between Bavinck and Warfield see Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2008), chapters 5 and 6; cf. idem., "Herman Bavinck and Benjamin B. Warfield on Apologetics and the *Autopistia* of Scripture," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (April 2010): 32–43.

> was such that the text was so contextualized that the subject treated became clear as crystal. The division of the material left nothing to be desired, and the sermon's application, while not made in older style, was in no way neglected. Mind, heart, and will all found a place in the preaching of our guest. This is as it should be wherever God's Word is proclaimed. We hope that the preaching of Dr. Bavinck will be a great blessing to all who had the privilege of being among his listeners.[16]

16. Nicholas M. Steffens (1839–1912) received his theological training at the Kampen Theolgical School of the Secession Churches where Bavinck's father, Jan Bavinck, was among his teachers. He immigrated to the United States in 1872, served German-speaking and Dutch-speaking congregations in the Reformed Church in America, taught at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI (1884–95, 1903–12), and at the Presbyterian Seminary in Dubuque, IA (1895–98, 1900–03). He was editor of *De Hope*, the Dutch language weekly for RCA members at the time of Bavinck's visit in 1908. His descriptive account of Bavinck's preaching is excepted from his column "Wekelijksche Budget" (weekly assessment) which appeared in *De Hope* 41, no. 51 (10/13/1908): 4. The translation was provided by James A. De Jong.

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Book Reviews

***The Kuyper Center Review, Volume Two: Revelation and Common Grace,* edited by John Bowlin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. Pp. xii + 334. $36.00 paper.**

The seventeen essays that comprise this large and wide-ranging second issue of *The Kuyper Center Review*—more than double the size of the first—are the fruits of two conferences sponsored by Princeton Seminary's Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology: a 2009 conference in celebration of the centennial of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures and a 2010 conference on neo-Calvinist formulations of common grace and contemporary interfaith dialog. The book is divided into two parts accordingly.

If there is a common thread to be found between the two sets of essays, it is this: the strength of the first—a profundity of perspective that is commensurate with a robust engagement of the subject's primary (Dutch) sources—is the weakness of the second. Many of the Bavinck-related papers cull nuggets from the Bavinck Archives, Bavinck's correspondence, and other non-translated primary sources; these studies thus enlighten important aspects of his thought from the perspective of a knowledgable insider who stands, albeit critically, within Bavinck's own tradition. However, many of the Kuyper-related papers attempt critical analyses of his formulation of common grace based upon a translation of brief passages selected from his massive, three-volume *De gemeene gratie;* thus it is difficult to avoid wondering whether the sweeping conclusions drawn in some of these studies are a bit premature. Additionally, one could raise the question of whether it is useful for anglophones to attempt to evaluate Kuyper's formulations of common grace apart from another one of his massive, three-volume, untranslated tomes: *Pro rege*. Not all of the contributions to the second part are limited in this way, however, and not all of them are directly related to Kuyper. What follows is a short synopsis the essays with brief analyses of select points.

Jan Veenhof opens part one with the intriguing suggestion that a correlation attains between three twofold motifs in Bavinck's thought: general and special revelation, common and special grace, and nature and grace. He finds Bavinck's attempt to synthesize these dualities laudable for its day but insufficient for contemporary use, especially in light of the theological questions arising from global interfaith dialog. Therefore, he suggests that developing Bavinck's formulation of Christ as mediator of creation provides an invitation for contemporary advancement of Bavinck's thought.

Gordon Graham claims that the the brilliance of Bavinck's Stone Lectures is found in his unveiling the reductio ad absurdum that underlies Nietzsche's atheistic philosophy of history.

George Harinck sheds intriguing historical light upon Bavinck's Stone Lectures by explaining why the lectures are entitled *The Philosophy of Revelation* instead of *The Theology of Revelation*. He argues that Bavinck is both responding to Lodewijk W. E. Rauwenhoff's *Wijsbegeerte van den godsdienst* (1887) and building upon the work of Albertus Bruining (1846–1919), a modernist theologian who had argued that religion and science are not mutually exclusive. In this light Bavinck advances beyond neo-Calvinism's initial phase of consolidating its own position on the synthesis of Christianity and modern culture and pioneers a second phase, namely, communicating the neo-Calvinist view to others so as to unite all Christian traditions behind a common commitment to defending God's revelation as the ultimate ground of society. Harinck withholds his judgment in this essay on whether Bavinck's risky venture was a success, but his verdict can be found elsewhere (see Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion: A Case Study of Herman Bavinck's Engagement with Modern Culture," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 60–77).

