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Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)
A Centenary Celebration

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Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies

JBTS 6.2 HERMAN BAVINCK (1854-1921): A CENTENARY CELEBRATION

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Special Thanks

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

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Herman Bavinck (1854-1921): A Centenary Celebration

Introductory Essay

N. Gray Sutanto and Justin McLendon

N. Gray Sutanto is Assistant Professor of Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington D.C. Justin McLendon is Associate Professor of Theology at Grand Canyon University and serves as a Managing Editor of JBTS.

Introduction

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

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

1. Open access to every *JBTS* issue can be found on jbtsonline.org.

2. Though *JBTS* will continue its primary focus on biblical and theological themes in forthcoming volumes, the editorial team has goals to dedicate future issues to noteworthy Christian scholars.

3. Of course, biblical principles support person-specific reflection. In Philippians 2, for example, Paul specifies and praises the faithful service of Epaphroditus, then adds "hold people like him in high regard" (Phil. 2:29, NASB). Conversely, Paul names Hymenaeus and Alexander in his letter to Timothy, warning of their blasphemous acts (1 Tim. 1:20). Thus, Christian reflection

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

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

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

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

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

upon individuals is warranted as both encouragement and warning.

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 285–86.

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

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

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

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

11. Many other English translations also account for the surge in scholarly and pastoral interest into Bavinck's work. Examples include Herman Bavinck, *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations*, trans. and ed. Bruce Pass (Leiden: Brill, 2020); *The Wonderful Works of God*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Westminster Seminary Press, ٢٠٢٠); Herman Bavinck, *The Sacrifice of Praise*, trans. and ed., Cameron Clausing and Gregory Parker, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019); Sutanto, Eglinton, and Brock, ed., *Christian Worldview*; Herman Bavinck, *Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers*, trans. and ed. James Eglinton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017); Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018); Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, ed. Stephen J. Grabill (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2021); Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

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

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

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

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

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

1. *Bavinck models the importance of theological priorities*. In his earlier work, *Trinity and Organism*, Eglinton challenges the so-called "two-Bavinck" hypothesis[15], repositioning Bavinck studies to orient Bavinck's theological project through an organic motif, one that understands that "Bavinck attempts to understand all of nature and history as a broad sweep of Trinitarian divine self-revelation."[16] As such, the depth of Bavinck's scholarship and the breadth of his interests are the fruits of one whose theological commitment gives first priority to the doctrine of God and his revealing work. This doxological aim was as much an intellectual commitment as much as it was a devotional lifeline. In other words, Bavinck's Trinitarian prioritization never deadened his affections or devotional piety; in fact, a casual reading of Bavinck's *Sacrifice of Praise* or *The Wonderful Works of God* evidences a theologian whose spiritual

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Engaging Bavinck

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In This Issue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Herman Bavinck on Antirevolutionary Politics

George Harinck

George Harinck (PhD, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) is Professor of History at Theological University Kampen and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Director of the Neo-Calvinism Research Institute at Theological University Kampen. He published widely on the history of the Neo-Calvinist tradition.

Introduction

Though Herman Bavinck is well known as a theologian, he also played a substantial role in Dutch politics. He was a member of the Antirevolutionary Party, he served as manager and president of the Central Committee, the executive board of this party, and the last decade of his life he was a Senator, a member of the Dutch First Chamber or Senate. In his context, other theologians were also active in politics and served as representative in city councils, provincial or national polities bodies: Abraham Kuyper in the first place, but also his former fellow student in Leiden, professor Gerrit Wildeboer, his Kampen colleague Maarten Noordtzij, Rev. A. Syb Talma, and the Leiden professor Bernard D. Eerdmans, to name a few.

Bavinck played a larger political role than most of his contemporary theological colleagues. However, evaluating his activities in the political domain, obituaries and historical publications have not stressed his work as a politician, but only his reflections on politics. He was not called a politician, but a statesman, a role somewhat exalted above political wheeling and dealing. Bavinck himself distinguished between politics as an academic discipline, as an art, and as a praxis. The praxis is about the tact of a politician, to speak or to act in such a way that serves best the state's interest. The art of politics is the application of political science to the given situations and relationships.[1] He was not a lawmaker, not a keen debater or agile in making deals, not much involved in closing ranks, organizing a majority, or canvassing voters, nor was he busy with negotiating in the corridors of parliament. His distinctive contribution was somewhere in between the art and the praxis of politics, offering broader perspectives on topical political issues, and he was much appreciated for his well formulated and thorough speeches. As such, he was really at home in the *chambre de réflexion*, as the Senate is called.

This assessment fits in the popular picture we have of Bavinck as a reflective theologian, more specialized in giving overviews and perspectives, and less attracted by the day-to-day struggle in church or in politics. This is not the full story, however. Bavinck was not an academic living in an ivory tower. His worldview would not

1. Herman Bavinck, "Ethiek en Politiek," *Stemmen des Tijds* 5 (1916): 35.

allow this. He wrote about Calvin: he "in particular poured the luster of godly glory over the whole of earthly life, and he placed all of natural life in the ideal light of eternity."[2] Calvin's "new concept of the catholicity of religion . . . also displayed a social and political character."[3] In the context of natural life, the political life was explicitly mentioned by Bavinck: "Also the civil and social and political dimensions of life are governed by the one law of God. Here we encounter an *inner catholicity*, a religion that encompasses the whole person in the wholeness of life."[4] Therefore, "The gospel is a joyful tiding not only for the individual person but also for humanity, for the family, for society, for the state, for art and science, for the entire cosmos, for the whole groaning creation."[5] To Bavinck, the praxis of politics was not a duty only, it was calling as well. And his personal fascination did not lead to avoiding politics either. He was interested in society and actively followed the political struggle and debate of his days. He often had a pronounced opinion about what happened at the Binnenhof in The Hague, the center of Dutch politics, and shared it with others.

In this contribution I leave the popular view of the detached theologian aside and analyze Bavinck's opinions on political developments and issues within the Antirevolutionary Party, and along the way, the party and how its leaders operated. My leading question is what specific contribution Bavinck made to the party machine and politics of his days. This focus on politics and the party is rare in Bavinck research.[6] In order to restrict myself, I will not pay much attention to his more academic reflections on politics, or to international politics (e.g. the League of Nations), nor to his involvement in ecclesial debates to amend article 36 (on the civil government) of the Belgic confession, or his speeches and debates in the Senate.

Bavinck's Interest in Politics

It is not clear if Bavinck's father Jan Bavinck was interested in politics or if the Bavincks talked about politics at home, but the first sign of Herman's fascination for politics is from June 1873, when he, an eighteen-year-old student at Zwolle's gymnasium, made a note in his diary on newly elected members of the Second Chamber. These were the years in which the antirevolutionary movement, in search for focus and organization, was being transformed from a movement into a party. This transformation included a change of leaders. Guillaume Groen van

2. 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): 84.

3. Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church" [1888], *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992), 238.

4. Bavinck, "Catholicity," 222.

5. Bavinck, "Catholicity," 224.

6. An exception is R. H. Bremmer, "Herman Bavinck. Theoloog onder politici," in *Personen en momenten uit de geschiedenis van de Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*, ed. C. Bremmer (Franeker: T. Wever, n.d.), 65–75.

Prinsterer (1801-1876) had led the antirevolutionary movement until the elections for the Second Chamber in 1871. In the early 1870s, his successor, Rev. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) entered the stage. In 1872 he founded an antirevolutionary daily newspaper, *De Standaard*, and the next year he decided to exchange the pulpit for the parliament. On 21 January 1874, he was elected to the Second Chamber and he was sworn in on 20 March.

As a student in Kampen and Leiden (1873-1880), Bavinck was captivated by this development. The first time he saw Kuyper was when the new member of parliament, 36 years of age, lectured in Kampen, on 24 March 1874. In these months Kuyper toured the country—Utrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, Kampen, Gouda—with his published lecture on "Calvinism as the Origin and Stronghold of Constitutional Liberties," which went into a second edition the same year. In this lecture, Kuyper presented himself as a *Christian* liberal and his main thesis was that Calvinism, not liberalism, had provided civil liberties. Law student Theo Heemskerk (1852-1932), a future prominent member of the Antirevolutionary Party, but at the time still a liberal, attended Kuyper's lecture in Leiden on 4 March and discovered that Kuyper was not a reactionary politician, but "a radical democrat."[7] Some weeks later Bavinck heard the same lecture in Kampen and shared in the sympathy of his fellow-students with Kuyper's Calvinistic plea "for the principles of true freedom."[8]

In Leiden, Kuyper's lecture had been received by a large audience of professors and students as remarkable, and on 4 and 16 November 1874, he returned to Leiden on request to discuss his lecture. Bavinck had moved to Leiden that Summer and was present the first time (we do not know about 16 November), when one hundred and fifty people listened to a debate between Kuyper and Heemskerk. That evening, Bavinck wrote in his diary: "Oh, I enjoyed so much Kuyper's . . . ."[9] Bavinck admired Kuyper, and in the Spring of 1875 he bought a photo of him to adorn the wall of his room in Leiden.[10] Together with the Leiden law student Christiaan Lucasse (1852-1926), like him a member of the Christian Reformed Church, he subscribed to *De Standaard*.[11] And he marked in his diary the day Groen van Prinsterer died, 19 May 1876. In 1878, he signed the famous People's Petition in favor of Christian education, and so did his father. Politics was never far away in Bavinck's student life, and when

7. Arno Bornebroek, *Een heer in een volkspartij. Theodoor Heemskerk (1852–1932), minister-president en minister van justitie* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2006), 42.

8. Report on Kuyper's lecture in Kampen in *De Bazuin*, 27 March 1874, quoted in James Eglinton, *Bavinck. A Critical Biography* (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2020), 64–65.

9. C. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1966), 32: "O, zoo'n genoegen gehad in K's" (translation by James Eglinton)—the sentence is incomplete. Bremmer is mistaken about the place where Bavinck heard Kuyper's lecture: it was not in Leiden, but in Kampen. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 79; Bornebroek, *Een heer in een volkspartij*, 43–44.

10. George Harinck, "'Eén uur lang is het hier brandend licht en warm geweest.' Bavinck en Kampen," in *Ontmoetingen met Bavinck*, ed. George Harinck and Gerrit Neven (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006), 111.

11. Valentijn Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam: Ten Have, 1922), 34.

in 1879 the Antirevolutionary Party was founded, it soon became Bavinck's political home. As a tax-paying minister in Franeker in 1881, Bavinck got the right to vote.

In the 1880s Bavinck was not an active party member, but this changed in the 1890s. As representative of the antirevolutionary constituency of Kampen, he attended the meeting of deputies of 30 March 1894 in Utrecht, where the extension of suffrage was debated.[12] After a dramatic split on this issue in the Antirevolutionary Party, a complete new Central Committee had to be elected. On 29 April 1897, Bavinck was elected as one of the fifteen members of the Central Committee of the party at the meeting of the deputies in Utrecht. Out of almost seven hundred votes, Bavinck won 644. He was a popular candidate, for only four out of the fifteen elected members got more votes.[13] At the same meeting he was elected as assessor, again with an overwhelming majority; Kuyper was elected as president. As one of three members of the executive committee, he now became a key part of the political machinery of the Reformed, representing the democratic wing among them, and he remained a member of this paramount board of the party until the end of 1909 when he left the political arena, with the aim of focusing on his academic work.[14] However, when asked in 1911, he became antirevolutionary candidate for the Senate, was elected, and was a member until his death. Though urged by Kuyper in 1913 to revoke his withdrawal as member of the Central Committee, he did not give in. One of the reasons was his dislike of minister Talma's social legislation.[15]

Joining a Party

Why was this party relevant to him? In the first place, Bavinck was positive about the formation within the Dutch political system of a party as such. This might seem obvious, but the need for this new phenomenon in Dutch politics—the Antirevolutionary Party was the first political party organization in the Netherlands—was disputed among orthodox Protestants. According to D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874), one of the founders of the Ethical Theology or *Vermittlungstheologie* in the Netherlands, parties as such were objectionable constructs. Bavinck elaborated on his view in the book on his theology, which he published in 1884.[16] There is no absolute opposition between revolution and anti-revolution, Bavinck described De la Saussaye's position,

12. Minutes public deputy meeting, 30 March 1894. *Papers ARP Centraal Comité.* Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

13. Minutes public deputy meeting, 29 April 1897. *Papers ARP Centraal Comité.*

14. This was the reason given in the newspapers, f.e. *Het Vaderland*, 24 December 1909. There were other reasons, he wrote in his diary, without being specific. Bremmer, *Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*, 232. See also Kuyper to Bavinck, 13 March 1913. *H. Bavinck Papers.* Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. This letter of thanks on the occasion of his departure from the Central Committee refers to his resignation in 1909.

15. Bavinck to Kuyper, 26 December 1912. *A. Kuyper Papers.* Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

16. Herman Bavinck, *De theologie van prof. dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye* (Leiden: Donner, 1884).

for the situation we live in is a mixed one, and one should not make a choice between its principles. The starting point for politics should not be choosing sides, but the freedom of the individual conscience in both church and state. From his viewpoint the French Revolution was both a liberation and a judgment. He did reject liberalism as a principle, but he appreciated its goal of true humanity. A party could never reach at such a nuanced view and would exclude the other instead. Bavinck summarized De la Saussaye's position in 1884 as follows:

> Separation of our people in two parties: liberals and antirevolutionaries, is impossible and impermissible. Impossible, because liberalism can be strictly orthodox and high-church, and among orthodox Christians is much liberalism, among liberals much anti-liberalism; outside of the antirevolutionary party there are antirevolutionaries. Impermissible, because by joining the antirevolutionary party, the other is branded as non-Christian and revolutionary, and many don't want to do this.[17]

De la Saussaye did not want the political victory of an antirevolutionary party, but a moral victory of individual Christians. Groen's motto, "in isolation is our strength," was true as far the relation between man and God, but this motto should not be applied to those in society or politics who do not share the Christian faith. This position implied that De la Saussaye preferred not to choose sides in the political dispute about a Christian or a neutral public school, or between orthodox and liberal in the church. All antitheses should be resumed in a higher synthesis. He favored Christian education, but he wanted to reach this goal via the church and through faith, and not via politics, as was the route Groen chose in 1869.

De la Saussaye's ideological foundation for not joining the Antirevolutionary Party may not have been adopted by other Protestants, but his reluctance to join a Christian party found support and was widespread among orthodox Dutch Protestants, the so called ethical-irenics.[18] Their reservation was that politics or party organization was not the right means to reform society, or for that matter, the church. They were negative about the political domain, for reaching concrete results would involve give-and-take with others who might have different motives. Historian Annemarie Houkes describes it like this: "While liberals rejected the mixing of faith and politics, because faith would impure politics, [ethical-irenics] rejected the same mixing, for it tarnished faith."[19] Groen called these orthodox Protestants "politicophobes," but they

17. Bavinck, *Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 19: "Scheiding van ons volk in twee partijen: liberalen en antirevolutionairen, is onmogelijk en ongeoorloofd. Onmogelijk, want het liberalisme kan zelfs star-orthodox en hoog-kerkelijk zijn, onder de rechtzinnigen is veel liberalisme, onder de liberalen veel anti-liberalisme; veel antirevolutionairs is er ook buiten de antirevolutionaire partij. Ongeoorloofd, wijl men juist door aansluiting aan de antirevolutionaire partij de tegenpartij als onchristelijk en revolutionair brandmerken moet, wat velen niet willen doen."

18. Annemarie Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders. Godsdienst, burgerschap en de Nederlandse natie 1850–1900* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2009), 200–202.

19. Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders*, 203.

were with many: only a segment of the orthodox Protestants joined or voted for the Antirevolutionary Party.

In the second place, the position of De la Saussaye had something attractive to Bavinck. It implied no separation from others, but an ongoing conversation between different worldviews in earnest pursuit of truth, like he himself practiced and enjoyed in his correspondence with his friend Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) ever since his student days. However, looking back in 1894, Bavinck concluded robustly that the divide in orthodox-Protestant circles between ethical and antirevolutionaries had already surfaced in 1869, when Groen made the school struggle through a political issue.[20] At the time this had not yet been crystal clear to him. In 1879, Bavinck confessed to his liberal friend Snouck Hurgronje that his opinions were not yet fixed: "All sorts of issues entail that my sympathies are anything but on the side of one direction or party, and that for now at least, my conscience forbids me from joining myself to anything, and that I prefer to seek my spiritual food where I am certain that I will find earnestness."[21] In 1881, however, after becoming a Reformed minister in Franeker and having edited the seventeenth-century orthodox Reformed *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, he concluded more firmly than he had done before, that any reconciliation or *Vermittlung* between Reformation and Revolution at any point, in principle and in method, in its view of God, man and world, was impossible.[22] He realized that this position might disturb Snouck Hurgronje and was not received well in the liberal circles at Leiden university. Bavinck's professor of practical theology and New Testament, J. J. Prins, wrote him that he appreciated his analysis of De la Saussaye's theology, but could not share Bavinck's position. For Prins, this was a bad kind of separatism. The Christian should function in society as leaven, and Prins disqualified Bavinck's position as "sectarian."[23] Would his Leiden friend Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje think the same? He wrote him in December 1884 that he did not aim at a sectarian position, but that his personal experience after his Leiden days—what he called his "historical dip"[24]—had taught him that a *Vermittlung* of heterogenous principles and worldviews would not lead to anything. "One must choose or share, one says; I think, the only thing that applies here is

20. Herman Bavinck, "Theologische richtingen in Nederland," *Tijdschrift voor Gereformeerde Theologie* 1 (1894): 186.

21. Herman Bavinck to C. Snouck Hurgronje, 4 August 1879, in *Een Leidse vriendschap. Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje over christendom, islam en westerse beschaving. Herziene editie*, ed. Jan de Bruijn and George Harinck (Hilversum, Verloren, 2021), 51. Translation by James Eglinton.

22. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 7 March 1882, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 89.

23. J. J. Prins to Bavinck, 2 October 1884, quoted in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 111.

24. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 23 December 1884, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 109.

choosing; there can be no talk of sharing."[25] Bavinck's nature might have made him hesitant on choosing sides, but his Reformed convictions made a choice unavoidable. He had to be antirevolutionary, whatever his reservations were.

Thirdly, this party was relevant to him because of the practical results of its antithetical position in the 1880s. In 1886, Bavinck wrote Snouck Hurgronje about the political debates in parliament on the nature of the public school, and defended the antirevolutionary position, arguing that a public school for all, propagated by the liberals, would only be possible if everyone would be indifferent on religion and would share the opinion that religion does not need to and should not have an influence on one's life and worldview.[26] The opposition of his party led to a victory for the Roman Catholic and antirevolutionary parties, and to the first Christian coalition cabinet Mackay (1888-1891). This resulted in what Bavinck called "the pacification of 1889:"[27] a new law on education that recognized and facilitated Christian education—the first and principal legal step, leading to the plural educational system that was fully realized in 1917.

Bavinck's principled support of the Antirevolutionary Party in the 1880s and of the educational struggle that was at the core of the party's policy, did not mean he was uncritical about the way the party and its leader Abraham Kuyper operated. He kept his reservations, but the "barbs and vilifications" from liberal and ethical-irenic side strengthened his allegiance, so the party kept the sympathy of his heart.[28] In a private letter Bavinck estimated that it was the neutral principle of the liberals that raised the antipathy in society against orthodox Christianity.[29] But Bavinck did not always appreciate the way Kuyper polemicized in the press. In 1888, Bavinck admitted to Snouck Hurgronje this often hindered his appreciation. Where did isolation shade into rejection of the other? He gave as examples how Kuyper defended extensively in *De Standaard* an antirevolutionary member of parliament, one who had criticized a liberal politician in a rude way, and also how he abused his polemic power to object to the critical remarks of Bavinck's friend Henry Dosker on the synod of the *dolerende* synod and humiliated him.[30]

25. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 23 December 1884, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 111. Translation by James Eglinton.

26. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 7 May 1886, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 116.

27. Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde. Rede ter inleiding van de deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht, op 13 april 1905* (Hilversum: Witzel & Klemkerk, 1905), 9.

28. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 1 January 1887, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 117. Translation by James Eglinton.

29. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 2 December 1888: "Obviously, I could be wrong and I hope so, but often I imagine that precisely because of its principle of neutrality, liberalism gives rise to, and feeds, antipathy towards Christianity as we view it. And that strengthens me, when I consult my own heart." De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 122. Translation by James Eglinton.

30. Bavinck aan Snouck Hurgronje, 22 December 1888, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse*

Independence

Religion and politics were not at odds in Bavinck's view, for religion was not too fair for politics, and politics was not too foul for religion. This was the foundation of his political commitment, and he repeated this opinion many times, but he only made it his own after having doubts about independence, isolation, *Vermittlung*, and cooperation. On several occasions later in his life, Bavinck looked back at the political history of his times and reflected on these themes. Compensation for his unsteadiness in his younger days can be detected in texts from the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s, in which he stressed the characteristics of the Antirevolutionary Party as independent and cooperative in a restricted way.

Looking back on the genesis of the Antirevolutionary Party, Bavinck noted in 1902 that Groen van Prinsterer broke the antirevolutionaries free from the conservatives and envisioned their potential future as an independent political tradition. To Bavinck this independency was vital. Groen's "work of purification" was continued in the 1870s by Kuyper, his successor: "Any merger of antirevolutionaries, Catholics and conservatives was combatted. Any unhealthy triple alliance policy, any false party formation based on general Protestantism or generic Christianity was condemned and rejected on strong principle."[31] It was like Bavinck corrected his own development in those years, which he will have condemned in retrospect as unsteady.

Kuyper's strategy was successful, as it turned out in 1878, when on his initiative the People's Petition was presented to the King, signed by more than 450,000 persons. Bavinck called this "a powerful testimony to the spirit that was aroused in the nation in favor of religious schools."[32] Even though Bavinck wrote these lines decades later, one can still sense his enthusiasm then about this development: independence was the way to go.

In the early years of independent political development there was no coherent set of antirevolutionary ideas at first. This only developed after 1872 when Kuyper started *De Standaard*, coordinated the activities of local election societies, founded a Central Committee, "drew up a program of principles which he fully elaborated and interpreted,"[33] and published as *"Ons program"* (Our Program). There was a longing for unity and cooperation, and tens of thousands attended the deputy meetings of the party beginning in 1879. We do not know if Bavinck was among them at the first meeting in 1879, but in 1915 he wrote as if he had been present: "There was no envy,

vriendschap, 121. See also: H. E. Dosker to Bavinck, 23 March 1889, in "*Men wil toch niet gaarne een masker dragen.*" *Brieven van Henry Dosker aan Herman Bavinck, 1873–1921*, ed. George Harinck en Wouter Kroese (Amsterdam: Historisch Documentatiecentrum, 2018), 97–98.

31. Herman Bavinck, *Samenwerking. Referaat gehouden op den 14en Bondsdag van den Nederlandschen Bond van Jongelingsvereenigingen op Geref. Grondslag [9 mei 1902] te Amsterdam* (Ermelo: Vereeniging De Gereformeerde Jongelingsbond, [1902]), 5.

32. Herman Bavinck, *A General View of the Netherlands, Number XVII. Mental, Religious and Social Forces in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Eduard Ydo, 1915), 36.

33. Bavinck, *A General View*, 34.

no one was at odds with other, but one *prayed together*. It was a delightful time. A time that attracted and invigorated. There was a warm connection of brothers, like had seemed impossible in our splitful Netherlands."[34] Bavinck added that Kuyper still enjoyed looking back to these years, and it is clear from Bavinck's writings he did as well.

Bavinck was careful not to glorify those years of independence and of organizing the party, or to look back melancholically. In 1915, Bavinck stressed that those former decades were no better than the days in the 1910s, the last decade of his life. In retrospect, he analyzed that in this decade the struggle for the Christian school was the primary source that unified the antirevolutionaries. For the people in the country this was the one political issue that moved their hearts, for here the connection between their religion and politics was obvious. Other issues did not interest them as much, nor did other issues unify them like the Christian school did, as Bavinck demonstrated by referring to the disputed founding of the Vrije Universiteit in 1880, the church split of the *Doleantie* in 1886, and the party rupture over extension of the suffrage in 1894.[35] This footnote to the image of unity should not only be applied to the party's history, but also to Bavinck's legacy, as we have seen.

Cooperation

In retrospect, Bavinck also paid attention to the fact that the Antirevolutionary Party, though coherent and focused, represented only a segment of Dutch society. The number of antirevolutionary representatives in the Second Chamber grew in the 1880s from 11 out of 86 in 1879, to 27 out of 100 in 1888, but they were a minority party, and could never reach political goals without cooperating with other parties or groups in parliament. The party's influence on Dutch politics "cannot be explained by its own growth in strength alone," Bavinck wrote, "but was to a large extent due to the aid of the Roman Catholics."[36]

After the independence of the party had been consolidated, cooperation was the way to go.[37] The unwitting alliance of the years before 1871 now made place for deliberate cooperation. It was the isolation of the party's principles that made practical and realistic cooperation possible, Bavinck stressed. Practical and realistic reasons were championed: the reason for cooperation was a shared interest, so it should not develop into a calling, a duty, ethical impulse, or self-sacrificing love leading to institutional cooperation. Further, cooperation should not be determined by profit or perceived benefits. In 1902, Bavinck warned about the temptation of power, especially since the cooperation with the Roman Catholics, since 1888, had turned

34. A. Anema, H. Bavinck, P.A. Diepenhorst, Th. Heemskerk en S. de Vries Czn, *Leider en leiding* (Amsterdam: W. ten Have, 1915), 10.

35. Anema, *Leider en leiding*, 26, 27, 41–43.

36. Bavinck, A General View, 34.

37. Bavinck, Samenwerking, 5.

out to be politically successful: "Before we know it, we give up our independence, we start concealing, and then go on to renunciation of our principles, and we cannot turn back anymore, in fear for the discovery of the smallness of our power."[38]

In this context Bavinck also pointed at a shadow side of the notion of common grace, which became popular in the 1890s, to defend the antirevolutionary cooperation in parliament with Catholics, liberals, and social-democrats alike: "The neutral zone, where cooperation is considered to be possible, increases in width, until interest goes over duty, success over right."[39] In sum, Bavinck's message was to be careful, and he offered this warning at the heyday of the Antirevolutionary Party and of cooperation with the Catholics in a coalition cabinet, at the time of the Kuyper cabinet (1901-1905). He had not advocated participation in the government in 1901 in the Central Committee of the party, but preferred the isolated and oppositional position of the party in parliament. On the contrary, Kuyper wanted the party to govern. "Despite his great gifts, it will be difficult for him to meet expectations with regard to education and social legislation," Bavinck wrote his lifelong friend Snouck Hurgronje.[40]

Freedom

Bavinck's choice against *Vermittlung* and for an independent political party did not mean he was isolating himself from society. To the contrary, he wanted to convince his environment that his Christian position was not alien to humanity. Bavinck was not merely concerned with tolerating other viewpoints, for he sought an appreciation of the diversity of views: "May principle remain pure and unadulterated, but I wish to apply this to the whole of human life, in all the breadth it allows."[41] Opponents of the Anti-revolutionary Party often feared this party aimed at a despotic, theocratic future, excluding dissidents. Bavinck often had to explain that his party not only did not aim at such a future, like he did in 1896. His practical objection to this fear was

> A Calvinistic State, a favored Church, an extension of the Reformed religion to the whole nation, are out of the question. The situation has totally changed since the time when these things were possible. Church and State, religion and citizenship, have been separated forever. Unbelief has permeated all classes and alienated a great part of the people from Christianity. To the alarming fact that unbelief is increasing on all hands, the Reformed do not close their eyes.

38. Bavinck, Samenwerking, 11: "En eer wij het weten, geven wij onze zelfstandigheid prijs, komen wij tot verzwijging, straks tot verzaking van onze beginselen, en durven en kunnen niet meer terug, uit vreeze voor de ontdekking van de kleinheid onzer kracht."

39. Bavinck, *Samenwerking*, 12: "De neutrale zône, waarop samenwerking mogelijk wordt geacht, neemt in breedte steeds toe. Totdat eindelijk het belang boven plicht, het succes boven recht gaat."

40. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 21 March 1902, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 135. Translation by James Eglinton.

41. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 23 December 1884, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 112.

> They do not wish to repristinate, and have no desire for the old conditions to return. They heartily accept the freedom of religion and conscience, the equality of all before the law.[42]

Alongside this practical argument he also provided an additional reason, based on the Reformed world- and life view:

> (…) according to Reformed principles, God has accorded to state, home, and society the peculiar power and authority proper to each; beside them stands the church with its own government granted to it by Christ. Subjugation of the church by the state or of the state by the church are thus both condemned. They both need to respect one another and also to support and aid one another. Pressure from either one is excluded. The church may indeed desire that the government of the land be directed by Christian principles and profit from the revelation of God's grace, for state and society have also been damaged by sin and need God's word to guide and direct, but here too grace does not nullify nature.[43]

It is important to realize this latter statement from his Kampen 1894 lecture on common grace about the Reformed position was not a theoretical, or specific theological stance only. It was also a positioning amidst liberal and ethical-irenic political alternatives. To Bavinck there was a direct link between political practice and his theology, as theological diversity resulted in political diversity. He showed this in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, where he connected the perspicuity of Scripture to the freedom of the Christian, and called its clarity "the origin and guarantee of religious liberty as well as of our political freedoms."[44] Here he echoed the message of the political speech of Kuyper he attended in 1874, be it that Kuyper grounded the civil rights in the Calvinistic freedom of conscience, and Bavinck dogmatically in the perspicuity of Scripture. He called the freedom of religion and conscience, the equality of all before the law "the good things which God has given."[45] Bavinck lived in what historians labeled as "the Age of Liberalism" (1815-1914/1930s). These rights and this equality are usually seen as the fruits of liberalism. But Bavinck has a different take when it comes to the Dutch political context of the late nineteenth century. Like Kuyper, he blamed the liberals for not being liberal enough, and grounded civil freedom and equality in Reformed theology.

42. Herman Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," trans. Geerhardus Vos, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5 (1894): 13.

43. Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace [1894]," trans. R. C. van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 63–64.

44. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 479.

45. Bavinck, "Future of Calvinism," 13.

Democratic and Social

To Bavinck this was not a confessional issue only; it was antirevolutionary political practice. In his view the Antirevolutionary Party was at the head of the movement for civil rights, and radically so. This resulted in a conflict within the party between the conservative and democratic wings on the extension of suffrage, which led to a rupture in 1894. Bavinck sympathized strongly with the democratic wing. He knew his democratic tendency was seen as too radical by fellow-orthodox Protestants and others, and he was suspected of a secret alliance with Socialism.[46] And indeed, the first left wing radical that was elected in the Second Chamber in 1888, Fedinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, won his seat with support of antirevolutionary voters, who were hinted to support him by Kuyper in *De Standaard*: do not vote for a liberal candidate! He agreed with Kuyper that radicals of all sorts have the same civil rights as anyone else, but social issues were not at the core of Bavinck's political interests, and unlike Kuyper he did not expect much of social legislation and did not think it would be able to reform society.[47] He was worried that material needs would dominate the spiritual needs. The latter issue had his main attention, and this issue was addressed in educational laws.

Education was Bavinck's social issue *par excellence*. To him the growth of the Socialist movement in the Netherlands, starting in the 1890s, was an expression of the growing priority of society over the state, and not of the relevance of class struggle: "This socialism does not, therefore, affect one class, that of laborers, but *all* classes, those of farmers, the industries, merchants, teachers and clerks, and men, women, and children in all circles of society. It concerns not one party only, but all parties and tendencies."[48] To him, the fundamental error of Socialism was the undermining of religious, moral, and legal foundations.[49] While Kuyper is known for his "architectural critique" of the structure of society, formulated at the Social Congress of 1891,[50] organized by the Antirevolutionary Party among others, Bavinck at the same congress did not criticize the structure of society.[51] He was in favor of preventing poverty and averting accumulation of capital, but did not show awareness of the dramatic disruption of society caused by capitalism, and the corrective role the state could play through social legislation. To the contrary, he stressed that social

46. Bavinck, "Future of Calvinism," 13.

47. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 21 March 1902 and 20 November 1903, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 135, 139.

48. Bavinck, *A General View*, 49.

49. Herman Bavinck, *De opvoeding der rijpere jeugd* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1916), 97.

50. Abraham Kuyper, Het sociale vraagstuk en de christelijke religie. Rede bij de opening van het Sociaal Congres, op 9 November 1891 gehouden (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1891), 16.

51. See on Bavinck and the Social Congress: Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 181.

relations were a matter of authority and obedience first, and legislation would not set aside social differences and inequalities.[52]

As to social relations in the economic sector, in 1902 he opposed party members like Syb Talma (1864-1916) who viewed employer and employee as equal parties, and stressed the biblical calling of submission.[53] Social inequality was a given, according to Bavinck at the Social Congress, and when Talma objected and asked if social conditions should not be changed, he denied by giving the example that a king would be deplorable if he had to eat rye bread, and that a laborer should not exceed himself with beef and wine.[54] Social issues were not his main interest. In contrast to those primarily concerned with material needs, during the Kuyper cabinet, Bavinck's conviction grew that in politics, and in culture in general, a "theistic collation"[55] had to be forged of Christians and of "everyone who appreciates religion and morality, who believes man does not live on bread alone."[56] Bavinck, in short, was conservative when it came to social politics.

But when it came to the extension of suffrage, Bavinck belonged to the democratic wing of the party. This became clear in the conflict between the democrats and the conservatives in 1894. This meant that he supported the antirevolutionary and Catholic organic idea of extending voting rights to all households as opposed to the individual voting rights the Socialists and some liberals advocated. It was in this context that he became active in the party. He had contacts with local electoral unions in the party to secure their support of extension of the suffrage, like in Harderwijk, Kampen, and Apeldoorn, and recommended Kuyper someone as Kampen's new mayor. He visited the antirevolutionaries in Nijkerk to convince them of the democratic course. Informing Kuyper about the opinions of the various local unions, he wrote: "Let me thank you with all my heart and bring you my sincere tribute for the excellent and powerful way you snatched the Antirevolutionary Party from the danger of conservatism."[57] Later that year Bavinck repeated his opinion to Kuyper: "The people, our people, are on your side. The future is without doubt to the

52. Herman Bavinck, "General Biblical Principles and the Relevance of Concrete Mosaic Law for the Social Question Today (1891)," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 13, 2 (Fall 2010): 443.

53. Herman Bavinck, "Heeren en knechten," *De Bazuin*, 9 May 1902; Gerard van Krieken, *Syb Talma (1864–1916). Een biografie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2013), 106–107.

54. Van Krieken, *Talma*, 52.

55. See: George 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* 29:1 (Spring 2011), 74–76. Bavinck would expand on this theme extensively in *Modernisme en orthodoxie. Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 october 1911* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1911).

56. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 32.

57. Herman Bavinck to Abraham Kuyper, 22 April 1894: "Laat me U ten slotte hartelijk mogen danken en U mijne oprechte hulde mogen bieden voor de uitnemende en krachtige wijze, waarop gij de Antirev. Partij aan het gevaar van het conservatisme hebt ontrukt." *Kuyper Papers.*

Christian-democratic development of our program."[58] In 1896 he called on Kuyper to make the paragraphs on education and the church in the party program more explicit. Education had his special attention, and in 1903 he longed for a final solution of this issue.[59] As to the church, Bavinck advised Kuyper to seize the moment, and to speak out in the election program for 1897 against any preference for the *Hervormde Kerk* and severing the financial ties between the state and this denomination. Now the party had to be reorganized after the conservatives had left: "The *Hervormde Kerk* is and stays the largest obstacle in the application and effectiveness of our principles."[60]

Bavinck's Maiden Speech as a Politician

Bavinck's Central Committee membership also implied that he had to promote and lead the party. One of his duties was addressing antirevolutionary electoral unions. On 14 April 1899 he gave a speech in Rotterdam to the provincial meeting of electoral unions in Zuid-Holland on "Antirevolutionary politics"– a speech he would also deliver in the next two years at provincial meetings in Middelburg, Haarlem, and Kampen. He was seconded by Talma, who addressed these meetings on social politics. In this maiden speech as a politician, covered extensively by the newspapers, he gave a sketch of what antirevolutionary politics entailed. Since the speech was never published, what follows is an extensive summary.

Bavinck, now addressing his audience in his new role of a politician, started with objections made by fellow orthodox-Protestants who distanced themselves from the Antirevolutionary Party. This subject was close to his personal development towards independence. Bavinck stressed that "politics as such is not a sinful business, in which confessors of the Lord should not be involved. Those who believe in God Almighty and in Jesus Christ, who has come, not to judge but to convert the world, and possesses all authority in heaven and on earth, cannot hate politics as Satan's business."[61] God's providence is nothing but the godly act of governing, and since man has been created in His image, in a derived sense politics is the art of governing. This reveals the high authority of governments, serving God in revenging evil.

The government as God's servant is key to the antirevolutionary view of politics, continued Bavinck. The art of governing is the prerogative of the state. Its authority

58. Bavinck to Kuyper, 1894: Het volk, ook ons volk, staat aan uwe zijde. En de toekomst behoort zonder twijfel aan de christelijk-democratische ontwikkeling van ons program." *Kuyper Papers.*

59. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 20 November 1903, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 139.

60. Bavinck to Kuyper, 12 November 1896: "De Hervormde kerk is en blijft voor de doorwerking en toepassing onzer beginselen de grootste struikelblok. Er biedt zich in jaren wellicht geen geschikter gelegenheid aan, om deze kwestie in het program op te nemen, dan juist thans, nu vele nieuwe kiezers aankomen en de partij opnieuw moet georganiseerd worden." *Kuyper Papers.*

61. Report in *De Standaard*, 15 October 1900. The text of Bavinck's speech has not been preserved. My summary of his speech is based on reports in *Het Vaderland*, 15 April 1899, and *De Standaard*, 15 October 1900.

has often been abused by despotic and tyrannic rulers. The French Revolution denied this divine authority, rejecting God's rule. Antirevolutionary politics is a reaction to this revolution. It was not possible in the ages before 1789, Bavinck argued, and is in its essence fruit of the times, and modern in structure.

This modern character was an important accent in Bavinck's speech. The party's principles dated from paradise, he said, but its expression was up to date. It did not aim the restoration of a Protestant nation with a public church like in the days of the Dutch Republic, and did not oppose democracy, but it was favoring modern society. When the School law of 1857 had been adopted, which created a "neutral" stance of the state, respecting everyone's conviction but excluding religious confessions, Groen van Prinsterer opted for the neutral state. Not on principle, but if the orthodox-Protestant confession was averted, then the non-Christian likewise: "no sham-neutral state".[62] Bavinck used this argument and proposed to close theological departments at state universities (including the one in Leiden!), and a full separation of church and state. The Antirevolutionary Party demanded no interference with the spiritual interests of the nation from a state claiming neutrality. Such a state has no authority in religious matters and, according to Bavinck, has as its main task only to protect the civil liberties and equality for all its citizens. The state had to serve the free development of society.

This neutrality stance, which in practice meant choosing for a plural public domain, was opposed by orthodox Protestants. They complained that the party, which according to *Our Program* of 1879 promoted a Christian state, in fact accepted a neutral state. According to Bavinck this was a misunderstanding. The Antirevolutionary Party still rejected a neutral state, for neutrality is a false claim. The Dutch state at present is not neutral, explained Bavinck, but coerced unbelief. It was a pantheistic state in disguise. School, church, and university have become functions of the state, he argued. This state is opposed by the Antirevolutionary Party, and consequently, it is the only political party that defends the civil rights of the people. Similar to Roman Catholics joining the Reformed in their fight against Spain in the sixteenth century, so all who oppose the violent pantheistic state should support the party.

Bavinck illustrated his argument by referring to the proposed law on compulsory education. The party opposed this law, for "freedom is the characteristic of the antirevolutionary policy."[63] It desired freedom for the church, and therefore demanded separation of church and state, and it desired freedom for Christian primary education. He recounted the history of the struggle for this freedom, and how the compulsory education law was the most recent attempt to save the public

62. *De Standaard*, 15 October 1900.
63. Report in *Het Vaderland*, 15 April 1899.

school. He expected the moribund public school to disappear. "The free school for all," was the party's slogan, and some liberals already had started to support this goal. He warned the party not to stop this fight for freedom and said: history will show if we appreciated freedom more than equality and fraternity!

The fight for freedom did not stop at primary education. Freedom was also desired for secondary and higher education. A free Theological School in Kampen and a Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam already existed, but higher education as such was still dominated by the state. If the state claimed to be neutral, this freedom should be granted. Finally, freedom was desired for the Dutch people as whole, especially for the weak. And as the party of freedom, it even desires freedom for the communist, the socialist, and the anarchist, for above all, God reigns. Their press and public action should not be limited. The antirevolutionary policy is not a policy of coercion and force, but one of law and justice for all. In any respect, it is the party of freedom.

While the socialist newspaper *Het Volk* qualified Bavinck's speech as "learned," Kuyper in an editorial in *De Standaard* praised Bavinck's first performance as antirevolutionary politician, together with Talma. Theirs was a new voice in the antirevolutionary choir, both progressive and national. He hoped their texts would be published and recommended to give these speeches in other provinces as well—the latter actually happened. What Kuyper appreciated was their message

> that our party has a higher calling than promoting the interests of our own circle; the plea for our principles implies a calling for the fatherland as a whole. (…) We cannot be missed in the circle of national politicians, for we have a viewpoint that is promoted by no one else; but then the historic character of our position must be stressed, and at the same time it has to be shown that it creates a life form in the present. Because both speeches move in this direction, they are prelude to the fight that awaits us anew in the present future.[64]

So this much is clear, Bavinck had entered the political arena successfully. The independence and cooperation in the name of freedom, that were elementary to Bavinck's view of antirevolutionary politics, had come together in his speech. It is interesting that he built this notion of freedom not on Kuyper, who was criticized by other orthodox Protestants, but on Groen, whose name was trusted in wider Protestant circles than the Antirevolutionary Party only. While Kuyper had argued in "*Ons program*," contra the liberals, that the state should not be secular, but build on the natural knowledge of God,[65] Bavinck labeled the liberals as pantheists and required them, in line with Groen, not to interfere with religion in any way. Kuyper promised liberty in 1879, and Bavinck in 1899 could show that his was the party

64. *De Standaard*, 16 October 1900.

65. Abraham Kuyper, *Our Program. A Christian political Manifesto* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2015), 57–74, esp. 66.

of freedom, based on the results of the Mackay-cabinet. Bavinck's use of the term neutrality was not very practical though, and in the history of the Antirevolutionary Party, Kuyper's argument that religion guaranteed freedom became dominant.

President of the Antirevolutionary Party

Unlike Talma, Bavinck was never considered as a minister in a cabinet or a member of the Second Chamber. Bavinck had no ambition in this direction either, for he was too reflective for the heat and pace of day-to-day politics. The audience of his political speeches appreciated his thoughtful opinions and his warm sympathy for the party, and Kuyper was enthusiastic about the impulse he gave to antirevolutionary politics, but he would never become a demagogue or a sharp debater, though he did give it a try with his qualification of the Dutch state as "pantheistic" and the Antirevolutionary Party as the "party of freedom." But again, these qualifications were too high-brow to arouse the enthusiasm of the rank and file in the party.

Bavinck was not a politician in the first place, but he assumed political responsibilities when asked. After being installed as prime minster in 1901, Kuyper was reluctant to step down as president of the Central Committee of the Antirevolutionary Party, which was his leadership post of the antirevolutionary movement. He finally resigned in 1903, on a temporarily basis, and the oldest member of the Central Committee assumed Kuyper's duties. In November 1904 Kuyper asked Bavinck to give the speech at the meeting of deputies as the starting point of the election campaign in 1905.[66] In the next month it became clear that a more active president was needed as well. Kuyper and the members of the Central Committee knew only one acceptable substitute: Bavinck. He did not aspire to become the party's president, but after consulting several insiders, he accepted the position of acting president: "I am not looking forward to it at all and judge myself uncapable for *this* position," he wrote Kuyper. Further, he continued, "I am placed in front of it by others, without me desiring it. Thus, it came to my mind, if in this way I was confronted with God's providence to which I had to give in. In any case, given this thought, I miss the courage to decline your request."[67] Kuyper and Central Committee members assisted him, but the next half year, until the elections in June, Bavinck was deeply involved in party business: selecting candidates, deciding on the party strategy, discussing with dissenting groups, etcetera. It is reasonable to suggest his professorship must have suffered in these months. Appeasement with *hervormde* groups and with more socialist inclined antirevolutionaries caused him a lot of trouble.[68] His leadership was

66. See: Kuyper to Bavinck, 25 November 1904. *Bavinck Papers.*

67. Bavinck to Kuyper, 29 December 1904. See: George Harinck, "'Als een schelm weggejaagd'? De ARP en de verkiezingen van 1905," in: D.Th. Kuiper and G.J. Schutte (red.), *Het kabinet-Kuyper (1901–1905)* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 271–73.