Henk van den Belt highlights an alleged difference between the epistemological commitments, and hence the apologetic methodologies, employed by Bavinck and B. B. Warfield. He makes his case by noting subtle refinements that Bavinck made to his small book *The Certainty of Faith* and to his *Dogmatiek* upon

receiving constructive criticisms from Warfield. However, it is debatable whether characterizing Bavinck's Stone Lectures as "a completely different approach to apologetics from what was common at Princeton" and as one that is undergirded by a penchant for both German idealism and Schleiermachean theology is to overstate the case (55). Nor is it likely that readers will find this short essay to be satisfactory on the large topic of the allegedly differing theological epistemologies of Old Amsterdam and Old Princeton—a topic that is treated at length by Cornelius Van Til and company. Nevertheless, van den Belt helpfully illuminates the persistence of Bavinck's and Warfield's transatlantic collegiality despite their intramural disagreements.

Jeffrey Hocking avers that Bavinck's eschatologically-astute theological methodology is a true tertium quid beyond dogmatism and relativism and that it thus deserves a neologistic moniker: "certitudinal discourse." Strangely, however, Bavinck's own terminology for eschatologically-astute theological discourse that he inherited from Reformed orthodoxy is wholly omitted from Hocking's assessment, namely, *theologia unionis*, *visionis*, and *viatorum*. In terms of clarity, style, and historical continuity, a "theology of pilgrims on the way" is much to be preferred over Hocking's proposal.

Jon Stanley appropriates Syd Hielema's analysis of the nature-grace relationship in Bavinck's thought for the purpose of asserting a way forward in contemporary neo-Calvinism, namely, to emphasize not only that grace *restores* nature (the traditional Kuyperian line) but also that it *renews* nature (the distinctly Bavinckian contribution). He offers several suggestions of where Bavinck's dual emphasis can shed light on contemporary neo-Calvinist thought such as rethinking its standard criticisms of Roman Catholic elevation dualism. These are interesting and welcome suggestions. The essay omits, however, the key theological formulation through which Bavinck treats glorification and renewal: federal theology, especially the *foedus operum*. Thus the way forward that Stanley suggests cannot be limited to Reformational philosophy but also must take into account the insights of Reformed dogmatics.

James Eglinton presents a trialogue between Hegel, Bavinck, and Barth on the ontology of God, Christ incarnate, and human beings. He finds in Bavinck an overlooked conversation partner for current debates on divine mutability and ontology.

Brian Mattson tours the twentieth century in light of Bavinck's final Stone Lecture and finds much evidence to confirm the prophetic nature of Bavinck's instincts regarding the impending dangers lurking behind Hegelian monism. He views Bavinck's lecture as an adumbration of Eric Voegelin's warning against "immanentizing the eschaton."

Beginning part two, Leora Batnitzky suggests, after looking at Kuyper's formulation of common grace, that Judaism and Calvinism do not differ in their theology but only in their anthropology. However, this proposal faces the difficulty of Cambria Janae Kaltwasser's essay which highlights the christological foundation of Kuyper's formulation via a sharp Barthian criticism of his thought.

Anver Emon argues that *A Common Word* (ACW) is too generic and that it fails to face the hard question for Islam: who is my neighbor? He pursues a concrete answer by analyzing how contemporary reformists are employing the principle of Maqasid al-Sharia to broaden Islam's tolerance for other religions. He concludes that the way forward may not be as easy as ACW implies.

Beginning with Kuyper and Bavinck, Dirk van Keulen carefully and illuminatingly surveys how several leading theologians in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have viewed Islam over the past hundred years.

Emily Dumler-Winckler suggests that Kuyper's and Bavinck's formulation of common grace, upon subtracting Kuyper's unnecessary identification of European culture and Christian social progress, provides a Christian theological basis for heeding ACW's call to love one's Jewish or Muslim neighbor and to learn from Jewish and Muslim revelations of God.

Cory Willson initiates a trialog with Bavinck, Berkouwer, and the Talmud to demonstrate that Jewish theology can enlighten the Reformed notion of the *imago Dei* taken in its broad sense.

James Eglinton's singular essay on the so-called "two Bavincks" hypothesis gently lays to rest a fifty-year-old annoyance in Bavinck studies, namely, the bi-polar Bavinck. He culls an abundance of evidence from Bavinck's rectorial addresses, his personal correspondence about his student days at Leiden, and the incipient reassessment of the hypothesis evident in several secondary sources to demonstrate that the schizophrenic reading of Bavinck's thought that continues to beset Bavinck scholarship is subjective (it leads to "theological apartheid"), ironic (it levels against Bavinck the same polemic he leveled against neo-Thomism), and untenable (it flies in the face of the clear commitment to an organic, trinitarian synthesis of Christianity and culture, theology and science, faith and life that pervades Bavinck's thought and life). This is a welcome and firm step forward for Bavinck (note the singular!) studies.

Andrew Harmon argues that a Kuyperian formulation of tolerance is possible if it includes a natural law component along the lines of Nicholas Wolterstorff's "deliberative democracy."

Robert Covolo proposes that classic neo-Calvinist formulations of the Holy Spirit's role in non-Christian religions such as Kuyper's and Bavinck's can be helpfully advanced by appropriating certain emphases from Amos Young's recent work on the pneumatology of religions.

— Laurence R. O'Donnell III