68. See: George Harinck, Roel Kuiper and Peter Bak, eds., *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829–1980* (Hilversum: Verloren 2001), 123–29.

mainly coordinative because he was not leading into battle, like Kuyper had done in election campaigns for thirty years. In this hard anti-Christian election campaign, the resilience the party sought was in fact was about only one issue: would Kuyper stay as prime minister, or would he have to step down?

The most important public event of his presidency was the speech he gave at the deputy meeting in Utrecht on 16 April 1905. In this speech, titled "Christian and Neutral Politics," Bavinck evaluated the aims and results of the Kuyper cabinet. The program the cabinet presented had been moderate, but explicit in its aim to build on the Christian foundation of society. He stressed that this Christian coalition cabinet had functioned above party lines and served the nation's interest. It was disappointing to him that the left (the Christian parties were called right, the liberal and social-democratic or socialist were left) had not acknowledged this.

What obstacles had the Kuyper cabinet met? The railway strike of 1903 was a severe threat to society. Bavinck qualified this strike in his speech, saying, "a revolution, an anarchy, a victory not of rights but of force, an unlawful relocation of authority."[69] The strike, one of the largest civil disturbances in modern Dutch history, dissipated without any bloodshed, and laws were adopted to prevent a next serious threat to social-economic life.[70] The leftish parties were opposed to this reaction by the cabinet and held that the rights and the authority were with the people, who delegated part of it to the government. "The people have rights, the government has duties," Bavinck quoted a liberal jurist, who commented on the role of the state in the days of the railway strike.[71] To the opposition, the government should have given way to the demands of the people. To Bavinck the authority of government – delegated by God, as we have seen – was at stake in this issue.

A similar obstacle was met by the cabinet in 1904 regarding the debate about a new law on higher education. The prospect that higher education would be free, and Christian universities would have the same rights as public universities was to the liberals "the demise of science and the extinction of public universities."[72] In both the railway strike and the higher education debate an accommodation or agreement was not possible. The opposition was antithetical, even though no alternative had been presented. The left side was negative only.

For Bavinck, the Antirevolutionary Party met the demands of the new times, like the withdrawal of church and state in favor of society. His party promoted and facilitated this tendency. He called his party a *radikale Fortschrittspartei*—a party of radical progress.[73] Christians are always progressive, he said, if they understand their

69. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 9.

70. James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper. Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 309–311.

71. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 13.

72. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 15.

73. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 44.

confession in the right way. And then followed some raging sentences in his speech that are characteristic for Bavinck:

> They go in the new situations in state and society, of philosophy and science, of literature and art, of profession and business; they investigate everything and preserve the good. They are no praise-singers of the past times and do not wail idly about the miseries of the present, but they intervene and reform according to the ideal they face. Even though they know that on earth things will never be set right before the second coming of Christ, and though this protects them from superficial optimism, they still work and do not get tired and never despair. No repristination, no maintaining of the status quo, but reformation is their motto.[74]

Like his lecture from the late 1890s on antirevolutionary politics, Bavinck assessed the neutrality of the state as an impossibility: "Neutrality has promoted the dominance of unbelief, the subversion of religious and ethical foundations in society. Maintaining of spiritual goods, the "spiritual powers," and Christian principles is therefore the most important task that rest on the shoulders of the government today."[75] The Antirevolutionary Party did not want to impose Christianity on society, it only wanted to prevent any enforcement of the neutral character of neutrality. Bavinck therefore called the distinction between state and society most relevant, arguing:

> The state does not have the calling to take the work of society's plate and accomplish what has been commanded to the family, the community, to church and school, to science and art. . . . But the state has to take care of the general interest, for the general welfare, for the 'salus publico,' and therefore has to create such conditions, that makes it possible to citizens, family and society, to science and art to fulfil its task and to flourish.[76]

74. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 30: Zij gaan in in de nieuwe toestanden van staat en maatschappij, van wijsbegeerte en wetenschap, van litteratuur en kunst, van beroep en bedrijf; zij onderzoeken alles en behouden het goede. Zij zijn geen lofzangers van verledene tijden en staan niet werkeloos te jammeren over de ellenden van het heden, maar zij grijpen in en hervormen naar het ideaal, dat hun voor oogen staat. Zelfs al weten zij, dat het hier op aarde nooit in orde komt vóór de wederkomst van Christus en al worden zij daardoor voor een oppervlakkig optimisme behoed, zij werken toch en zitten nooit moedeloos bij de pakken ter neer. Geen repristinatie, geen handhaven van het status quo, maar reformatie is hun leus.

75. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 33: "(…) neutraliteit heeft de heerschappij van het ongeloof, de ondermijning van de godsdienstige en zedelijke grondslagen van ons volksleven in de hand gewerkt. Handhaven van de ideale goederen, van de „geestelijke machten", van de christelijke beginselen is daarom de voornaamste taak, die heden ten dage in ons vaderland op de schouders der overheid rust."

76. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 35–36: "Het is de roeping der overheid niet, om der maatschappij het werk uit de handen te nemen en de taak te volbrengen, die aan huisgezin en gemeente, aan kerk en school, -aan wetenschap en kunst is opgedragen. (…) Maar wel heeft hij te zorgen voor het algemeen belang, voor de algemeene welvaart, voor de „salus publica", en dus zulke uitwendige verhoudingen en bestaansvoorwaarden te scheppen, waardoor het aan de burgers, aan huisgezin en

He ended his speech in praise of politics as "the high and delightful art to reign a people according to God's will, in accordance with its character, history, and calling He granted."[77]

Kuyper praised Bavinck's leadership of the deputy meeting and his speech.[78] Though Bavinck was hopeful about the elections, the Antirevolutionary Party lost. The parties on the right side won the vote (343,000 over 280,000), but lost too many constituencies, winning only 48 out of 100 seats in parliament. The Catholics kept their 25 seats, but the Antirevolutionary Party lost 8 of its 23 seats, partly because the *hervormde* antirevolutionary minded people voted for parties that opposed the antirevolutionary separation of church and state from society, and the cooperation with Catholics.[79] The liberals now took on the government again, be it only for two and a half years.

Leadership

Bavinck was disappointed about the result of the 1905 elections, but he did not blame his party or his leadership for the loss, only the dissenting socialist-minded antirevolutionaries and de *hervormden*.[80] Though he was hesitant in 1901 about the party joining the government, he now saw positive aspects in this loss as well. He wrote Snouck Hugronje in early 1906: "Although I clearly had not expected or hoped for the former cabinet's defeat, I regard it as no especially great loss; it contains a wise lesson for our party, and I did indeed wish that they had gained more benefit from it. I refrain from joining in the endless criticism of the present situation, that has now become the order of the day."[81] This quote reveals his distance to the general opinion within the party. Bavinck had become weary of the political hassle he had been in the last year. He admitted to Snouck Hurgronje that politics had a demoralising influence, but he did not want to attribute this to politics as such. The depraving side of politics had to do with the corrupted nature of man, according to Bavinck. This side may be more visible in politics than elsewhere, but it was present in trade,

maatschappij, aan wetenschap en kunst mogelijk is, om elk hun eigen taak te volbrengen en tot bloei te geraken."

77. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 39–40: (…) de hooge, heerlijke kunst, om een volk te regeeren naar den wil van God, in overeenstemming met het karakter, de historie en de roeping, die Hij eraan schonk."

78. Kuyper aan Bavinck, 15 April 1905. *Bavinck Papers.*

79. Jurn de Vries, "Hoedemakers rol bij de val van het kabinet-Kuyper," *Tijdschrift voor Religie, Recht en Beleid* 11 (2020): 80; D.Th. Kuiper, *De voormannen. Een sociaal-wetenschappelijke studie over ideologie, konflikt en kerngroepvorming binnen de gereformeerde wereld in Nederland tussen 1820 en 1930* (Kampen: Kok, 1972), 163.

80. Anema, *Leider en leiding*, 13.

81. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 16 January 1906, in De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 148. Translation by James Eglinton.

industry, science, and art as well. Corruption is never a mark of a certain domains, but always originated in the human heart.

Instead of giving up on politics, Bavinck, despite his negative experiences in politics, kept on encouraging Snouck Hurgronje to participate. He claimed:

> (…) if the best ones, whose eyes are open to the temptations of the political life, withdrew, [politically] speaking and acting would be left wholly to the rascals. I dare to speak more boldly because I know myself to be free of ambitions in the realm of politics, and in so far as I took part in it, it was only because of a sense of duty, not from inclination or desire.[82]

Bavinck had done his duty, and though some antirevolutionaries envisioned him as the successor of Kuyper[83] to lead the party into a new era, he knew he was not the enthusing leader and the organizer that was needed. At the deputy meeting of 17 October 1907 in Amsterdam, he handed over the party leadership to Kuyper again, who was re-elected as president of the Antirevolutionary Party with more than seven hundred votes; Bavinck, who did not want to continue as president, got twelve votes.[84] After handing over his presidential responsibilities he was re-elected as assessor with 536 out of 574 votes.[85] But he did not attend deputy meetings anymore and resigned after the parliamentary elections of June 1909.

At the celebration of the first quarter of a century of *De Standaard* in 1897, Bavinck had praised Kuyper as a journalist and politician who with his newspaper "did not find his strength in antipapist fierceness, in arousing of all sorts of basis, be it ecclesial, passions, but in principled opposition to ultra-montane politics."[86] Bavinck believed Kuyper belonged to these "best ones" who were polemical for an ironical goal. This did not mean he agreed with all Kuyper said and did, and though he knew many who regarded him as a "bummer,"[87] he either sided with him or gave him the benefit of the doubt. But when Kuyper kept on qualifying the third Christian coalition cabinet Heemskerk (1908-1913)–Kuyper had expected to be invited to be part of it by a younger generation of anti-revolutionary politicians, but to his annoyance, he was not–in *De Standaard* as disastrous, a political abuse, and a rupture with the party's position for long, Bavinck finally spoke out against Kuyper's party leadership, that acerbated the atmosphere in the party. Five eminent antirevolutionary politicians objected to the view of the elderly statesman and party

82. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 147. For his view on politics as a high calling, see also: Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 39.

83. Harinck a.o., *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829–1980*, 112.

84. Minutes deputy meeting, 17 October 1907. *Papers ARP Centraal Comité.*

85. Minutes deputy meeting, 17 October 1907. *Papers ARP Centraal Comité.*

86. Herman Bavinck, *Het vierde eener eeuw. Rede bij gelegenheid van het vijf en twintig-jarig bestaan van de "Standaard"* (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1897), 17.

87. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, 7 May 1886: "brekespel". De Bruijn and Harinck, *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 117.

president, that the party had flourished under his leadership only. In 1915 they published the pamphlet *Leider en leiding*, leader and leadership, and one of the five noted in his memoirs that it was Bavinck who actually wrote the pamphlet.[88] He was the politician a younger generation of antirevolutionaries looked up to for inspiration: "His universal knowledge and universal spirit made him a completely unique figure in our circles," would his successor in the Senate write in 1922 to a leading anti-revolutionary politician.[89]

Like he had written before, he now again stressed that only the school struggle and a shared religious conviction had united the party, otherwise there had always been much dissent and opposition. The present situation was not worse compared to former days. What had changed, Bavinck explained, is the context in church, school, and politics. People received better education, and by founding the Vrije Universiteit, students were encouraged to see through their own eyes, which provided opportunities to view various issues with personal reflection. New problems had presented themselves, many of which proved difficult to solve, and lacking an answer, a neutral zone out of reach of the antirevolutionary principles developed, where these problems were resolved. And if a connection was made between the principles and the day-to-day political issues, difference of opinion surfaced. Uncertainty grew about what comprises antirevolutionary politics: "On many issues we don't know what we are up to, what the capacity and reach of our principles is, and which way we have to go. There is no steady course in our political life, and too often our position is determined by our opponents."[90] Bavinck's and his fellow politicians' solution to this problem was balanced and positive: they would not coerce or drill the rank and file of the party, but through closer connections and tighter internal cooperation, they would restore trust and strengthen their collective freedom. Thus, in unity there is strength.

Shifting Opinions

One of the issues out of reach of principles was suffrage. In 1907, Bavinck let go of the antirevolutionary principle of household suffrage as unrealistic, and instead, he favored the individual, universal suffrage. On Kuyper's insistence, the party remained committed to the organic view on suffrage until universal suffrage became the law in 1917. Confronted with this political fact, the latter suffrage was accepted by the Antirevolutionary Party.[91] The same scenario happened on the issue of extending the suffrage to women. The party, led by Kuyper, opposed to this extension. Bavinck,

88. P.A. Diepenhorst, *Herinneringen*, ed. by J. de Bruijn and R.E. van der Woude (Amsterdam: Historisch Documentatiecentrum, 2003), 84; Bremmer, *Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*, 236–39.

89. A. Anema to V.H. Rutgers, 1 February 1921: "(…) zijn universeele kennis en universeele geest maaktem hem to een geheel eenige figuur in onzen kring." *V.H. Rutgers Papers.* Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

90. Anema, *Leider en leiding*, 45.

91. Bremmer, *Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*, 228.

however, was the most important antirevolutionary voice in favor of this right. In the Senate, Bavinck voted in favor of women's voting rights, deviating from the party line Kuyper defended in a 1914 book.[92] Furthermore, in 1918 Bavinck published a book about the positive role and place of women in society.[93]

Giving up principled positions was not incidental. In 1905 he had admitted that the antirevolutionary principles did not exclude disagreements, but still defended them as indicators of the direction where the solution should be found.[94] But the next decade his doubt on this issue increased. As Bavinck explained in the 1915 pamphlet on party leadership, the principles often did not meet political reality. In notes for an unpublished pamphlet, Bavinck wrote in 1919 that antirevolutionaries should realize that none of the principles had stayed "intact, none of these had been resistant to the power of reality (…) Facts were stronger than principles."[95] As examples, Bavinck mentioned the principal opposition to state funded Christian education, to universal suffrage, to sabbath observance, to state pensions, and to women's voting rights. Time and again there was hope Christianity and culture could be reconciled, but time and again Bavinck faced the old problem of the relation of the gospel and this world. What hindered him among the Kuyperians was "their lack of appreciation, their all or nothing, their absoluteness, their lack of recognizing the relative."[96]

It seemed Bavinck's sensitivity of his younger days for the complaints on Christian parties resurfaced in his old age. In the early 1880s Bavinck had rejected De la Saussaye's and others' objections by joining and defending the Antirevolutionary Party, but now he realized the party structure implied rejection of other Christian opinions as morally flawed, while promoting the party's opinion without effect. He still did not appreciate the dualism in the *Vermittlungstheologie*, but he stressed the need to relate Christianity to the catholic, cosmic, and ethical-religious dimensions, and not lock it up in an organization. In 1919, the need for independence and the warning against cooperation stayed behind.

Conclusion

Three issues stand out in this overview on Bavinck and the art and practice of politics. In the first place, Bavinck promoted politics as a domain where religion had to be applied. To do this effectively, an independent party was the best option. Bavinck's stress on an independent political position coincided with his personal development

92. Abraham Kuyper, *De eerepositie van de vrouw* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1914).

93. Herman Bavinck, *De vrouw in de hedendaagsche maatschappij* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1918); Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 278–80.

94. Bavinck, *Christelijke en neutrale staatkunde*, 35.

95. George Harinck, C. van der Kooi en J. Vree (red.), *"Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende". Aantekeningen van H. Bavinck over de zaak-Netelenbos, het Schriftgezag en de situatie van de Gereformeerde Kerken (november 1919)* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994), 50.

96. Harinck a.o., "*Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende*," 66.

in the 1880s towards a more robust Reformed position in theology. Though we know Bavinck as a conversational person, one who always tried to appreciate the strong points in his antagonist, and Kuyper as the antithetical debater, one who would frame the position of his opponent negatively, it was Kuyper who forged coalitions, while Bavinck was reluctant to do so. The cooperation with the Catholics in a Christian coalition was not only beneficial, he contended. In 1901 he was not in favor of forming a coalition cabinet, and in 1906 he was positive about the oppositional role of the Antirevolutionary Party. He lacked Kuyper's agility, and did not have the authority to lead the party in a different direction. It seemed in the 1880s and 1890s he caught up with the solid Reformed theology of the *Synopsis* and with Kuyper's principal firmness and antithetical spirit. But later in his life, he realized that party formation could also lead to isolation and intellectual sterility.

Secondly, Bavinck in the late 1910s mirrors the Bavinck of about 1880, who at that point had not yet anchored in the Reformed tradition. Bavinck still felt attracted to De la Saussaye and ethical-irenics, and he had not yet sided with Kuyper, who was "more than all of them the banner bearer of Calvinism," as Bavinck claimed in 1897.[97] This position of his younger days—and its flipside in later years: the sharp criticisms of orthodox Protestants who did not join the party—sheds light on the shaky position the Antirevolutionary Party often was in. With his role as internal mediator, and his name recognition as a theologian, Bavinck served to keep the party both coherent and focused, both in the 1880s and 1890s, when orthodox Protestants criticized and left the party, and in the 1910s, when the party was in need of a new leader. In 1905, some had hoped he would continue accepting leadership duties, but that was not his cup of tea.

Finally, Bavinck presented the Antirevolutionary Party as the vanguard of the new society to come, and in this way attracted a younger generation. Over and against the orthodox Protestants, socialists, and liberals, Bavinck defended the view that Christian politics was not about establishing a Christian state or submitting society to Christianity. Instead, it was about freedom for every conviction or worldview and about the acknowledgment that in the end, governing was not about material issues but about facilitating the spiritual well-being of citizens of all walks of life. He feared that the material would dominate politics, and therefore called for a "theistic coalition" to keep Dutch society on the right track.

From a political point of view, he analyzed what happened as a withdrawal of institutions like state and church in favor of society. In his opinion, the Antirevolutionary Party was the only one to promote and facilitate this process of liberating society. Kuyper welcomed this progressive view, but in practice the party under his post-Bavinck leadership took a conservative turn, opposing universal and women's suffrage, and joining Bavinck's conservative social policy. After Kuyper's (1920) and Bavinck's death (1921) the party became more conservative. In the 1950s

97. Bavinck, *Het vierde eener eeuw*, 38.

and 1960s the notion of the Antirevolutionary Party as a progressive party surfaced again. It is no surprise that this revival coincided with a rediscovery of Bavinck's ideas and attitude.

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Planting Tulips in the Rainforest: Herman and Johan Herman Bavinck on Christianity in East and West

James Eglinton

James Eglinton is Meldrum Senior Lecturer in Reformed Theology at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent book, Bavinck: A Critical Biography, won The Gospel Coalition Book of the Year for History and Biography in 2020, and was a finalist for the 2021 ECPA Christian Book of the Year in the Biography and Memoir category.

Introduction

In my earlier *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*,[1] I argued that the development of Herman Bavinck's life and thought is best understood in two distinct phases: the two decades spent as a professor at the Theological School in Kampen (in the 1880s-90s), in which he wrote the first edition of the *Reformed Dogmatics*;[2] and in the following two decades at the Free University of Amsterdam (from 1902 until 1921), in which he revised the *Dogmatics* extensively, and was engaged in a multipronged effort to promote the importance of Christianity to the viability of a dechristianising Western culture.[3] These phases can be described in various ways. Bavinck himself spoke of the first phase as corresponding to the "age of Renan," to which I have added a follow-on "age of Nietzsche" descriptor. These windows of time were lived in the shadow, respectively, of the all-too-easy materialism of the French philosopher Ernest Renan, and the Jesus-despising philosophy of domination pioneered by the German atheist Friedrich Nietzsche. In a more directly biographical sense, however, we might simply talk about these phases in terms of a "young Bavinck" and a "mature Bavinck."

Talk of "young" and "mature" phases in his personal and intellectual development is hard to deny: in these respective periods, Bavinck lived in markedly different social and intellectual contexts, and developed accordingly within them. As is described in *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, in the Netherlands at least, the opening decades of the twentieth century were very different to the closing decades

1. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

2. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 133–218; Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, 4 vols., 1st ed. (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1892-1901).

3. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 219–92; Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (Kampen: 1906-11). The English translation, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003-8) is based on the second Dutch edition.

of the nineteenth. Within that context, Bavinck's thought changed in some respects: primarily in response to the sudden death of Renanesque moralistic materialistic atheism, and the unexpected resurrection of Nietzsche's anti-Christian atheism, the mature Bavinck moved from his earlier primary task as a defender of Calvinism, to become a public apologist for Christianity in general, alongside his commitment to Calvinism in particular.[4] The mature Bavinck distanced himself from the brand of predictive deductive thinking that marked his young thought, and instead came to see the outworking of sin and fallen starting points as chaotic and unpredictable.[5] In the "mature" phase, he was certainly more audibly committed to evangelism at home and abroad than he had been in the Kampen years.[6] The notion of worldview gained a greater degree of prominence in his mature writings.[7] Most notably, Bavinck's views on the role of women in society became markedly different towards the end of his life.[8]

In observing these changes, it should be noted, we do not find the mature Bavinck coming into his own by making a radical about turn in a similar style, for example, to the rupture seen between the younger and more mature Karl Barth on either side of his famous *Römerbrief*.[9] In general, the mature Bavinck's developments are best seen as further refinements—rather than wholesale rejections—of his early thought. Bruce Pass' recent work, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, charts an important example of this, following Bavinck's attempts to organise his dogmatics around a distinct (but shifting) centre point.[10] In the Amsterdam years, then, we find Bavinck hard at work in perceiving and resolving tensions set out in his earlier thought.

When considering his mature phase in that light, one area of tension seems to open up and—unlike the previous examples—go unresolved: namely, the awkward tension between his views on the global export of Western culture and religion (i.e. Christianity) on the one hand, and his public willingness to affirm the (global) catholicity of the Christian faith, and the consequent non-universal character of local Western forms of Christianity, on the other. In his mature thought, the relationship of Western Christianity to the notions of "local" and "universal" is untidy and unresolved. The mature Bavinck argued that non-Western cultures needed Christianity, but however much he admitted that Western Christianity was local rather than universal, he struggled to explain how Christianity might grow indigenously in non-Western cultures. While he argued against the export of Dutch

4. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 226–27.

5. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 230–31.

6. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 255–59.

7. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 227.

8. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 277–80.

9. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Sir Edwyn Clement Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

10. See, for example, Bruce Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentrism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen: Vandenboek & Ruprecht, 2020), in which Pass explores Bavinck's attempts to reorganise the centre of the dogmatic system.

Christianity to America (precisely on account of its Dutchness and foreignness within American culture), Bavinck nonetheless supported the export of Western Christianity in general to the non-Western world—despite its Westernness and foreignness in non-Western culture.)

This article will explore that tension, setting out the sense in which Herman Bavinck argued for both the global export *and* the provisionality of Western Christianity, and will demonstrate that this particular topic represents a notably unresolved problem in his mature thought. Biographically, it will locate this lack of resolution in his call for greater Western involvement in the development of missiology as a discrete theological discipline. Stated differently, it appears that Herman Bavinck was aware of his own shortcomings in resolving this particular difficulty. This interpretation will then be used to explain the attempt made by his nephew, the celebrated missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964), to resolve this clash via a distinct return to Augustine, who served as an African hinge between the indigenous forms of Christianity found in the East and the West.

Herman Bavinck on Catholicity and Locality

From early in his career, Herman Bavinck held to a distinctive and detailed account of the catholicity of the Christian faith. His 1885 lecture, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,"[11] argued that while the Protestant Reformation gave rise to sectarianism and the fragmentation of the church, it was nonetheless based on a rediscovery of the true nature of catholicity. This rediscovery entailed the rejection of (what Bavinck saw as) a dualistic Roman Catholic view of nature and grace whereby, "According to Rome, Christianity is exclusively church. Everything depends on this. Outside the church is the sphere of the unholy."[12]

In rejecting the view that the church's catholicity pertains to the church—which is to say, to the ranks of the ordained—but not the world, he argued that Protestants acquired a new perspective on the world and life within it. Protestantism drew sin and grace into a sharper opposition than its Roman Catholic antecedent had. By doing this, Protestant theology posited afresh that sin had a pervasive and corrosive spread across the entirety of human life, and accordingly, that the Christian faith presented God's solution to the problem of sin in every part of human life. In this sense, Bavinck claimed, Protestant theology articulates Christianity as a faith for all of life in the world (and for the entirety of that life) in a distinctively Protestant way. This is the nature of Protestant catholicity:

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

12. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 230.

> The gospel is a joyful tiding, not only for the individual person but also for humanity, for the family, for society, for the state, for art and science, for the entire cosmos, for the whole groaning creation.[13]

As such, catholicity is recast in universal tones: its scope encompasses the created realm, and not simply the church, in its entirety. In Bavinck's view, this was a profound departure from Roman Catholicism: "Rome thus maintains the catholicity of the Christian faith in the sense that it seeks to bring the entire world under the submission of the church. But it denies catholicity in the sense that the Christian faith itself must be a leavening agent in everything."[14] This change towards a culturally universalist sense of catholicity, though, is not anti-ecclesial. Rather, the insistence that Christianity is catholic with regard to the totality of human cultures and historical periods goes in tandem with a distinct view of the catholicity of the church itself:

> It is impossible to express the thoroughgoing universalism of the Christian faith in words more powerful and beautiful than these. Christianity knows no boundaries beyond those which God himself has in his good pleasure established; no boundaries of race or age, class, or status, nationality, or language.… A Gospel so rich created a people of God that could no longer be contained within the boundaries of one nation and country.… The cross of Christ reconciles all things—God and humanity, heaven and earth, Jew and Gentile, Barbarian and Scythian, man and woman, slave and free. On Pentecost, the New Testament church is born as an independent community.[15]

On these terms, catholicity requires the church to have no ethic, geographical, or cultural centre point on earth. Rather, it subjects the church to a radical geographical decentralisation. On these Protestant terms, catholicity prevents any single cultural expression of Christianity from receiving normative privilege.[16] In his later *Reformed Dogmatics*, the arguments first rehearsed in "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church" were developed into a claim that the idea of '*Roman* Catholic' was itself oxymoronic: these words, he wrote, are "mutually contradictory."

> The Roman Catholic Church makes the faith and salvation of humans dependent on a specific place and on a specific person and thereby fails to do justice to the catholicity of Christianity. The name "Roman" or "papal church" therefore expresses its nature much more accurately than "Catholic."[17]

13. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 224.

14. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 231.

15. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 224.

16. For a further elaboration of Bavinck's views on Calvinism as catholic along cosmopolitan and organicist lines, see Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Confessional, International, and Cosmopolitan: Herman Bavinck's Neo-Calvinistic and Protestant Understanding of the Catholicity of the Church," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 12 (2018), 22–39.

17. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 323.

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, is a truly global institution—a fact recognised by Bavinck. However, the sense in which it privileges a particular human culture in the midst of all the cultures of the world marks it out, in Bavinck's view at least, as insufficiently catholic. Protestantism, he believed, fights sin in the natural order more strenuously than Catholicism, precisely because Protestants see the good in natural order: every square inch of human life is worth fighting (against sin) for. To borrow the language of viniculture, wherever the catholic faith is found, it will have a distinct *terroir* reflecting its local growth habitat. It depends on this difference just as viniculture needs the difference between Chilean Syrah and Spanish Rioja—a culture that is worlds apart from the homogenising global export model of, for example, Coca Cola, the flavour of which is more or less the same regardless of location. "The kingdom of heaven may be a treasure and a pearl of great price," he wrote, "but it is also a mustard seed and a leaven."[18] Every cultural thing, and every square inch of cultural soil, matters to God, and is targeted, and distinctively redeemed, by the gospel of grace.

Even in Bavinck's earliest writings, then, we find an account of the heart of Protestant theology that sees catholicity as radically geographically decentralised,[19] and that, in theory at least, is able to see the common grace of God as present (albeit in non-uniform ways) in all of human culture. Because it is catholic, Christianity is able to take root in, blossom within, and reform, every distinct human culture: it is emphatically not only a faith for the West or those who inhabit Western culture.

Bavinck was clearly aware that the Western world itself contained many distinct cultural histories. We could expect nothing less from a figure so deeply influenced by German Romanticism—a movement that promoted a keen sense of distinctive national traits. In that light, Bavinck was cognisant of the locality of his own Dutch Reformed tradition against a broader backdrop of Western cultures. This awareness of local Christian tradition was all the more striking given his contrast with his colleague Abraham Kuyper, whose geopolitical thought saw Dutch Calvinism has destined to exert great influence on other nations (above all, the United States). In response to Kuyper's grand international ambitions, we find Bavinck writing in an article on "The Future of Calvinism" that,

18. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 236.

19. In this regard, Bavinck's view of catholicity closely resembles Abraham Kuyper's arguments in the *Lectures on Calvinism* that in Protestantism, the church's spatial centre point is in celestial, where Christ is physically present, in contrast to Roman Catholicism's centre point being earthly: "the Church had more and more lost sight of this celestial character,—she had become worldly in her nature. The Sanctuary was again brought back to earth, the altar was rebuilt of stone, and a priestly hierarchy had reconstituted itself for the ministrations of the altar. Next of course it was necessary to renew the tangible sacrifice on earth, and this at last brought the church to create the unbloody offering of the Mass." Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 60.

> Calvinism wishes no cessation of progress and promotes multiformity. It . . . honors every gift and different calling of the Churches. It does not demand for itself the same development in America and England which it has found in Holland. This only must be insisted upon, that in each country and in every Reformed Church it should develop itself in accordance with its own nature and should not permit itself to be supplanted or corrupted by foreign ideas.[20]

For that reason, he argued that while Calvinism is "a specific and the richest and most beautiful form of Christianity," it is "not coextensive with Christianity." Although he believed strongly that the Netherlands needed Calvinism, his views on his local tradition's international prospects flatly contradicted those of Kuyper: "Nobody," he wrote, "can tell whether Dutch Calvinism is still destined to exert influence on the future of Calvinism in other countries."[21]

These sentiments shed important light on one of Bavinck's most memorable claims. In speeches held across the Netherlands following his return from a journey to North America in 1892, Bavinck argued that rather than exporting their Dutch Calvinism to America, the Dutch should encourage America to develop its own distinctive form of Christianity. Each of these speeches closed with the (locally controversial) claim that, "after all, Calvinism is not the only truth."[22] As a melting pot fed, amongst other things, by a range of distinct Western cultural histories (and forms of Christianity), he believed, America needed a Christianity that was conditioned by the norms of Scandinavian Lutherans, English Puritans and Methodists, Scottish Presbyterians, and so on. To project Dutchness on the development of its Christianity would be wrong, precisely because it would be a foreign imposition. (When critiquing forms of secularism and atheism in Dutch culture, Bavinck's own organicist thought often drew on the image of the invasive non-native species, and a careful attentiveness to the flowers that natively grow in one's own terrain. The same idea exerts influence on his reluctance to plant Dutch Christianity elsewhere in the West.)[23]

Herman Bavinck on the Export of Western Christianity and Culture

In what we might term the 'young' phase of Bavinck's development, we find relatively little attention to the specifics of how Christianity might spread in the non-Western world—although from early on, he had laid the conceptual foundation for this truly catholic faith to bloom in whichever cultural soil its seed is planted. Those questions only become prominent in Bavinck's thought in the "mature" phase, and that for two

20. Herman Bavinck, "Future of Calvinism," *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5, no. 17 (1894): 23.

21. Bavinck, "Future of Calvinism," 24.

22. Cited in Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 314.

23. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 207.

reasons. First, during a trip to North America in 1908, he encountered first-hand the fervour of the global evangelisation movement and was deeply marked by it. In response to this, he became a prominent advocate for the development of missiology amongst the Dutch Reformed, developed personal contact with missionaries working outside the Western world, and encouraged young Dutch Christians to move into the mission field.[24] Secondly, in 1911, to his own great surprise, Bavinck was elected as a Member of Parliament—a role assumed just as the Dutch colonial project was wrestling with questions prompted by secularisation. Should the Dutch export Western culture without also sharing the Dutch religion, or should its colonial project aim at the spread of both?[25]

In two notable parliamentary speeches, Bavinck argued for the likely disastrous effects of the secularised export of Western culture. His claim was that to teach indigenes a Western view of culture, economics and science, without also sharing Christianity, was necessarily to strike a death blow to their ancestral religion, whilst also refusing to give them a new faith to take its place. It was to create a gaping God-shaped hole, whilst wilfully leaving that hole as an empty space. In this line of reasoning, he thought, to teach modern Western biological science to a follower of an animistic religion inherently undermines that person's animistic religion. To disabuse a non-Western person of the foundations of their native religion, whilst also deliberately keeping silent on Christianity as the religion that gave rise to Western culture and science, is an impoverishing form of cultural expansion. The longer-term effect of this sleight of hand, Bavinck believed, would be that non-Western people would later regroup around their traditional religions, which would then take on a powerful anti-Western focus. In short, he feared a future disrupted by global, religiously-fuelled (and anti-Western) warfare—for which reason, his speeches argued passionately that the West should export both its culture *and* its religion to the non-Western world.[26]

Concretely, in the mature Herman Bavinck's thought, the best outcome for Dutch colonial subjects was conversion to Western culture and religion—both of which, he believed, were more highly developed (thanks to the leavening influence of Christianity) than the cultural and religious offerings of the non-Western world. In one parliamentary speech on this topic, for example, he spoke with paternalistic pride of a Javan who now worshipped Christ, *and* revered the Dutch queen.[27] The best thing for a Javan, he thought, was to become a Christian and a quasi-Dutchman.

24. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 255–58.

25. For a historical study of Dutch Reformed (*gereformeerde*) approaches to this question, see Herman Smit, *Gezag is gezag: kanttekeningen bij de houding van de gereformeerden in de Indonesische kwestie* (Amsterdam: Verloren, 2006).

26. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 267–69.

27. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 268.

Tension left Unresolved: The Call for a Missiologist

In exploring the mature Bavinck's views on the spread of Christianity from West to East, it is hard to avoid the palpable tension between his fundamental doctrinal commitments regarding catholicity (which deal so explicitly with Christianity's potential for native reformation in every human culture) and his struggle to imagine an indigenous form of Christianity that might grow beyond the Western world. If it was insufficiently catholic for Roman Catholicism to expect non-Roman believers to adopt the trappings of Roman culture, was it somehow different to expect Javan converts to take on the trappings of Dutch culture? For all his insistence that "Calvinism is not the only truth," Herman Bavinck could only ever imagine planting tulips in the rainforests of Java. In all likelihood, of course, this lack of constructive vision for indigenous Christianity outside of the West is primarily the product of Bavinck's views on the cultural superiority of "civilised" (*beschaafde*) Western culture *vis-à-vis* non-Western cultures: amongst Europeans of his era, it was widely accepted that Western culture had been uniquely penetrated by the true religion for millennia, to the benefit of its art, science, and society. While a poorly defined, moralistic judgment of Herman Bavinck as "colonial" is of little use historically or theologically, particularly given his own critiques of (what he saw as) exploitative colonialism, it remains true that he was profoundly shaped by the superior sense of 'civilisation' that marked Western Europe in his era (in Bavinck's eyes, a superiority of culture, though not of race).[28] It would perhaps be more surprising to find Western European theologians who came of age in the late nineteenth century who bucked that trend, and strove instead to perceive the different complexity and value in non-Western cultures.

Despite this, the reasons to look appreciatively at non-Western cultures, and to pursue indigenous Christianity there, can clearly be seen in Bavinck's writings. And as such, the lack of a constructive sense of how to connect his commitments to catholicity as pertaining to culture, and the need for every culture to be redeemed by Christianity, is a striking one: surely the former requires a vision of the latter that allows for Christianity to grow locally outside of the West, and that does not require Javan believers to become pseudo-Europeans in order to follow Jesus? Indeed, we might subvert a line from his critique of Roman Catholicism in his early article on catholicity to say that in this case, "the motive is clear even if the system is not yet fully developed."[29] (Building on Sutanto's work, which highlights that Calvinism recognises the inevitability of diversity, I argue that this recognition of inevitability exceeds Herman Bavinck's own final written corpus.)[30]

28. See, for example, George Harinck, "'Wipe Out Lines of Division (Not Distinctions)': Bennie Keet, Neo-Calvinism and the Struggle against Apartheid," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 11 (2017): 81–85.

29. Bavinck, "Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," 229.

30. Sutanto, "Confessional, International, and Cosmopolitan: Herman Bavinck's Neo-Calvinistic

When considering this tension biographically, however, it does seem the case that Herman Bavinck was well aware of his shortcomings on this particular issue. Although he had travelled around Europe and had visited North America twice, he had no personal experience of the non-Western world (which was mediated to him most deeply by his friend, the orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, who travelled extensively in the Middle East, and in Indonesia).[31] While Bavinck promoted missiology as a much-needed theological discipline in the early twentieth century, he was also aware that he himself was no missiologist. (When Bavinck began to agitate for more resources to be devoted to missiology at the Free University of Amsterdam, around 1910, missiology was taught as a subject within practical theology, which was the responsibility of the New Testament scholar Petrus Biesterveld. Bavinck's argument was that it should be separated from New Testament and practical theology and receive the exclusive attention of a newly appointed professor missiology.)[32]

It is certainly quite possible that Herman Bavinck's efforts to promote more focused missiological reflection were motivated by his own apparent struggle to connect his notion of catholicity to the growth of Christianity beyond the West. At the very least, we can say with confidence that he knew he was not a missiologist, and certainly never presented his arguments on colonial missions as the last word on that subject. His insistence on the true nature of catholicity, by contrast, is stated repeatedly across his corpus, and in both "early" and "mature" life phases. It was perhaps the case that his search for a devoted Reformed missiologist was itself a search for someone who could exceed his own limitations and pursue the outworking of catholicity to a greater degree.

Johan Herman Bavinck

Bavinck's search for a missiologist colleague was first met by the appointment of Petrus Sillevis Smitt (1867-1918). That appointment, however, failed to meet his expectations. Sillevis Smitt was a practical theologian primarily concerned with training Dutch pastors, and had no experience of missiology or the non-Western world. After his appointment, missiology remained a subject handled in passing during lectures under the broader heading of practical theology. Furthermore, Sillevis Smitt was plagued by poor health, and died six years after his appointment. Herman Bavinck's call for "a man who lives solely for mission" remained unmet for some time. Remarkably, however, it was fulfilled in some style by his nephew, the missionary and missiologist Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964), who was later

and Protestant Understanding of the Catholicity of the Church," 35–36.

31. Jan de Bruijn and George Harinck, eds., *Een Leidse vriendschap: De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 1875-1921* (Baarn: TenHave, 1999).

32. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 257–58.

appointed to teach missiology at both the Theological School in Kampen, and at the Free University of Amsterdam.[33]

Johan Herman, a son of Herman's brother Coenraad Bernardus ("Bernard"), a Christian Reformed pastor, studied under his uncle at the Free University of Amsterdam (1912-18), where he became a member of the university's Union for East Indies Members (Vereniging van Indisch Oud-leden). There, in early life, he became acquainted with the noted missiologist Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965). Following his years in Amsterdam, he pursued doctoral studies in Germany at the University of Erlangen (1918-19), where he wrote a dissertation on psychology and mysticism in the medieval German Dominican Henry Suso. (In describing his early motivation to study this particular topic, Holtrop's biography of J.H. Bavinck portrays him as having been inspired by the combination of his uncle's interest in religious psychology, and Augustine's dictum, "I wish only to know God and the soul.")[34] Following this, he moved to Indonesia, where he served as the assistant pastor of a Dutch-speaking congregation composed of Dutch colonists, and Dutch-speaking Asians, in Medan (1920-21), and then worked as pastor to a Dutch congregation in Bandung (1921-26). At the close of his first period in Indonesia, he published the book *Inleiding in de zielkunde* (Introduction to Psychology), a work that attempts to bridge Augustine's *Confessions* and the insights of modern psychology.[35] In the same year, he returned to the Netherlands to pastor in Heemstede (1926-29), where he published another profoundly Augustinian work in Christian psychology: *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing* (Personality and Worldview), in which he argued that all worldview-building is paradoxically an attempt to ascend towards, and also to evade, God.[36] In 1930, he returned to Indonesia, albeit in an altogether different context and mindset: rather than ministering to Western expats and locals who had moved towards Western culture, he became a missionary to locals in Surakarta (1930-33), and then served as a teacher of indigenous pastors in Jogyakarta (1935-39). In these years, he pursued deep immersion in Eastern culture and close contact with Eastern religions, and he attempted to articulate the sense in which the catholicity of the faith requires its indigenous expression in the East. In that context, his first Javanese-language book appeared under the title *Soeksma Soepana* (The Depth of the Soul, 1932), written under the pseudonym Kjai Martawahana. That pseudonymous work

33. Paul J. Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist, Johan Herman Bavinck, 1895-1964* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003); John Bolt, James Bratt, and Paul Visser, eds., *The J. H. Bavinck Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Daniel Strange, *Their Rock is Not Like our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

34. P. N. Holtrop, "Bavinck, Johan Herman," in C. Houtman, et al, eds., *Biografisch lexicon voor het Nederlands protestantisme*, vol. 6 (2006), 27.

35. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Inleiding in de zielkunde* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1926), III, 26.

36. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1927), 165.

served as a prelude to his longer book *Christus en de mystiek van het oosten* (Christ and the Mysticism of the East, 1934)—a work that provides Johan Herman's clearest presentation of Augustine as the theological architect of Western civilisation, and that presents the East's great need as indigenous engagement with Augustine, rather than with the Western civilisation to which his life and thought gave rise.[37] Van den Berg has described how in this particular work, "Bavinck confronted Javanese thinking, influenced as it is by Hindu and Muslim mysticism, with the thought world of Augustine who, in his own day, had coped with the problems posed by Neoplatonic mysticism."[38] The most basic missiological rationale in that particular book is that Augustine himself is the ideal Christian missionary to the peoples of the East.

The Augustinian Bridge

In contrast to his uncle's unshakable sense of being Western, Johan Herman Bavinck once memorably described himself as "having been born with an Eastern soul."[39] (During his second period in Indonesia, he also gained the nickname "the white Javanese.")[40] As has been noted, Johan Herman even published theological literature in Javanese, under a Javanese *nom de plume*. In contrast to the pseudo-Dutch Javan celebrated by Herman, Johan Herman attempted to embed himself in non-Western culture, even to the point of becoming Kjai Martawahana.

In noting this difference, I argue that Johan Herman's move to promote the indigenous non-Western growth of Christianity should not be seen as a rejection *simpliciter* of his uncle's thought: he was not simply a crude post-colonial reaction to his famous colonial-era uncle. Rather, Johan Herman attempted to resolve the tension in Herman's approach to catholicity and culture by grounding those issues in the life and work of his long-term muse, Augustine of Hippo, who provides a fourth century African bridge between the twentieth century East and West. If, as Holtrop has claimed, Johan Herman's principal influences were his uncle and Augustine, it seems that Johan Herman used the latter to ease some of the former's theological tensions.[41]

Herman Bavinck's own thought, of course, was also profoundly influenced by Augustine, who was the most cited theologian across the four volumes of his *Reformed*

37. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Christus en de mystiek van het oosten* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1934), 9, 112–15. Five chapters of this work have been published in English translation, see "Christ and Asian Mysticism," in *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, 303–411.

38. J. van den Berg, "Legacy of Johan Herman Bavinck," *International Bulletin* 7, no. 4 (October 1983): 174.

39. Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 442.

40. van den Berg, "Legacy of Johan Herman Bavinck," 172.

41. A more fully-orbed account of Johan Herman's influences—Augustine, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Otto, Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, Barth, Brunner, and Kraemer—is found in Paul J. Visser, "Introduction: The Life and Thought of Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964)," *The J. H. Bavinck Reader*, 33–36.

Dogmatics[42]—a fact that resonates with his eventual successor at the Theological School in Kampen, Anthonie Honig, noting that the study of Augustine in particular had occupied Herman's early years there.[43] Herman's brother, and Johan Herman's father, the pastor Bernard Bavinck, was also a noted Augustine enthusiast. In 1930, for example, he spoke on "Augustine's Doctrine of Predestination" at the Union of Pastors in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Vereniging van Predikanten van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland).[44] (Beyond this, however, little is known of Bernard Bavinck's views on Augustine.) Clearly, as Bernard's son and Herman's nephew and one-time student, Johan Herman had abundant opportunity to encounter Augustine—an influence that he seems to have channelled to a distinctive end.

In comparison to the use of Augustine seen in Herman's writings, Johan Herman utilised Augustine in two distinct ways: in the first place, the notion of *paradox* (derived from the *Confessions*) played a governing role across Johan Herman's works.[45] This is the existential *motif* running through Augustine's autobiography that that all human life—his own included—is a simultaneous looking for, and a fleeing from, God. This psychological insight serves as the lens used by Johan Herman in his sympathetic and critical reading of religious philosophers in the West (Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel), and in the East (Laozi, and Confucius).[46] While there is a well-established Western view of Augustine as a 'universal man' whose story compels Western people because it is existentially relatable to subsequent generations of Westerners,[47] Johan Herman viewed Augustine's universal existential appeal as truly global: it is no less relevant to the peoples of the East, whose lives are also simultaneously drawn towards and driven away from God. In comparison to this reliance on existential, psychological factors in accounting for universal human cultural and religious strivings, Herman relied on the interrelated theological notions of common grace and general revelation, alongside the doctrine of sin, to account for the particulars of human religiosity.[48] Viewed in that light, it becomes clear that in Johan Herman's

42. Brock wisely notes that, "While quantity does not guarantee influence, [Bavinck] does cite Augustine nearly eight hundred times in the *RD*, which is substantially more than his use of Calvin." Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020), 45.

43. A. G. Honig, "Ter nagedachtenis aan Prof. Bavinck," *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 6 (October 1921): 182.

44. *De Bazuin*, April 4, 1930; H. Faber, "Kroniek," *Vox Theologica: Interacademiaal Theologisch Tijdschrift* 2 (1930): 48.

45. His book *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing*, for example, is essentially an exposition of Augustine's paradox as an exercise in worldview cultivation.

46. Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing*, 18.

47. For example, Stewart Pernowe, *The End of the Roman World* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), 143. "Augustine is one of the universal men."

48. This is not to say, of course, that Johan Herman deployed the Augustian paradox as a rejection of the categories of general and special revelation (see Johan Herman Bavinck, "General Revelation and the Non-Christian Religions," *The J.H. Bavinck Reader*). However, Visser has argued that later in his life, Johan Herman's account of divine self-revelation moved away from a

work, the Augustinian paradox is utilised differently than in Herman's writings. It is certainly the case that Herman's work on psychology—in particular, on the unconscious life and personality, as seen in his "Foundations of Psychology" and *Philosophy of Revelation*—was developed in the shadow of Augustine.[49] However, in comparison to this, Augustine's psychological paradox is nonetheless given a distinctive central role in Johan Herman's thinking, in particular as a Christian entry point into non-Western cultures, and as an entry point into Christianity for non-Western people. It is in this sense that Augustine functions prominently as Johan Herman's "bridge." Rather than begin with an effort to convince Eastern people of the basic structures of Abrahamic monotheism—that there is a God who discloses himself generally, who is the giver of their cultural goods and virtues, against whom all have sinned, and so on—as starting point from which to explain their religion and culture to them, Johan Herman seems to have preferred a first point of contact in a universal psychological paradox.

Secondly, Johan Herman's writings show specific readiness to attribute the development of Western civilisation to a single figure (Augustine), in contrast to Herman's attribution of Western civilisation in more general terms to the impact of Christianity as a religion. While Herman's parliamentary speeches claim that modern Western culture is the fruit of Christianity, Johan Herman personalises this claim in something akin to a "butterfly effect" view of Western history: while the twentieth century West is inexplicable without Christianity, its long and slow Christianisation was a specific consequence of Augustine's life and work. In Johan Herman's estimations, the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* changed everything: the *Confessions* signals a profound new awareness of human psychology in the striving to move from the self towards God (a process understood by Johan Herman as the cultivation of a worldview), just as *De Trinitate* advanced an understanding of the reality of divine self-revelation as the basis of human knowledge of the divine. With these, Augustine gave birth to a new world. In Johan Herman's works, he is *the* seminal figure whose own existential, cultural, and intellectual conversion to Christianity was singularly important in the shaping of what later emerged as Christianised "Western" culture. In *Christus en de mystiek van het oosten*, he argues that Augustine reshaped the world around the Mediterranean from its pre-Christian *cosmological* world-order into the novel *theological* world-order that followed.[50] Having perceived that God's self-revelation is the source of our knowledge of the divine, Augustine set about

recognisably neo-Calvinist account of revelation along general and special lines, and instead came to resemble a Barthian account of revelation as Christocentric. See Visser, "Introduction: The Life and Thought of Johan Herman Bavinck (1895-1964)," 35.

49. Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018), chapters 3 and 7; "Foundations of Psychology," *The Bavinck Review* 9 (2018): 8, 173, 183, 209.

50. Johan Herman Bavinck, *Christus en de mystiek van het oosten*, 113–34.

rereading the world as the locus of that self-disclosure. His world looked different in the light of its triune Creator.

As such, Johan Herman saw Augustine as the progenitor of Western culture, rather than a figure formed within it: in this reading, while all subsequent Western culture is deeply indebted to Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo nonetheless retains a primordial non-Western point of origin. As a figure who grew up wrestling with the Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures and religions that predated Christianity, his immediate interlocutors—pagan Romans, Greek philosophers, and Manichaeans—were no less alien to twentieth century Westerners than the Hindus and Buddhists with whom Johan Herman interacted on Java. It was precisely by overcoming them that Augustine gave rise to what then emerges as "the West." Alongside Herman Bavinck's Protestant insistence that "Augustine does not belong exclusively to Rome,"[51] we find in Johan Herman's writings an implicit argument that Augustine does not belong exclusively to the West. Subtly, Johan Herman invests the kind of universal capital in Augustine's story that Herman had stored in the notion of "catholicity." In these, respectively, each man believed he had found something for everyone.

Planting Augustine in the East

From this, we see an ability to distinguish between Augustine as the Christianising *root* of Western culture (in terms close to Peter Brown's description of him as "the first modern man"),[52] and later Western civilisation as the local Christianised *fruit* that slowly grew from it. In contrast to Herman's belief in the West's calling to export both the root (seen by him generally as Christianity) and its local fruit (Western civilisation), Johan Herman eschewed crudely exporting the fruit, whilst arguing *for* the missiological necessity of planting the same root: Eastern people needed to meet Augustine for themselves, and discover that his strivings with his own pre-Christian neighbours were recognisable within their own religious and cultural setting. And from that indigenous interaction with the Western world's African architect, Christianity would set to work transforming the East. To Johan Herman, there was simply no need to plant tulips in the rainforest. One need only plant the story of Augustine, and leave its world-reordering power to take effect. (Behind the encounter with Augustine, of course, lies a direct encounter with Scripture, as the text that overturned Augustine's pre-Christian life and world.)

While *Persoonlijkheid en wereldbeschouwing* and *Christus en de mystiek van het oosten* set out both an architectonic (theoretical) view of Western culture and its Christianity as springing up from Augustine's root, and present the East's great need as a direct encounter with him, it is important to note that in his second phase in

51. Herman Bavinck, "Foreword to the First Edition (Volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 9–10.

52. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 504.

Indonesia, Johan Herman set about putting this theoretical approach into practice. In the early 1930s for example, we find him in full flow, engaging both Dutch colonists and locals with the message of Augustine. In February 1932, the newspaper *De Nederlander* carried a report on a Youth Leaders Conference held in late December 1931 in Merapi—a conference attended by, "Forty-five people . . . Bataks, Javans, Chinese, people from the Moluccas were amongst those who had come from very different backgrounds."[53] The paper's extended report detailed that Hendrik Kraemer was originally scheduled to speak, but was unable to do so on account of family circumstances: "He was replaced by Dr. Bavinck, who gave an improvised talk on the life of Augustine."[54] Later that year, in October, he also gave lecture on, "Augustine, the seeker of the light," to a Dutch society (Sociëteit de Eendracht) in Magelang.[55] In addressing both audiences, the priority of Augustine is clear: the Bishop of Hippo, author of the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*, was the key to spreading the catholic faith in the East. From that root, Johan Herman attempted to tend and water some early local shoots, from the *Balé Sudda Sadana* youth centre—a house in which Javan social hierarchy and family boundaries were subverted by the use of Low Javanese language, and through an insistence that all present were brothers and sisters—to the *pantja saudara* ("circles of five") Bible-study groups intended by Johan Herman as a means both to teach Scripture to locals, whilst also learning their culture better from them.[56] This was an effort to grow Christianity with a recognisably Asian *terroir*.

Conclusion

In this initial attempt to tease out a significant and unresolved tension in Herman Bavinck's thought, centred on the apparent clash between his views on common grace, human culture, and catholicity, Johan Herman Bavinck has been posited as a neo-Calvinist theologian who brought his uncle's tradition from the colonial early twentieth century into the post-colonial mid-century that followed. It has done so by suggesting that the key to this advance lies in the central place played by Augustine's own life and theology—and the psychological paradox central to both—in Johan Herman's efforts to ease his uncle's tensions. Despite the common recognition of Johan Herman's great love for Augustine in scholarship on his writings, the sense in which Augustine enables him to resolve a knotty tension in his uncle's thought seems more significant than has previously been acknowledged. This claim is made tentatively, of course, recognising that Johan Herman's own life and thought were particularly complex, and subject to further development following his return to the

53. *De Nederlander*, Feb. 25, 1932.

54. *De Nederlander*, Feb. 25, 1932.

55. *Algemeen handelsblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, Oct. 19, 1932.

56. Visser, *Heart for the Gospel, Heart for the World: The Life and Thought of a Reformed Pioneer Missiologist, Johan Herman Bavinck, 1895-1964*, 34–35.

Netherlands in 1939.[57] It certainly merits further attention in conversations on the place of Reformed, and specifically neo-Calvinistic, Christianity in the globalised twenty-first century, within which Herman's thought remains jarringly bound to the nineteenth century in some regards. And as such, it holds some promise in continuing Sutanto's earlier conversation around the "inevitability" towards diversity seen, although perhaps not sufficiently developed enough, in Herman's own lifetime.[58]

In noting this aspect of development between Herman and Johan Herman, it is perhaps fitting to conclude with the admission that the lives of both Bavincks demonstrate distinctive polymathic qualities. My own earlier work has charted Herman's polymathic tendencies at length, arguing that he was driven to become a polymath because of his views on Calvinistic Christianity as a truly catholic faith.[59] Van den Berg has described the same impulse in Johan Herman, albeit without using that polymath label, but with an important difference: Johan Herman's broad and insatiable intellectual and cultural curiosity came about as an extension of his fundamentally Augustinian concerns. "[Johan Herman] Bavinck's writings," van den Berg claims, "cover a wide, almost overwhelming and confusing, variety of subjects. Yet an element of continuity is clearly evident: his fascination with the problem of God and the human soul."[60]

To a fairly consistent degree, it appears that Johan Herman tried to refocus his uncle's theological trajectory by drawing Augustine—an ever-present figure in Herman's works—to the fore. Why might this be? One possibility is that he was trying not simply to answer his uncle's call for a devoted missiologist. It might also be true that he was fulfilling Herman's plea that, "dogmatics must become more psychological"—an ambition that draws our eye to Herman's own deep Augustinian roots.[61] At the heart of that striving lies a desire to bring the *Confessions* and *De Trinitate* to bear on one another, because together, they acquaint us with who we truly are, as those who are always simultaneously looking for and looking away from God, and with who God shows himself to be: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God eternally in three persons. Strikingly, it seems that his plea was heard and fulfilled, to a degree at least, in the realm of missiology, rather than in dogmatics proper.

57. Visser, "Introduction" 33–36.

58. Sutanto, "Confessional, International, and Cosmopolitan: Herman Bavinck's Neo-Calvinistic and Protestant Understanding of the Catholicity of the Church," 35–36.

59. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 204–5.

60. Van den Berg, "Legacy of Johan Herman Bavinck," 173.

61. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 168.

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Encyclopedia Bavinck: The Case of the History of the Theological Encyclopedia

Gregory Parker Jr.

Gregory Parker Jr. is a Ph.D. student in Systematic Theology at the University of Edinburgh, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh, UK. He is a co-editor and co-translator of Herman Bavinck's The Sacrifice of Praise *(Hendrickson, 2019) and* Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion *(Hendrickson, 2022*).

Introduction

A familiar scene in the kids' books *Encyclopedia Brown* is the arrival home of the befuddled chief of police, Mr. Brown. He is troubled by a case. His son Leroy "Encyclopedia" Brown takes up the case that is puzzling his father. The cases are often worked out on account of some sort of wide-ranging trivia type knowledge that Leroy has gathered. "Encyclopedia" Brown's encyclopedic knowledge is how he garnered his nickname. In modern parlance this is often how we think of the encyclopedia. It is a distended dictionary of sorts, swelling with far too much information. Alternatively, many think of the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* sitting somewhere in their parent's homes sold to them by a travelling salesman years ago. This picture or understanding of the encyclopedia as strictly a set of information is novel to the twentieth century.[1]

In the nineteenth century, the theological encyclopedia was an indispensable tool in the toolbox of the student of theology.[2] Bavinck perceived the theological encyclopedia as a crucial component to the study of theology. He writes, "The encyclopedia must be practiced at the beginning and at the end of the years of study. First to orient us. Subsequently to pull everything together and thereby allow us to see the forest for the trees."[3] The theological encyclopedia was a crucial part of the development of the student of theology. The theological encyclopedia orients students to the field of theology.

1. In fact, it is the kind of encyclopedia Bavinck hoped would not develop for it would present knowledge atomistically. See Nathaniel Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2020), 97.

2. For an expansion on the importance of the theological encyclopedia in nineteenth century theological thought, see Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016).

3. See "Manuscript Encyclopaedie der Theologie," (unknown) Box 346, Folder 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck. Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands. §1. ("De Encycl. moet dus beoefend aan 't begin en aan 't eind des studiejaren. Daarna om alles saam te vatten en om de boomen het woud niet voorbij te zien.")

Zachary Purvis argues that, in the late eighteenth and ninteenth century, the theological encyclopedia was viewed as a "living" apparatus. It was a way for theologians to envision how the various components of theology related to one another. The issues of the organization of knowledge, the unity of theology's various parts, and theology's relationship to the rest of the traditional faculties were all problems facing theology. In Germany the collective name for these problems was the theological encyclopedia (*theologische Enzyklopädie*).[4] The same issue was prevalent in Dutch universities and the same theological tool was being utilized.[5]

Nineteenth century Dutch theologian and contemporary of Herman Bavinck's (1854–1921), Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), argued that the Encyclopedia was a systematic way of considering how various sciences related to each other. He wrote, "The idea of system became the chief aim in Encyclopedia; and from the material of each science so much only was taken as was necessary for the proper understanding of its organic life."[6] In this manner, the encyclopedia became its own independent science. The idea of the encyclopedia, therefore, presupposed a relationship between the various parts of knowledge and strove to understand how they organically connect to each other.[7] It is this organic relationship which the encyclopedia investigates. For Kuyper, the encyclopedia was formed by first classifying the various areas of human knowledge, then burrowing down to collect the treasure of those various sciences. This was followed by placing these issues within the individual departments in relation to themselves. And, finally, all the various sciences are tied together so that the whole of science can be viewed in its organic unity.[8]

This essay provides a condensed unveiling of Bavinck's narrative of the historical origin and development of the theological encyclopedia.[9] As well as providing a

4. Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 2, 80.

5. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 86, 103; Joris van Eijnatten, "History, Reform, and Aufklärung: German Theological Writing and Dutch Literary Publicity in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology*/ Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte 7, no. 2 (2000): 174. Van Eijnatten argues German theological writings were commonly and popularly translated and read in the Netherlands in the second half of the eighteenth century.

6. Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1894); portions of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedia* are in English, as *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles* vol. 2, trans. J. Hendrik de Vries (New York: Scriber, 1898); Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 10; James Eglinton, "The Reception of Aquinas in Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie der heilige Godgeleerdheid*" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 455. Eglinton puts forth a very clear summary of Kuyper's encyclopedia project: "In the full-length original, volume 1 provides Kuyper's retelling of the history of theology's emergence as a distinct science. Volume 2 contains Kuyper's constructive account of theology as an organized form of the knowledge of God. This is followed, in volume 3, by a distinctively Kuyperian application of the principle of theology as science, namely, that other sciences should be 'Christianized' by theology, leading to the creation of Christian philosophy, Christian literary studies, Christian art, Christian natural sciences, and so on."

7. Kuyper, Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology, 11–12.

8. Kuyper, Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology, 27.

9. There are primarily four sources of Bavinck's which to pull from to navigate his history

historical panorama of the origin and development of the theological sciences, this essay will provide a lens through which to approach Bavinck's own theological encyclopedia. The theological encyclopedia is an important aspect of understanding any nineteenth century theologian's theological system. Bavinck's theological encyclopedia is only accessible to those who have visited the Vrije Universiteit's Herman Bavinck archive.[10] It also provides insight into how Bavinck relates to his theological heritage and modernity. In this paper, it will become clear that Bavinck is interested in sourcing his theological encyclopedia from the reformed tradition, having it develop *theologically*, while also being comfortable utilizing modern encyclopedic grammar. In this manner, we get insight into Bavinck's encyclopedic program as concomitantly orthodox and modern.

In section §2 of Bavinck's "De Theologisiche Encyclopaedie" he sketches a history of the development of the theological encyclopedia.[11] He lays out the history in three broad periods: (1) Early Church to the Reformation, (2) "After the Reformation until Schleiermacher"[12] and (3) "Since Schleiermacher."[13] In section §3 of "Encyclopaedie der Theologie," he also outlines the progression of the theological encyclopedia. It follows a similar historical trajectory as the aforementioned encyclopedia but lacks any clear divisions, apart from a gap before the introduction of Johann G. Herder and Schleiermacher.[14] On account of this clear structure within

of the theological encyclopedia: (1) Bavinck's 1884–85 lectures, see "Manuscript Encyclopaedie cursus," (1884–1885) Box 346, Folder 43, Archive of Herman Bavinck, Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands (hereafter, no. 43, Archive of Herman Bavinck); (2) his "De Theologisiche Encyclopaedie" ("The Theological Encyclopedia") manuscript from 1901–1902, see "Manuscript Theologische Encyclopedie," (1900–1902) Box 346, Folder 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, (hereafter, no. 217, §); (3) his most polished "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (Encyclopedia of Theology) whose date is unknown, see "Manuscript Encyclopaedie der Theologie", (unknown) Box 346, Folder 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck. (Hereafter, no. 187); and (4) "Dictaat of Herman Bavinck's Encyclopaedie d. Theol." by an unknown student (1902), Cameron Clausing's Private Collection, Christ College, Sydney, Australia. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 130. During his Kampen years Bavinck lectured on the theological encyclopedia.

10. Ximian Xu's dissertation is the only sustained interaction with the encyclopedic sources in English. Ximian focuses on the dissonance between Kuyper and Bavinck's understanding of the theological encyclopedia in relation to their differing starting points. My own dissertation hopes to draw more attention to Bavinck's theological encyclopedia. Ximian Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God: Herman Bavinck's Scientific Theology for the Modern World" (PhD diss. University of Edinburgh, 2020).

11. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 1–16. ("Geschiedenis van de Theol. Encylopaedie.")

12. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 3.("Na de Reformatie, tot Schleiermacher.")

13. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 9("Sedert Schleiermacher"); Kuyper's *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, I, 54–475. These three periods are similar to, but distinct from Abraham Kuyper's threefold division of (1) Up till the Renaissance, (2) From the Renaissance to the New Philosophy, and (3) The New Philosophy.

14. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. Rather than beginning with the development of Scripture it begins with Origen.; No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2. In the margins he does list an alternative fourfold historical division: (1) development of the canon, (2) dogmatic period, (3) growth of pietism and rationalism, (4) eighteenth century between orthodoxy and piety; rationalism and super-rationalism.

Bavinck's chronicle of the history of the theological encyclopedia these three phases will shape our retelling of his narrative.

In the first phase Bavinck inspects the early church for clues of the development of the theology and theological encyclopedia. In this initial stage, Bavinck perceives little development of encyclopedia. Although in germ the fourfold structure that is present in Bavinck's mature theology is identified as present. In the middle age's theology matures into a science. This development fosters both internal structure and external relationships. Bavinck gives the briefest attention to this time period.

In the second phase we will look at how the Reformation impacts the development of the theological encyclopedia up until the arrival of Schleiermacher. In the reformation Bavinck perceived a development of the theological encyclopedia alongside of the changing curriculum scene in Universities and the *historia literaria* (literary history). On account of the Reformation his analysis splits into a tri-part division: Rome, Lutheran, and Reformed. He gives little attention to Rome. For Lutherans another important thread is identified with Johann Gerhard's *Methodus Studii Theologici* whom desired for theology to develop *theologically.* Bavinck's own reflections on theology follow this path. Finally, while inspecting the Reformed Bavinck identifies five trends. Importantly, one can envision Bavinck's own four-fold theological encyclopedia as following the Reformed tradition.

In the third phase Bavinck identifies the main problem with the theological encyclopedia in the wake of Schleiermacher, that is it has allowed philosophy to take center stage. This is the case that Bavinck's theological encyclopedia seeks to solve. In the final analysis Bavinck suggests all modern encyclopedias as having this problem. Bavinck attempts to correct this line of thinking by returning theology to its proper location. In light of our synopsis of Bavinck's theological encyclopedia is any further clarity brought to orienting Bavinck's relationship to orthodoxy or modernity?[15] A historical perspective will pay dividends in our understanding of Bavinck's own encyclopedic writings and will allow us to see how Bavinck positions himself in relation to the tradition and his intellectual milieu. What we will find is a Reformed catholic thread in Bavinck's encyclopedia and an appropriation of modern grammar to overcome the problems he identifies. Special attention is paid here to Schleiermacher and Hegel.

15. Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020). This is not intended to reintroduce a binary in Bavinck scholarship, but rather to more closely consider Bavinck's relationship to both.

The History of the Theological Encyclopedia

Early Church to the Reformation

In the first period Bavinck paints a broad foundation for the origin of the encyclopedia as beginning in 1 Timothy 3, the collection of the thoughts and life of Christ in the gospels, and initially taking flight with the formation of the canon.[16] After the emergence of the canon he perceives Origen, Clement, and the school of Alexandria as leading the way in beginning to distinguish the various disciplines within theology.[17] Summarizing the development of the encyclopedia in the early church, Bavinck writes:

> Therefore, in the old church there was no such thing as an Encyclopedia yet. Nevertheless, the various theological skills are already thought to be necessary to form a scriptural point of view, which emphasizes the study of Scripture, and brings together the secular disciplines, and is generally accepted in four parts: study of Scripture, dogmatics and ethics, church history and practical theology.[18]

In germane form in Bavinck's account of the early church we have the fourfold division of the discipline of theology, which he embraces. Moreover, Bavinck hints at the role of theology in unifying all of the sciences. This initial summary should signal to us that Bavinck perceives his own fourfold encyclopedia as growing out of the tradition of the church.

In the Middle Ages, Bavinck perceives a more formal development in the encyclopedia. In both accounts, Isidore of Seville's *Originum sive Etymologiarum Libri XX* is mentioned,[19] as well as, Hugo St. Victor, who shifted theology under philosophy.[20] Hugo divided the task of theology through the exegesis of Scripture, literal (historical), allegorical (dogmatics), topological (ethics).[21] Thus there remained four divisions of theology. Though we might note that dogmatics and ethics are split

16. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 1; Räbiger, *Encyclopaedia of Theology*, I, 19. Bavinck states to see Räbiger. Räbiger argues, "The germs of Christian theology are already discernable in the apostolic writings."

17. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 1. He also mentions Chrysostom, Augustine, Ambrose, Josephus, and Eusebius as each playing a part in this early stage at beginning to distinguish the various theological disciplines.

18. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 1. ("Dus in de oude kerk nog geen eigl. Encycl. Maar toch begint men de verschill. theol. kundigheden al von den geestelijk noodig te achten, legt nadruk op de Schriftstudie, horde samenhang met *disciplinae saeculares* vast, en krijgt al zoo ongeveer 4 deelen: Schriftstudie, dogma – eth. kennis, kerkgesch. and practical Theo.")

19. Compare with No. 187, §3, and No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 1; W. M. Lindsey, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Orignum Libri XX* (Oxford, 1911); Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, trans., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

20. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2.

21. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2.

into two separate parts here, unlike above. Bavinck points to Thomas Aquinas as an example of a theologian giving sustained reflection on what it means to do theology in the middle ages.[22] The scholastics also contemplated the enterprise of theology, under the whom "theology became its own science with its own object and end." Moreover, theology was established "in relation to the other sciences."[23]

In this initial time period, Bavinck perceives theology as developing a four-fold division. Although it does not begin to take upon itself a more formal structure until the middle ages. Alongside the development of theology as an academic discipline is the blossoming of the self-consciousness of the theological task. This scientific relationship generates relationships with the other sciences and internal structure. Importantly, we see the continued thread of Bavinck perceiving his structure as one within the tradition of the church.

Reformation to Schleiermacher

In the second time period, Bavinck consciously notes the development of theology and theological encyclopedia alongside of the blossoming of the university. He is careful to note how the parts of the organism of theology are organized and progress. The Reformation and humanism were a further catalyst for sustained inquiry into the methods and grounds of theology, and the relationships between the disciplines. As the Reformation progressed so did the theological encyclopedia.[24] Bavinck detects the Reformation, as yoked with a reform of the theological curriculum, specifically by Erasmus, Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger.[25] As is typical in Bavinck's works when he reaches the Reformation his analysis splits into a tri-part division: Rome, Lutheran, and Reformed.

In the 1900–1902 account, Bavinck lists several Catholic encyclopedias, but offers no comments. For the Lutherans, several figures are mentioned, but it is Johann Gerhard's who receive the highest praise.[26] On Gerhard's *Methodus Studii Theologici* Bavinck commented, "It is the best encyclopedia in three parts."[27] In this treatise, Gerhard did not simply lay out the various loci, but rather he spent

22. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2. ("In de middelE. lette men ook op het caput de theologie voor de Dogmatiek. Zie bv. Thomas.")

23. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2 ("In de Schol. werd de theol. [illegible] eigen wet. met eigen object, doel, in werd verhouden tot andere wet. bepaald.")

24. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck §3.

25. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck §3; No. 217, §2, No. 3.

26. Purvis, *Theology and the University,* 27–28. Bavinck is not alone in his assessment of the work of Gerhard. Purvis demonstrates Gerhard as one of the more significant figures in the seventeenth century in the development of the theological encyclopedia.

27. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 4. ("Gerhard *Methodus studii Theologici* Jena 1620. de beste encycl. in 3 deelen"); Johann Gerhard, *Methodus studii Theologici: Publicis, praelectionibus in Academia Jenesi Anno 1617. Exposita* (Jena: Steinmannus, 1620).

significant space attending to the definition of theology.[28] Theology functions as the center of the various disciplines for Gerhard. The starting point is the study of Scripture, the midpoint is dogmatics, which is followed by church history, with the end of practical theology. Theology, is also developed under the guidance and surveillance of the church.[29]

Turning to the Reformed Bavinck underscores primarily four figures as significant: Andreas Gerhard Hyperius, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Petrus van Maastricht, and Gisbert Voetius.[30] It is enlightening to look at Bavinck in light of these four Reformed figures. Helpfully, Bavinck summarizes his thoughts on these figures in five points, which we will utilize to sketch this section. He notates first, that distinct from the others Voetius placed a strong emphasis on calling.[31] Nonetheless, Voetius does little to develop the discipline of theology, splitting it simply into eight parts. He divides into the following: didactics (dogmatics), practical, Scriptura, elentics, scholastics, Patristics, church polity, history.[32] This leads to Bavinck's second point, "The theology courses are simply placed next to each other; they still lack the principle of division and system. Nonetheless, gradually they group together, and the 4 parts appear (see Hyperius, Alsted, Voetius, and Maastricht)."[33] Bavinck is critical of his tradition here. He perceives it as having failed to develop a systematic unity around the theological courses. Nonetheless he extends the olive branch suggesting that despite the lack of formal development, the four parts become clear.

Bavinck's third point is that "typically the theoretical subjects (Exegesis and Systematic Theology) are mentioned first, and then the practical subjects (History and Practical Theology)."[34] This trajectory is exemplified by Hyperius.[35] Johann Alsted's work *Encyclopaedia septem tomis distincta* (1630) also offers a clear

28. Juxtaposed to Bavinck, Gerhard denied that theology was a science (*scientia*) rather he preferred the term for theology as one of aptitude or habit (*habitus*). Gerhard's fourfold division has much in common with Bavinck. Räbiger, *Theological Encyclopaedia*, 45

29. Räbiger, Theological Encyclopaedia, 44–45.

30. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3.

31. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8. ("Opmerking: 1. Op roeping, aanleg etc. propaedentische studie wordt sterke nadruk gelegd zie bij Voetius die er echter veel bij haats was er niet bij hoort.")

32. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3 He writes, "In de theologie: a) theol. didactica (dogm.) b) theol. practica . . . c) theol. Scripturaria, d) elenctica, e) scholastica, f) patristica, politia ecclesiastica, h) historica"; No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 7.

33. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8. ("2. De theologie vakken worden eenvondig naast elkaar gesteld, missen nog deelingsbeginsel and systeem.Toch groepeeren ze zich allengs and komen de 4 deelen allengs te voorschijn. Zie Hyperius, Alsted, Voet, en Maest.")

34. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8. ("Gewoonlijk worden de theoret. vakken [Exeg. & Syst. Th.] eerst, & daarna de practische vakken [Hist. en Pract. Th.] genoemd.")

35. Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 28. Purvis notes that nearly all major theological encyclopedias point towards Hyperius work as anticipating the four-fold division of biblical exegesis, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology.

identifying mark of the development of theological encyclopedia.[36] In Alsted's *Encyclopaedia*, Bavinck states, theology is sketched as the "first of the faculties of sciences and theology is divided into (1) natural theology, (2) catechesis, (3) didactics (dogmatics), (4) polemics, (5) caustics, (6) prophecy, and (7) morality."[37] Following, Luther, Alsted exhorts the theologian to *oratio*, *meditatio*, *tentatio*. However, both Bavinck and Kuyper give more attention to Alsted's earlier 1611 work *Methodus Sacrosancta theologie*, which according to Kuyper gave a more organic point of view.[38] The *Methodus ss. theologiae* splits theology into (1) natural, (2) catechetical, (3) didactic, (4) soteriological, (5) prophetical, and (6)discursive theology.[39]

Bavinck's fourth point is both one of theological methodology and encyclopedia. He writes, "First one must be at home in the Scriptures, the doctrine of the church, with her proofs and proofs of the contrary, before they begin to study history and practical theology."[40] This trajectory progressively works through the various components of theology. One example of this division is that of Hyperius. In 1556 Hyperius published, *De recte formando theologiae studio*, which resembles his later and more extensive *De theologo, seu de ratione studii theologiae*.[41] This work situates theology among the other faculties, in which all other sciences prepare for the study of theology. Bavinck demonstrates that in *De theologo* Hyperius splits theology into three areas: (1) Scripture and its interpretation, (2) systematic theology or the *loci communes*, (3) historical and practical theology. This final section includes church history and the practical life of the church.[42]

In Bavinck's fifth and final point he connects the encyclopedia to the maturing *historia literaria* (literary history) genre. He said, "gradually the encyclopedia became

36. Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Encyclopaedia septem tomis distincta*, 2 vols (Herborn, 1630); Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, I, 164–69; Abraham Kuyper identifies two foundation principles in Alsted's encyclopedia of Alsted, it is (1) a book which compiled, in brief, all the known sciences, and (2) it is a study of their mutual organic relations.

37. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 5. ("de theol. als de eerste der faculteits-wetenschappen en verdeelt ze in theol. naturalis, catechetica, didactica (dogm.), polemica, casuistica, prophetica, moralis.")

38. Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, I, 164. ("Toch bevredigt reeds de indeeling, die hij in 1611 in zijn *methodus s.s. Theologiae* [ed. Hanau 1634] gaf, uit organisch oogpunt better.")

39. Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Methodus ss. Theologia* I–IIX (Hanoviae: Conrad Eifrid, 1634).

40. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8 ("Eerst moet men thuis zijn in de HS. de leer der kerk, met haar bewijzen & met anderer weerlegging, eer men overging tot studie van hist. en pract. theol."); No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §8. This is in harmony with how Bavinck maps his own encyclopedia. Bavinck's own theological encyclopedia is arranged accordingly: (a) the principle [exegetical theology], (b) the subject [historical theology], (c) the object [dogmatic/systematic theology], (d) the goal [practical theology].

41. According to Muller Hyperius *De theologo* is "the most extended Protestant essay on the basic study of theology written in the sixteenth century." Muller, *After Calvin*, 107–108; Andreas Hyperius, *De Theologo, seu de ratione studii theologici, libri* IIII (Basel, 1559).

42. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 5. ("Hier dus reeds a] exeg. b] system c] hist. & pract. theol.")

connected with the development of literary history, but this posed a great danger to losing sight of the system of the encyclopedia."[43] Bavinck's concern was the loss of the system. The danger was the isolation of the various sciences from each other. The *historia literaria* summarized primarily three topics: the history of knowledge/literature, the knowledge of books, reviews of the literature and recommended reading.[44] This movement helped to summarize the state of the various sciences and facilitated future study. As Bavinck puts it succinctly, "Scholarship began to exist in book form."[45] The *historia literaria* reveal the crucial nature of the theological encyclopedia in the life of the university. Lectures in the genre of *historia literaria* became a constant presence in the life of the university by the end of the century. They functioned as companions to the theological encyclopedia that helped students to navigate the terrains of their field, while also helping seasons scholars to push in constructive directions.

In the second time period then Bavinck writes of the development of theology and the theological encyclopedia alongside of the blossoming of the university. First, with Hugo Victor and the blossoming of theology as a discipline, next with the Scholastics and the progression of theology as science. This was followed by the Reformation and the adjustment of the theological curriculum. Lastly, with the commencement of the *historia literaria* genre that spread alongside the development of the encyclopedia. He is careful to note how the parts of the organism of theology are organized and progress. His five points across the progression of the theological encyclopedia reveals continuity and discontinuity with and within the Reformed tradition.

After Schleiermacher

In two of Bavinck's archival narratives (folder no. 187, and no. 217) he gives credit first to J.G. Herder for the entrance of the new era of the encyclopedia and then turns his attention to Schleiermacher. He wrote, "A new age broke after Herder gave his delightful methodological tips in his *Briefe das Studium der Theologie* (1780) in Wiemar, followed by D. Fr. Schleiermacher's birth (Nov. 21, 1768) in Breslau in Silesia."[46] Herder had previously assessed the state of the encyclopedia in his 1769, writing:

43. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8 ("Allengs werd de Encyl. Verbonden met de Litteratuur gescheidenis, en vooruitgang, maar met groot gevaar om het system. der Enc. Uit 't oog te verliezen.")

44. Purvis, Theology and the University, 34.

45. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 8 ("Geleerdheid begun te bestaan in boekennis").

46. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("Eene nieuw tijd brak, nadat Herder heerlijke methodologische wenken en zijne *Briefe das Studium der Theologie* [1780] Wiemar gegeven had, dan met D. Fr. Schleiermacher geb [21 Nov. 1768] te Breslau in Silzie"); No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2, 9. Dutch nearly identical; In this location Bavinck suggests Schleiermacher's indebtedness to Schlegel; Johann Herder, *Briefe das Studium der Theologie betreffend* Vol. I–II (Weimar: Carl Rudolph Hoffmans, 1785).

> Now encyclopedias are being made, even Diderot and d'Alembert have lowered themselves to this. And that book that is a triumph for the French is for us the first sign of their decline. They have nothing to write, and thus produce summaries (*abregés*), dictionaries, vocabularies . . . encyclopedias—the original works fall away.[47]

> Herder's pessimistic outlook on the encyclopedia was both a statement of the staleness of the field, and a foreshadow to his own contribution. His primary contribution in his *Briefe das Studium der Theologie betreffend* was a clarion call for students to read the Bible as humanly and historical. Herder's encyclopedia is part of the historicism that develops in the eighteenth century of which both Schleiermacher and Bavinck are a fruit of in the nineteenth century.[48] After a brief mention of Herder, Bavinck moves to discuss the importance of Schleiermacher on the theological encyclopedia.

L. W. E. Rauwenhoff's lectures on the encyclopedia in 1876 at Leiden University opened with this statement: "In 1811 Schleiermacher's *Kurze Darstelling des theol. Studiums* (*Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*) came and worked a reversal."[49] This quote is pulled from Bavinck's student notes. It testifies to both the presence of Schleiermacher in the theology of the Netherlands and the importance of Schleiermacher's encyclopedia. The remarkable reimagining of the theological encyclopedia was performed by Schleiermacher in his *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*. This was initially written in 1811 and expanded in 1830.[50] Schleiermacher's impact was large enough to warrant Bavinck perceiving all encyclopedias as living in its wake.[51] Purvis describes this time period for the theological encyclopedia like so, "[The] theological encyclopedia in this context underwent a dramatic recasting, from being an instrument for pedagogical and methodological reflection to a

47. Herder, *Journal meiner Reise im Jahr 1769 Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877–1913), iv, 412.

48. See Cameron Clausing, "'A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist': The Influence of the Nineteenth Century Historical Turn on the Theological Methodology of Herman Bavinck," PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 2020).

49. Manuscript "Prof. Rauwenhoff Encyclopaedie," I–III (1876–77) Box 346, Folder 25, Archive of Herman Bavinck, [Hereafter, no. 25]. Oct. 2, 1876, inn 1811 kwam Schleiermacher's *Kurze Darstellung des theol. Studiums*. Dit bewerkte een omkeering; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, trans. Terrence Tice (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011); Schleiermacher, *Kurze Darstellung des theologischen Studiums zum Behuf einleitender Vorlesungen* (1811/1830) ed. Dirk Schmid (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

50. Schleiermacher's 1831–32 lectures demonstrate his awareness that his threefold arrangement was distinct from the fourfold arrangement popular in Germany and subsequently the Netherlands (See Richard Crouter, "Shaping an Academic Discipline: The *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 111–27, 120).

51. This is similar to Bavinck's assessment on dogmatics (See *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 78).

comprehensive, "living' apparatus of theology."[52] This aligns well with Bavinck's assessment of the period.

In folder 187, Bavinck identifies three groups of encyclopedists concurrent with and after Schleiermacher. First, the strict orthodox, which includes Gottlieb J. Plank[53], Johann F. Kleuker[54], Karl F. Stäudlin[55], Gottlieb C. A. von Harless[56] and Johann A. H. Tittmann.[57] According to Bavinck, each of them structures the discipline of theology as (1) exegetical, (2) systematic, (3) historical, and (4) practical. The second group is the *Vermittelungstheologie* (mediating theology). Bavinck identifies two key figures, Karl Hagenbach[58] and Jacobus Doedes.[59] As with the strict orthodox encyclopedists, Bavinck categorises their work as ordering theology along (1) exegetical, (2) historical, (3) systematic, and (4) practical lines. The third group is the philosophical, which includes Karl Rosenkranz[60], A. F. L. Pelt, and G. H. Kienlen.[61] This group follows the three-fold division of Schleiermacher. Nonetheless, each of these three groups has something in common.

In the wake of Schleiermacher, Bavinck perceives all encyclopedias as having a common problem. The problem they share is that they orient the theological encyclopedia around philosophy. It is this weakness that Bavinck perceives his own encyclopedia as resolving. Bavinck attributes the swapping of theology for philosophy in the orrery of the encyclopedia at the foot of the philosophies of Johann G. Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Hegel. He writes, "The Encyclopedia must be revised, it has been influenced through the philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel and not developed itself purely."[62] This is the problem of the modern theological

52. Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 80.

53. Gottlieb J. Plank, *Einleitung in die Theologische Wissenschaften*, 2 Vols. (Göttingen, 1794–95).

54. Johann F. Kleuker, Grundriss einer Encyklopädie der Theologie oder christlichen Religionswissenschaft, vol. 2, (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1800–1801).

55. Karl F. Stäudlin, *Theological Encyclopoedia and Methodology* (Hanover, 1821).

56. Gottlieb C. A. von Harless, Theologische Encyclopädie und Methodologie vom Standpunkte der Protestantischen Kirche (Nuremberg, 1837).

57. Johann A.H. Tittmann, *Theologische Encyklopädie Wissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1798).

58. Hagenbach, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der theologischen Wissenschaften* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1851).

59. Jacob I. Doedes, *Encyclopedie der Christelijke theologie* (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1876); Interestingly, Doedes features more prominently in Bavinck's first edition of *Gerformeerde Dogmatieks* section on "Encyclopaedische Plaats der Dogmatiek."

60. Karl Rosenkranz, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der theologischen Wissenschaften* (Halle: Schwetschke, 1845).

61. Kienlen, *Encyclopédie des sciences de la theologie chrétienne* (Strasburg, 1842).

62. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("De Encyclopaedie moet herzien, is door philosophie van Fichte, Schelling, Hegel geinfluenceerd, heeft zich niet zuiver ontwikkeld"); No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2. Bavinck lists these same figures but adds a further breakdown. Under the influence of Schleiermacher (Hagenbach, Pelt, Harless, J.P. Lange, Rothe; Hegel: Rosenkranz & Noack; Schelling: Daub, Erhardt.

encyclopedia. In the next section, we turn to consider how Bavinck resolves this problem while still utilizing modern grammar.

The Case of the Placing of the Theological Encyclopedia in Bavinck

An outline of Bavinck's narrative of the development of the theological encyclopedia provides three issues for consideration: (1) How does Bavinck respond to the problem of modern theological encyclopedias; (2) Bavinck is also "After Schleiermacher" (that is, post-Schleiermacher), so where does fall in his own three-fold classification of encyclopedias after Schleiermacher (strict orthodox, mediating theologian, or philosophical); and (3) how might we consider Bavinck's relationship to this encyclopedic tradition?

First, how does he respond to the modern *philosophical* theological encyclopedia? He turns the theological encyclopedia back to its proper identity, theology. For Bavinck, much like how theology must develop *sui generis*, the theological encyclopedia must be allowed to develop *theologically*.[63] Bavinck's use of theology as the essence, principle, and purpose of the theological encyclopedia differentiates him from his philosophical sources. As Bavinck writes:

> The concept of essence, principle, content, purpose and thus the divisions of theology, and thus also of the content, purpose, etc. of its subjects stands under that influence. It is necessary first to disengage from it, to work to purify philosophy, to allow theology to construct itself. Therefore, the foundations must first be properly laid. Then perhaps we can adopt good ideas from Schleiermacher, etc. and graft on our trunk of theology. The difference in division, the arrangement of the subjects, suffers in different views of theology. For it has become increasingly clear, the object of the Theological Encyclopedia is theology itself, her business is the development of Theology. So long as the view of theology differs (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Philosophical, etc.) so does the Encyclopedia.[64]

To carry Bavinck's own metaphor further, it is the Reformed theology trunk, that has grafted into it the branches that will help the organism to flourish. On the heels of

63. Eglinton, Bavinck: A Critical Biography, 137–38.

64. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2("De opvatting van wezen, beginsel, inhoud, doel en dus verdeeling der theologie, en dus ook van den inhoud, doel etc der enkele vakken staat on der dien invloed. Het is noodig, om zich daarvan eerst los te maken, positief te werk te gaan het philosophie uittezuiveren, de theol. zelve zich te laten construeeren. Eerst moet daarom de grondslag goed gelegd. Dan kunnen wij misschien later wel goede ideen van Schlierem. etc overnemen, en op den eigen stam der Theol. in enten: Het verschil in verdeeling, volgorde der vakken worstelt in verschillende opvatting der Theol. Want het is steeds duidelijker geworden: Object der Theol. Enc. is de Theol. zelf, haar zaak is de ontwikkeling der Th. Zoolang opvatting v. Theol. verschilt [Kath. Luth. Geref. Philos. etc.], verschill ook the. Enc.")

this extended quote, Bavinck differentiates it around this exact thing. According to Bavinck, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher each arrange the encyclopedia around philosophy, while Protestants arrange it in the Scriptures, "the essence of theology."[65] An encyclopedia develops itself purely by developing itself according to its own object. For the "theological" encyclopedia this is theology; for him theology, not philosophy is must be the starting point of the theological encyclopedia.[66] Bavinck's encyclopedia returns theology to its proper place. As Bavinck writes:

> The theological encyclopedia can only be given by a theologian. The theological encyclopedia is a system of theology, so it does not have to go through philosophy, etc. but by [theology] becomes entirely determined. The encyclopedia is bound to her object, theology and this is also her home. The theological encyclopedia is the self-consciousness of theology."[67]

Bavinck envisions theology as being a governing science over the organization of knowledge, but also theology is a theological-philosophical system in its own right. Theology must govern its own household, before it may extend its reign over all of the sciences. If the theological encyclopedia is ruled by philosophy the house and the kingdom are lost.

In turning to the second question, Bavinck's encyclopedic work is also post-Schleiermacher, so where should he be positioned in his three-fold grouping? First, it should be noted that Bavinck spends significantly more space explicating the growth and divisions of the encyclopedia during the time of the Reformation and gives this time period credit for the development of the four-fold encyclopedia.[68] This is four-fold division of exegetical, historical, dogmatic, and practical theology Bavinck retains. He thus does not follow Schleiermacher's three-fold division of philosophical, historical, and practical.

65. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §2 ("Protest. In de Schrift; [illegible] weze Theol. in de philos [v. Kant, Schell. Hegel, of Schleierm.]") Bavinck's contrast is not between Protestants and non-Protestants, otherwise, Schleiermacher and Hegel would muddy Bavinck's distinction. But he seems to be using Protestants here to polemically capture the purity of his own articulation.

66. Bruce Pass, *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 50. Bavinck writes of theology and philosophy as the *Universalwissenschaft,* "Dictaat of Herman Bavinck's Encyclopaedie d. Theol.," §5, 23–26. Bavinck writes of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel's respective works orbiting the encyclopedia. Fichte adopts the 'I' as the starting place of the *Wissenschaftlehre*. Schelling shifts the 'I' to the Absolute in three stages (Father [eternal], Son [finite], Spirit [infinite]); Hegel adopts Schelling, but furthers his conception of reason.

67. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §5 ("Theologische Encyclopedia kan alleen gegeven worden door den Theoloog, de wijsgeer kan dat niet. De theologische Encyclopedia is systeem der theologie, moet dus niet door de philos. etc maar geheel door deze beheerscht worden. De. Ency. is gebonden aan haar object, de Theol. en haar dus ook in deze thuis. De theol, enc. is het zelf-bewustizijn der theol.")

68. "No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §6. Indeed, if one was to add to this argument in folder no. 217, Bavinck spends significant time developing the concept of the theology, in light of the theological encyclopedia in light of the propaedeuse of Petrus van Mastricht, another clear sign of his desire to align himself within Reformed orthodox.

The second, encyclopedic difference between the two is how they construe the ordering of the system. Bavinck perceives Schleiermacher's practical theology as informing his dogmatics; Bavinck discerns in his own project dogmatics as informing practical theology. It was believed by Bavinck that Schleiermacher "fixed the Encyclopedia as purely a formal science, without *realia*, and gave to practical theology the place of honor."[69] Accordingly, Bavinck argues this rests on two fundamental ideas: (1) theology is a positive science, and (2) whose parts are connected by the church.[70]

Christian Theology as a positive science for Schleiermacher simply means that it organizes in an orderly and rational manner the historical experience of Christians within a particular set of social circumstances in order to serve a specific practical function. Succinctly, it is the ordered reflection of the experience of God-consciousness among Christians. Christian theology is connected to the church because it is that community that is distinctly Christian. The three parts of theology intersect for Schleiermacher in the church because every facet of theology must come to bear on the life of the church. The church may then function "on the basis of a highly developed consciousness of history."[71] In other words, the individual self-consciousness finds its fulfilment in the community of the church.

As is the typical reading of the various parts of Schleiermacher's theology, Bavinck identifies, theology as unfolding under the umbrella of philosophical, historical, and practical. Bavinck employs the illustration of a tree to demonstrate his understanding of the various parts of Schleiermacher's encyclopedia and its subsequent shortcomings. The "philosophical (root) sketches the essence of the church: (apologetics and polemics)"[72], "the historical (trunk)" includes "exegesis, church history, and statistics"[73], and the practical (leaves): "method of church government: church service and church government."[74]

69. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("Schl. vaste de Enc. 't eerst als zuiver formeele wetenschap op, zonder realia, en gaf der pract. theol. eereplaats.")

70. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("theol. is positieve wetenschap, wier deelen verbonden zijn door betrekking op de kerk"). This is in harmony with Terrence Tice's reading of Schleiermacher's entire *Outline* as in germ in §1. (See Terrence Tice, "Editors General Introduction" in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, trans. Terrence Tice (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), xv–xvii, xv. Theology is a positive science, the parts of which join into a cohesive whole only through their common relation to a distinct mode of faith, that is, a distinct formation of God-consciousness. Thus, the various parts of Christian theology belong together only by virtue of their relation to Christianity. This is the sense in which the word "theology" will always be used here. Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, §1.

71. Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, §8

72. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("a] philosophische [worstel] schetst 't wezen der kerk: apologetiek en polemiek.")

73. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("b] historisch [stam]: exegese. Kerkgesch. Statistiek.")

74. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("c] practisch: techniek der kerkregeering: kerkdienst en kerkregeering.") The word "leaves" is absent from Bavinck.

Nonetheless, all is not well in this forest. Bavinck gives three brief critiques, the first, "philosophical theology cannot be the root, the foundation of theology, that is the Scripture (exegetical theology)" [must be].[75] Schleiermacher places apologetics and polemics under philosophy, which Bavinck perceives as wrong-headed, "apologetics and polemics may not be detached from dogmatics".[76] The second critique, the historical trunk is also suspect for Bavinck, because of the location of Scripture. "Exegetical Theology should not be under history."[77] His critique goes one step further, "Dogmatics is not history = a referential science."[78] Dogmatics for Schleiermacher is historical.[79] In the wake of Schleiermacher, Bavinck perceives the encyclopedia as having lost its foundation. A deforesting and replanting around the concept of theology is required.

Thus we can remove from consideration the third group which follows both Schleiermacher' philosophical starting point and his threefold division. We are thus left with the strict orthodox or the *Vermittelungstheologie* (mediating theology). Resolving this question goes hand in hand with our third question, of how Bavinck relates to the encyclopedic tradition. In this respect, I believe Bavinck has more in common grammatically with the mediating theologians and more in common theologically with the strict orthodox.

For starters, Bavinck's articulation of the theological encyclopedia reveals an indebtedness to modern grammar. That is he uses terminology such as self-consciousness (*zelf-bewustizijn*) and imagines the theological encyclopedia to be an organism.[80] Bavinck argues for the theological encyclopedia as the self-consciousness of theology. Interestingly, in the same set of notes Bavinck lists several philosophers and theologians (Doedes, Schelling, Hegel, Daubanton, Pelt, etc.) with what seems to be their contribution to the theological encyclopedia discussion. Next to Hegel is

75. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("de phil. theol. kan niet worstel, grondslag zijn der theol. dat is de Schrift, exeg. theol.")

76. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("Apologetiek en polemiek mogen niet losgemaakt van dogmatiek.")

77. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("Exeg. theol. mag niet opgenomen onder de history.")

78. No. 187, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §3. ("Dogm. Is geen history. = refereerende wetenschap.")

79. *GD2*^{e}, I, 27; *RD*, I, 47. Bavinck develops this further here; Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, §196–222.

80. "Dictaat of Herman Bavinck's Encyclopaedie d. Theol.," §5, 21 ("Vijfde beteekenis. In 18: en 19: eeuw wet. zette zeek voort op ongeloof. wijze. Aantal al vakken vermeerden van j. tot j. De wet. is haar geheel werd een brute chaos, niet te overzien. Vandaar behoefte om z. rekenschap te geven v.h. verband, dat tusschen al die vakken onderl. bestond. Alzoo werd enc. de wet, v.h. organisme der wetensch," translated as "Fifth meaning. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century science continued in an unbelievable manner. [The] number of subjects increased from year to year. Science as a whole has become a bolt of unforeseeable, chaos. Hence the need to take into account the link between all of these various subjects. Thus, *the Encyclopaedia* became *the science of the organism of sciences*."

"zelf-bew. in theol." (*self-consciousness in theology*).[81] This simple tip of the hat helps one to recognize how important this philosophical grammar remained to Bavinck's encyclopedic system. While he refused to follow Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling down the road of constructing the theological encyclopedia around philosophy. He still recognized the strength of their proposal in recognizing the encyclopedia as a form of self-consciousness.

It is difficult to discern how far to take this appropriation and thus it is best to proceed conservatively. Hegel's concept of self-consciousness is indebted to Fichte and Schelling. For it was Fichte who placed self-consciousness at the center of all things, as that which provided organization, development, and purpose.[82] And it was Schelling whose organic concept of nature pushed to overcome the dualism of subject and object. Hegel's argument via Schelling was to overcome the dualisms of the subject and object through an animating life force, which was at different degrees of development and organization.[83] The identity of the subject and the object is realized in the self-consciousness. In this manner, the subject (theology) finds itself in the other (encyclopedia), which together are driven along by the *levensbeginsel*, theology. If this appropriation of Hegel's idea is the case then we might consider self-consciousness as the fruit of modern philosophy. In this manner, theological development is intimately connected to the development of the encyclopedia. The theological encyclopedia as the self-reflective development of doing theology. Hence why all theology must not only come to terms with Schleiermacher's systematic theology, but also his encyclopedia according to Bavinck.[84]

If we must place Bavinck into one of his three categories, then we should position him amongst the mediating theologians. That is not to say he is a *Vermittelungstheologien*, but rather his encyclopedia is one example of his attempt to remain orthodox while harvesting the fruit of modern thought.

The structure of his framework is essentially that of his Reformed forefathers. Additionally, Bavinck differentiates himself from his modern sources by proxy of the object of his theological encyclopedia. For him the theological encyclopedia must develop *theologically* not philosophically. At once revealing him as being rooted in the soil of his own theological tradition, while also existing in the orchard of the modern age. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Sutanto's remark, "His modern self is an aspect of his orthodox self, standing shoulder to shoulder" – holds true here.[85] The

81. No. 217, Archive of Herman Bavinck, §4.

82. Bieser, *Hegel* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 73–74.

83. Bieser, *Hegel*, 104–106.

84. *RD* I, 166. "All subsequent theology is dependent on [Schleiermacher]. Though no one took over his dogmatics, he has made his influence felt on all theological orientations – liberal, mediating, and confessional, and in all churches – Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed."

85. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed eclecticism: On catholicity, consciousness and theological epistemology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70, no. 3 (2017): 314.

historical panorama of theological encyclopedia Bavinck positions himself in relation to the tradition and his intellectual milieu. This allowed us to identify the Reformed orthodox thread in Bavinck's encyclopedia and his indebtedness to his own tradition. While he attempts to utilize the categories of his own time.

Conclusion

This essay provided a narration of Bavinck's chronicle of the historical origin and development of the theological encyclopedia. This historical panorama of the development and divisions of the theological sciences allowed us to briefly consider Bavinck's own theological encyclopedia. We noted that Bavinck utilizes modern grammar, while maintaining the content of Reformed orthodoxy. Bavinck attempts to overcome the problem facing the modern theological encyclopedia by returning theology to its rightful place within the system. In this manner, for Bavinck, theology through its encyclopedia does not have an existential crisis, but rather reaches self-consciousness as it remains true to its object.

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Jesus the Law Restorer: Law and the Imitation of Christ in Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*

Jessica Joustra

Jessica Joustra (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary, Free University of Amsterdam) is assistant professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University and an associate researcher at the Neo-Calvinist Research Institute at the Theological University of Kampen (NL). She is an editor and translator of Herman Bavinck's Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity and associate editor for the Bavinck Review.

Introduction

"*Jesus* matters," asserts Reformed philosopher James K.A. Smith.[1] A seemingly innocuous claim in Christian scholarship, one might assume he was lauding the Reformed, specifically neo-Calvinist, tradition for its well-known insistence that "there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human life of which Christ, who is Sovereign of all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"[2] Smith's claim, however, is a critique, not a praise of the Reformed tradition. He continues by offering an important insight into an area of theological deficiency, speaking specifically of theological ethics: "in the Reformed tradition, we also speak more about creation than we do cross, and we speak more about law than we do Jesus."[3] In other words, the Reformed tradition needs to continue to mine its own resources—and the resources of other theological traditions—to explore the ways that Jesus matters, not just as the one who secures our salvation and makes cosmic worldview claims, but as the one who guides our life.

This essay seeks to mine the theological resources within the Reformed tradition on Jesus and theological ethics as a means to respond to Smith's charge, looking to Reformed dogmatician and ethicist Herman Bavinck's understanding of the centrality of imitation of Christ in the Christian life. But as we will see, Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ does not stand in isolation; he pairs the imitation of Christ with a traditional Reformed emphasis on the law. Thus, this essay will also ask a question: given his ongoing insistence on the law's role in Christian ethics, does Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ meaningfully show

1. Richard Mouw and James K. A. Smith, "An Anabaptist-Reformed Dialogue: Continuing our Conversation with Richard Mouw," in Comment Magazine, September 20, 2013, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/an-anabaptistreformed-dialogue-continuing-our-conversation-with-richard-mouw/.

2. Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

3. Mouw and Smith, "Anabaptist-Reformed Dialogue."

the way that Jesus *matters* in the Christian life? I will argue that because Bavinck ties the imitation of Christ to another central image in his work, grace restores nature, the answer is both yes and no: Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ results in Jesus Christ bringing something *functionally* new (a new understanding of the law), though not *fundamentally* new (for he is not a new law*giver,* rather a law-*restorer*).

The Imitation of Christ: Herman Bavinck's Interpretation

Best known as a dogmatician,[4] Herman Bavinck also did substantial work in theological ethics, including his recently rediscovered, unpublished manuscript *Reformed Ethics* that was intended as a companion to his well-known *Reformed Dogmatics.* Throughout his works on ethics, a distinctly Reformed understanding of the imitation of Christ is developed. While the theme is present throughout much of his work, Bavinck treats the imitation of Christ at length on three separate occasions: in 1885 and 1886, in his first essays on the imitation of Christ, in 1918, in his later essays on the same, and in his *Reformed Ethics.* Here, we will briefly survey these three works to understand what Bavinck understands to be a biblical picture of the imitation of Christ and how this theme of imitating Christ interacts with other dominant themes in his theology, particularly the theme of grace restoring nature.

In a series of articles entitled *De navolging van Christus* (The Imitation of Christ) in *De Vrije Kerk* in 1885 and 1886, Bavinck undertakes his first detailed study of the imitation of Christ. This study is primarily focused at a historical/theological overview of the major trends within the imitation tradition throughout church history. As Bavinck takes his readers through the history of the theme, he articulates a four-part typology of the prominent instantiations of the imitation of Christ throughout history: the martyr, the monk, the mystic, and the modernist.[5] None of these four models of imitation, Bavinck argues, encapsulates a fully biblical picture of imitation. But, importantly for Bavinck, none of them are *wholly* aberrant either; he provides a nuanced analysis of each model, finding aspects to praise in each, while also offering serious criticisms.[6] As he goes through this historical/

4. Henry Zylstra, for example, in the preface to Bavinck's *Our Reasonable Faith,* writes, "Bavinck was primarily the theologian, the dogmatician. His *magnum opus* is the four volumes of his *Reformed Dogmatics*." Henry Zylstra, preface to *Our Reasonable Faith*, by Herman Bavinck, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1965), 6.

5. Herman Bavinck, "The Imitation of Christ I (1885/86)," in *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the* Imitatio Christi, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2013), 372–96. To these four, we might add a fifth. Bavinck briefly praises the "pure" imitation of Christ in the early church, a form that soon gave way to these other four traditions of imitation (374).

6. The martyrs of the early church, Bavinck argues in "Imitation I," exhibited courage and strength in the face of their persecution. This undoubtedly testified to their strong belief. To this praise, he adds that martyrdom became corrupted as some began to focus more on the suffering rather than the *cause* of suffering: they "forgot that what made one a true witness was not martyrdom

theological survey, Bavinck makes it clear that the imitation of Christ is a necessary aspect of Christian discipleship, but to imitate Christ in a biblical way necessitates rejecting much of the historic understanding of the theme.

Bavinck's posture towards the imitation tradition, and his understanding of a biblical picture of imitation becomes even clearer following his historical/theological survey. In these final pages, he puts forward his own understanding of the imitation of Christ, informed by tradition and grounded in scripture. The "true imitation" of Christ consists of two necessary elements: first, it consists of "mystical union . . . spiritual, living communion with Christ;" second, on account of one's spiritual union, the imitation of Christ extends outward to all of one's life.[7] Christ *is* an example for our day to day actions, modeling the "virtues and obligations which conform to God's law."[8] As he follows the law, Christ ought to be imitated, in word and deed.[9]

Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ as imitating Christ *as he follows the law* gets to the heart of what he understands as a biblical model for imitating Christ. First, such a model begins with knowing Christ as savior.[10] On account of Christ's saving work, we are called into fellowship with Christ, leading to seeing Christ as not only savior, but example. Second, for Bavinck, understanding Christ to be an example does not merely call one to external, mimetic imitation—that is, a "slavish and narrow copying of [Christ's] personal words and deeds."[11] Nor does the imitation of Christ consist in imitating every single one of Christ's actions, for "creation, election, calling regeneration . . . and all miracles are unique

itself but the cause for which a martyr died" (391). This, he argued, laid the foundation for a doctrine of meritorious good works. The monks, in a new context with less persecution, were an important witness against the growing worldliness of the church. Alongside this, they took seriously the call of Jesus to deny themselves. Nevertheless, Bavinck again raises criticisms: the monks, he argued, perpetuated a dual understanding of morality. Only some could truly imitate Christ; those who lived an "ordinary life" could not achieve this "higher level of perfection" (381). He also argued that this form of imitating Christ could lead to an external, mimetic imitation. One could outwardly display the habits of Christ, but inwardly remain "very unChrist-like" (392). As the context changed once again, so too did the picture of biblical imitation. Mysticism, Bavinck argued, displayed a "strong ethical and practical emphasis," alongside its emphasis on union with Christ (388). Alongside these important emphases, however, Bavinck argued that mysticism paid excessive attention to Christ's suffering and can lead to an "exaggerated emphasis on feeling" (393). Finally, Bavinck attends to imitation in his own day: the modernists. Unlike the others, Bavinck's description of this form of imitation is primarily negative (and far shorter). While Bavinck affirms the validity of seeing Jesus as an example, he argues that the modernists understand Jesus to be *only* an example, forsaking the logically primary commitment to Jesus as savior: "only [when we know Jesus as Redeemer] then do we dare look at him and consider him our example" (394).

7. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 397.

8. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

9. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

10. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 397. This is contrary, he argues, to the modernist model, which sees Christ first—and perhaps only—as example.

11. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 396; this is contrary, he argues, to the downfalls of the martyr, monk, and mystic models of imitation which—in one way or another—affirm a "narrow copying" of Jesus's actions.

and inimitable."[12] For Bavinck, the imitation of Christ penetrates deep into the life of the Christian, laying claim to one's external actions and internal disposition. It is also comprehensive, for "nothing in Christ is excluded in the demand to follow him," and concrete, seeing Christ as a tangible example, while not calling for an exhaustive nor literal copying of Jesus's particular actions.[13] Third, the imitation of Christ is, for Bavinck, necessarily grounded in the moral law, which Christ fulfills.[14] "That which is required by the law of God," he writes, "is clearly portrayed for us in the example of Jesus."[15] Given that the imitation of Christ is grounded in the moral law, which "applies and is valid for all [people] everywhere," a final piece of Bavinck's understanding of imitating Christ emerges: the imitation of Christ is a universal ideal. All Christians are called to imitate Christ, in their own circumstances, places, and times.[16]

Bavinck's historical/theological survey of the major trends in the imitation tradition reveals that there is always a hermeneutic at play in discovering what might be assumed to be a straightforward interpretation of the biblical text: suffering, denial, mystical union, etc. In his own exposition of the theme, he articulates the hermeneutical key for how one ought to know what to imitate in Christ's life rather simply: the Ten Commandments.[17]

Throughout these first articles, Bavinck articulates a twofold, biblical model of imitating Christ: union with Christ and, as a consequence of one's union with Christ, law-shaped imitation of Christ's virtues. In 1918, near the end of his career, Bavinck published another work on the imitation of Christ, a small booklet entitled *De navolging van Christus en het Moderne Leven* (The Imitation of Christ and Modern Life). While this booklet has a different audience, was written in a different time, and thus has a slightly different focus than his 1885/6 articles, Dirk van Keulen convincingly argues that Bavinck remains consistent in his basic affirmation of a biblical model of imitating Christ.[18]

12. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

13. Bavinck writes in Imitation I, "Every word and deed of Jesus is useful for our instruction and ought to be taken to heart . . . [but] not every word or deed is in itself to be imitated" (399). Thus, we cannot simply parse out some actions of Christ as useful for an example and others—inimitable as they may be—as excluded from the imitation of Christ. Even those inimitable acts of Jesus "do reveal the glorious perfections which we must take as example since they wholly conform to God's law" (400).

14. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 396.

15. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

16. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 396. Once again, this assertion runs contrary to the imitation models of the martyr, monk, and mystic, which Bavinck argues are only for *some* Christians to enact.

17. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

18. Van Keulen identifies three primary areas of discontinuity: Bavinck's extended discourse on war, a "broader elaboration of his historical survey" (highlighting Bavinck's wider intended audience for these later essays), and a "growing awareness" of hermeneutical questions, particular those surrounding the Sermon on the Mount. (Dirk van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck on the Imitation of Christ," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 90–91; for more on

A key component of this booklet is Bavinck's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount and its implications for the imitation of Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount, "the nature of this imitation is clarified . . . by means of concrete examples."[19] Rejecting both radical spiritualization and extreme literalism, Bavinck explains that the examples in this text—like plucking out one's eye—are "not to be taken literally," but they are "nonetheless to be understood practically and concretely."[20] In other words, Christians seeking to follow these words are not to literally pluck out their eye, but are to mine the practical implications of this command, for Jesus's command remains a concrete illustration of the "virtues which the law requires of us."[21] Christ is no new law-giver; rather he provides a specific, contextual model of what the law requires.[22]

While Bavinck's reference to imitating Christ's virtues in this booklet echoes his reference to virtues in 1885/6, his textual and contextual exploration in 1918 give him further opportunity to elaborate on what exactly these virtues are. Here, Bavinck differentiates the virtues that the Christian is called to imitate into two categories: passive virtues—"truth, righteousness, . . . holiness, purity, modesty, temperance, . . . prayer, vigil, fasting, . . . faith, love, longsuffering, . . . generosity, hospitality, . . . compassion, lowliness, meekness, and patience," which were stressed in the Sermon on the Mount[23]—and active virtues, those that are part of the pattern of "reforming and renewing the world."[24] Both passive and active virtues, self-denial and world-engagement, are inherent in the call to imitate Christ.

As those charged to imitate the virtues of Christ in law-patterned obedience, seeing Jesus as the normative moral example is nonnegotiable for Christians. But the manner in which one applies his example, Bavinck stresses, is importantly contextual; Christians have freedom in the way that they apply Christ's virtues to their own life.[25] As in Bavinck's 1885/6 work on imitation, in his 1918 booklet, Jesus's words and actions are given normative status for the life of the Christian, and the hermeneutical key to understanding how to apply these to one's own life remains the law.

Alongside these two, standalone works on the imitation of Christ, Bavinck treated the theme at length in his unpublished *Reformed Ethics* manuscript. With an

the relationship between these works, see John Bolt, "Christ and the Law in the Ethics of Herman Bavinck," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 62–71. Bolt also adds that this booklet is a *systematic* study, rather than a primarily historical study. John Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the* Imitatio Christi, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2013), 83.

19. Herman Bavinck, "The Imitation of Christ II (1918)," in *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the* Imitatio Christi, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2013), 413.

20. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 418.

21. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 426.

22. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 419.

23. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 420.

24. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 424.

25. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 438.

in-depth survey of imitation in Scripture and a familiar study of the manifestations of the theme throughout church history, Bavinck affirms a three-part imitation of Christ that closely parallels the two-fold imitation of Christ laid out in 1885/6. First, imitating Christ must flow from union with Christ.[26] Second, Christ must "tak[e] shape within us," as the Holy Spirit "confirms us to Christ in his suffering, death, resurrection, and glorification."[27] Finally, the imitation of Christ comes to outward expression as we "shap[e] our lives in accord with Christ."[28] Again, the rubric by which one shapes their life on the pattern of Jesus is found in the law:

> [The true imitation of Christ] consists of shaping the life that exists only in and from communion with Christ, in accord with his moral example; it is acquiring a Christ-*shape* in us, so that others can know Christ from and through us. This correspondence of our life's shape with that of Christ manifests itself in a variety of virtues, but especially in righteousness and love. Righteousness or holiness is complete agreement with the law, that is, moral freedom. For us believers, the law no long stands over against us abstractly, but in Christ; in Christ, the law is our norm . . . Christ is the moral ideal, the living law.[29]

Here, the relationship between the imitation of Christ and the law is further concretized: Christ is not only an example of what the law requires, he is the "living law."

The imitation of Christ, Bavinck argues, is *the "*form of the spiritual life,"[30] a necessary aspect of sanctification. Christ must be seen not only as Redeemer (though this is first and foremost!) but as the normative example for the Christian life. In each substantive work on the imitation of Christ, Bavinck never wavers from his basic understanding of a biblical model of imitation: the Christian life ought to be marked by law-patterned imitation of the virtues of Christ. Given the centrality of the imitation of Christ for Bavinck's understanding of Christian ethics, it is not surprising that this theme is closely related to other central themes in his dogmatics. While we could point to a number of themes—the gospel as a pearl and leaven, the catholicity of the church, common grace, sanctification, etc.—here, I want to focus in on only one: grace restoring nature.

Bavinck's view of the relationship between nature and grace, Jan Veenhof argues, is a "central part—indeed, perhaps we may say *the* central theme—of his theology."[31] Grace, writes Bavinck, *restores* God's original creational intent; it is

26. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, vol. 1, *Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. John Bolt, Jessica Joustra, Nelson Kloosterman, Antoine Theron, Dirk van Keulen (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 339.

27. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 339.

28. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 340.

29. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 341.

30. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 338.

31. Jan Veenhof, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck*, trans. Albert M. Wolters (Dordt College Press, 2006), 7.

a "restoration of the form (*forma*) originally imprinted at the creation on humans and creatures in general."[32] Rather than wiping away the works of God's hands in creation, or introducing foreign elements to it, "grace restores nature and takes it to its highest pinnacle"[33] instead of "nullify[ing] nature," Christ came to "restore and preserve" the "various spheres of life.[34] For Bavinck, salvation is a story of restoring and renewing the cosmos, in Christ.

Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ is deeply intertwined with this central theological theme.[35] In his 1918 discussion of imitating not only the passive, but active virtues of Christ, Bavinck writes that explicitly affirms that:

> [T]he New Testament presupposes the Old Testament, redemption is accomplished on the foundation of creation, the work of the Son is bound to that of the Father, grace follows nature, rebirth can take place only after birth. All the products of culture, marriage, family, state, etc. are good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of Lights. . . . *Grace does not suppress nature but restores it*. The gospel is not a new law either with respect to the Law of Moses nor to the laws which God has established in nature for the natural dimension of life.[36]

As such, Christianity "never opposes nature and culture in themselves but only their degeneration," and thus Christians ought to take a posture of imitating Christ that can be oriented *toward* culture and its renewal, in the "state, society, art, science, agriculture, industry, commerce, etc."[37] Because grace restores nature, imitating Christ can take a distinctly culturally engaged posture, rather than "world-renunciation," a posture that can emerge in various imitation traditions, or "world-domination."[38] Such a posture is only possible if grace *restores* nature.

Bavinck writes elsewhere that the "Gospel is a joyful tiding, not only for the individual person but also for humanity, for family, for society, for the state, for art and science, for the entire cosmos, for the whole groaning creation."[39] This picture of the renewing, restoring work of grace that permeates not just the individual Christian,[40]

32. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 578.

33. Bavinck, *Sin and Salvation in Christ,* 577.

34. Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (1989): 64.

35. Dirk van Keulen also briefly points this out in his essay on the imitation of Christ (van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck on the Imitation of Christ," 90).

36. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 429; emphasis added. Later in the same work, Bavinck again explicitly references this central theme, writing that "grace presupposes and restores nature" (436).

37. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 429.

38. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 428.

39. Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 224.

40. Though this is not the full extent of the implications of grace restoring nature, Bavinck does

nor merely Christian institutions, but the whole of creation is possible on account of his understanding that the gospel opposes "all that which was sinful," rather than "the world as God's creation."[41] Christ came, Bavinck argues, to "destroy the works of the devil and thus to renew and restore the works of the Father," not to oppose "nature and culture in themselves."[42] Because of Bavinck's understanding of the comprehensive, concrete nature of Christ's example, the works of Christ, distinctly culturally engaging, affirming, and restoring that they are, have direct bearing for how the Christian ought to live: opposed to the corruption of creation from sin, and oriented towards the restoration of God's creational intent. This picture of sin and grace is beautifully woven into Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ. As Christians seek to imitate the virtues of Christ, in law-patterned obedience, they do so patterned after the one whose grace *restores* nature.

Law and Imitation? Historic Neo-Calvinist Responses

Bavinck's articulation of the imitation of Christ does not occur in a vacuum, nor is it the only instantiation of a Reformed understanding of the theme. While the theme of imitating Christ found prominence in thinkers like Thomas à Kempis,[43] John Calvin himself also employs language of imitation, articulating a Reformed, qualified-but-positive treatment of the imitation of Christ. Aware of the potential for abusing the theme, Calvin insists that imitation is *not* a rote copying of Jesus's actions; imitation is not mimicry.[44] Nevertheless, he affirms that "to imitate Christ . . . is the rule of life."[45] Jesus Christ models for us true humanity. He is the example of the goal of our sanctification: the restored image of God. This pattern of sanctification is rooted in the law, and—through the work of the Holy Spirit uniting the believer to Christ—drives us toward conformity with the example of Christ, through self-denial and cross-bearing.[46]

consistently speak of the imitation of Christ as a *restoration* of the image of God in the Christian. In his 1885/6 work on the imitation of Christ he writes, "From Christ, who is both our Savior and our example proceeds reforming, recreating, renewing power, a power that makes us like him and completely restores the image of God in us." Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400; see also Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 340.

41. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 426.

42. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 430.

43. While he is not the first to apply this theme—Bavinck himself traces the theme of imitating Christ throughout church history—Thomas à Kempis's work on the imitation of Christ is rightly noted as a prominent thinker within the imitation tradition. For more on his prominence, see John Van Engen, *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 8 (among others).

44. Calvin poignantly makes this point in his commentary on John 13:15 where he writes that Christians are to be "imitators not apes." (Calvin, *Commentary on John*: John 13:12–17).

45. Calvin, *Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians*, quoted in Jimmy Agan, "Departing from—and recovering—tradition: John Calvin and the Imitation of Christ," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (2013): 810.

46. For Calvin on the law as the pattern of obedience, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian*

Prior to the discovery of Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics* manuscript, John Bolt argued that "Bavinck's emphasis upon the imitation of Christ . . . thus in part reflects Bavinck's greater fidelity to Calvin."[47] Excluding Bavinck's work on the imitation of Christ in *Reformed Ethics,* Bavinck's primary works on the theme of imitating Christ, while echoing Calvin's theological emphases, do not actually cite Calvin's work. In his *Reformed Ethics,* however, Bavinck both thematically channels Calvin (emphasizing union with Christ, Christ as the shape of the moral life, etc.) and cites his work explicitly.[48] Even without a detailed treatment of the relationship between Calvin and Bavinck on the imitation of Christ, we can already see that Bavinck is not alone in his Reformed affirmation of the theme. Bavinck constructs his understanding of the imitation of Christ upon a solid Reformed foundation that includes the work of John Calvin. He both takes up Calvin's dominant themes and builds upon them, placing an imitation model that centers on Christ's law-patterned virtues at the heart of his ethics.[49]

While Bavinck is not wholly unique in his Reformed insistence on the imitation of Christ, among neo-Calvinists—both his contemporaries and those who follow after him—his explicit affirmation of the imitation of Christ remains rare. For leading ethicists within the neo-Calvinist tradition, the imitation of Christ has often played little to no role in establishing an ethical norm for the Christian life. Instead, as James K.A. Smith highlighted, it is the law that ought to guide Christians in their daily living. This emphasis on the primacy of the law can be seen throughout neo-Calvinist ethics. Here, we'll briefly explore the work of three ethicists to highlight the consistent nature of this emphasis: Wilhelm Geesink, Bavinck's contemporary and the principal ethicist at the Vrije Universiteit from 1890–1923; H.M. Kuitert, a later

Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.6.1 and 3.7.1 and John Calvin, *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*, trans. Henry J. Van Andel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 25–66. For more on Calvin, sanctification, union with Christ, and imitation, see, for example: I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992) and Joseph Lucien Richards, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974).

47. Bolt, *Theological Analysis*, 27. The use of this theme is not only due to the influence of Calvin, Bolt affirms, but Ulrich Zwingli, the subject of Bavinck's own doctoral studies (28).

48. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 335. Here, Bavinck returns to that two-part constitution of imitating Christ found in Calvin: cross-bearing and self-denial.

49. In his 1888 rectoral address on "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," Bavinck argues that Calvin overcame the "dualism" that had emerged throughout church history, affirming that grace restores nature, "re-creation is not a system that supplements Creation, as in Catholicism, not a religious reformation that leaves Creation intact, as in Luther, much less a radically new creation as in Anabaptism, but a joyful tiding of the renewal of all creatures" (238). But even amidst his glowing praise of Calvin, Bavinck raises a criticism in *Catholicity* (237), "I do not deny that even in Calvin the negative virtues of self-denial, cross-bearing, longsuffering, and moderation are emphasised." As a means to affirm the full catholicity of the church, or the full implications of grace restoring nature, Bavinck affirms not only the *negative,* or passive, virtues of self-denial and cross-bearing seen in Calvin in his understanding of the imitation of Christ, but also the *positive,* or active, virtues of Christ.

generation neo-Calvinist ethicist who taught ethics at the Vrije Universiteit from 1967–1989; and Lewis Smedes, a North American neo-Calvinist who taught ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary from 1968–1995. Each upholds what has become known as a standard neo-Calvinist theme: the primacy of the law in theological ethics.

Wilhelm Geesink, Bavinck's contemporary and colleague at the Vrije Universitiet, firmly grounds early neo-Calvinist ethics in the law. As John Bolt details, Geesink's focus on the law was not due to a lack of exposure to, or knowledge of, the imitation tradition. On the contrary, Geesink wrote his dissertation on Gerard Zerbolt, a member of the Bretheren of the Common Life and an influence on Thomas à Kempis.[50] Despite Geesink's familiarity with the theme, the imitation of Christ does not play a significant role in his ethics.[51] Geesink argues that it is in the Ten Commandments that we find "God's revealed will for the existence and behaviour of our direct relationship to him."[52] Christ confirms the nature of the commandments as those instituted by God at creation as an enduring ethical guide.[53] In Geesink's work, the Ten Commandments function as the primary guide for the Christian life, making known the will of God for humanity.[54]

The primacy of the law in neo-Calvinist ethics articulated by Geesink continues in later generations. H.M. Kuitert who, like Geesink, taught ethics at the Vrije Universiteit, displays this same impulse in his work. While Kuitert does not devote all of his writing to Christian ethics,[55] he is quite clear on the place of Jesus in the Christian life. Responding to "existentialist theology," he asserts the necessity, and historicity, of the resurrection as the linchpin of Christian faith. As he discusses the implications of such a claim, however, we begin to catch glimmers of his understanding of the role of Jesus's life as an example for the Christian life:

50. Bolt, *Theological Analysis,* 21.

51. He does, however, reference the theme on occasion. But when he does, Geesink argued that imitating Christ should be understood as submission to God's secret will, not a general ethical norm. James Eglinton, "On Bavinck's Sanctification-as-Ethics," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic (Downers Grove, IN: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 173–74.

52. W. Geesink, *The Fourth Commandment*, trans. Gilbert Zekveld (1998), 3.

53. In Geesink, *The Fourth Commandment,* Geesink discusses Christ's reference to work and rest in John 17:5: "My Father worketh hitherto." Here, Geesink argues, Christ refers back to the creational nature of the Sabbath. Sabbath is a creation ordinance which is "a law implanted or 'created within us'" (19–20). Christ does not add to this ordinance, nor is Christ seen as one we imitate in his following of this commandment. Rather, Christ confirms the creational nature of the command. Jesus, too, Geesink argues, kept the Sabbath (58–59, 64–66).

54. For more on this, see Geesink's *Van's Heeren Ordinantiën* and *Gereformeerde Ethiek*. As John Bolt explains, in *Van's Heeren Ordinantiën*, Geesink offers a detailed analysis of the laws of God in the natural and moral world and an exposition of the Ten Commandments. Bolt, *Theological Analysis,* 21.

55. He wrote multiple works exploring hermeneutics and dogmatics. See, for example: H. M. Kuitert, *The Reality of Faith: A Way Between Protestant Orthodoxy and Existentialist Theology*, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968).

> the story of [Christ's] cross and resurrection is told as our story: we are buried and risen with Him (Rom. 6:4). The inclusiveness of Jesus's person and work determines everything for us. We are not dealing with an application of something that is really external to the application made as well as to the thing to which it is applied. We should not try to make Jesus's story significant for us by applying His life to ours in a moral sense.[56]

The life of Jesus, for Kuitert, has abounding soteriological implications for the life of the Christian; he is the "ground of faith."[57] This, however, does not make Jesus one that a Christian ought to imitate.

Speaking even more clearly on the subject, Kuitert emphasizes the Ten Commandments over and above an imitation of Christ as *the* way to understand God's will for the Christian life when he writes that Christians find "ideas, not norms" in the "humanity of Jesus."[58] The example of Jesus is a historically conditioned and situated example; to imitate Jesus "as a person from the beginning of our era . . . leads nowhere."[59] Instead, "remaining faithful to tradition," Kuitert argues that we find God's will in the Ten Commandments, which function as a "summary of what we can call the basic moral principles."[60] For Kuitert, like Geesink, the Ten Commandments form the guidelines for the Christian moral life.[61]

The characteristic neo-Calvinist emphasis on the primacy of the law in for the Christian moral life is not only seen in later generations of neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands, but can also be seen in North American neo-Calvinism. In *Mere Morality,* Lewis Smedes articulates what "God expects of ordinary people," by

56. Kuitert, *Reality of Faith*, 178.

57. Kuitert, *Reality of Faith*, 185.

58. H. M. Kuitert, *I Have My Doubts: How to Become a Christian Without Being a Fundamentalist,* trans. John Bowden (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 120.

59. Kuitert, *I Have My Doubts,* 120.

60. Kuitert, *I Have My Doubts*, 252; compare with 267–68.

61. A contemporary of Kuitert's, Jochem Douma, also displays this pattern of the primacy of the law in Christian ethics within the neo-Calvinist tradition. Douma, who served as professor of ethics at the *Theologische Universiteit Kampen*, wrote extensively on Christian ethics. But, unlike some of the other neo-Calvinist ethicists surveyed, he *does* treat—however brief—the imitation of Christ as an ethical motif that has a role for the Christian life. In his works, Douma affirms that the Ten Commandments reveal "God's core commandments." Jochem Douma, *Responsible Conduct: Principles of Christian Ethics*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 90. They also provide the "norm for life." Jochem Douma, *Christian Morals and Ethics*, trans. John P. Elliott and Andrew Pol (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Premier Publishing, 1981), 40. Like the others surveyed here, Douma understands the Ten Commandments as the normative guide for Christian behavior. But, the Christian's union with Christ provides an important, alternative motivation for following the Ten Commandments (a critical point for him, given that the Ten Commandments seemingly provide normative guidance not just for Christians, but for everyone). A Christian enacts the moral norms of the Ten Commandments on account of their union with Christ, a transformation that gives the Christian's life "another direction which can be classified as *following Christ*" (Douma, *Christian Morals and Ethics,* 52; emphasis original). Here, we find a qualified affirmation of the language of imitation: the Christian's motivation for adhering to the obligations of the commandments is found in following, or imitating, Christ.

appealing to the words of Ecclesiastes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his *commandments;* for this is the whole duty of man."[62] Like the other ethicists surveyed here, Smedes affirms that the Ten Commandments determine how one is to understand God's will for humanity. The "Thou shalt[s]" of the Ten Commandments, he argues, "can be translated 'Everyone ought.'"[63] While the commandments are for all people, they also detail the "way of life in Christ."[64]

As Smedes considers of what exactly that way of life in Christ consists, he rounds out this law-based ethic with themes of love and justice, fulfillment of the law in Christ, and an emphasis on the role of grace, but never shies from seeing the Ten Commandments as the guiding norm for ethics. In the commandments, Christians are given a guide for moral action; in Christ, Christians are given a "living model" who demonstrates the way that these ancient commandments from Sinai depend on love and are oriented towards justice.[65] The Christian's moral responsibility, under the guiding norms of love and justice, must discern the appropriate and fitting application of the moral laws given in the Ten Commandments.

Geesink, Kuitert, and Smedes each affirm a consistent, dominant emphasis within Reformed ethics: the primacy of the Ten Commandments. Such an emphasis is easily discerned within the thought of John Calvin, who wrote that the law of God is an "everlasting and unchangeable rule to live by;" it is a "perfect pattern of righteousness."[66] The "principal use," or third use, of the law, as a guide for believers, is well known as a key aspect of Calvin's interpretation of the law.[67] As Guenther Haas describes, Calvin understands the law to be a guide for believers in two ways: first, as the "best instrument to provide thorough instruction for believers in the nature of the Lord's will," and second, to "exhort them to holiness."[68] There is simply no denying that the Ten Commandments plays a pivotal role in Reformed ethics. But as we have already seen, for Calvin, a focus on the Ten Commandments does not *exhaust* Christian ethics. "When we come to our Lord Jesus Christ and behold him," he writes, "it is essential that we follow his example."[69] The goal of the Christian

62. Ecclesiastes 12:13, quoted by Lewis Smedes in *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans , 1983), 2; emphasis original to Smedes's quotation.

63. Smedes, *Mere Morality,* 8.

64. Smedes, *Mere Morality,* 12.

65. Smedes, *Mere Morality,* 13. Jesus then shows us that the commandments depend on love. As Smedes articulates on the same page, "Law without love tells us not to kill a stranger; law with love moves us to go out of our way to help a wounded enemy."

66. Calvin, *Institutes,* II.6.13.

67. Calvin, *Institutes,* II.6.12.

68. Guenther H. Haas, "Calvin's Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin,* ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101; see also Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law,* 252. For Calvin's own articulation of these two ways the law guides Christians, see: Calvin, *Institutes,* II.7.12.

69. John Calvin, "Sermon Six: Deuteronomy 5:13–15," in *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*,

life (or, the goal of sanctification), the restored image of God, can be seen in the person and actions of Jesus Christ. For Calvin, imitation and law are necessarily linked. He writes:

> Only if we walk in the beauty of God's law do we become sure of our adoption as children of the Father. . . Because the Father has reconciled us to himself in Christ, therefore he commands us to be conformed to Christ as to our pattern. . . . We should exhibit the character of Christ in our lives . . . [and] reveal an imitation of Christ who is the mediator of our adoption.[70]

For Calvin, the law shows us the way of sanctification; in Jesus Christ we see this way fulfilled. Neo-Calvinist ethicists have often emphasized, with Calvin, the law without simultaneously highlighting the way Christ functions as an example of this law.

Responding to the Challenge: The Relationship between Jesus and the Law in Bavinck's Imitation of Christ

Bavinck's affirmation of the centrality of the imitation of Christ in the life of the Christian, demonstrates a distinctive break from his contemporaries and from those who will follow him in the neo-Calvinist tradition. But we still can ask the question: does Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ meaningfully show the way that "Jesus *matters*" in the Christian life? In other words, does the imitation of Christ change the content of Christian ethics?[71]

The charge to articulate the way that Jesus affects the content of ethics has not only come from voices internal to the Reformed tradition, like James K.A. Smith. It has also come—in strong form!—from other Christian traditions, including the

ed. and trans. Benjamin W. Farley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), 127.

70. John Calvin, *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*, trans. Henry J. Van Andel (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 15, 18–19.

71. This essay is focused on the *content* of Christian ethics, which corresponds in large part to the second half of Bavinck's two-part definition of the imitation of Christ in his 1885/6 work on the theme: actively following the example of Christ in every aspect of one's life. While not the primary consideration of this essay, it is important to note that there is *also* an important change in the first aspect of Bavinck's definition of the imitation of Christ, a "mystical union . . . living communion with Christ," as it relates to how Christians follow the law ("Imitation I," 397). Because Christ is *first* our Redeemer, when we follow Christ's example, it is the "Spirit [who] fulfills the law of God in us." The pattern for our action does not remain external to us: in Christ, through the Spirit, we are united to the one who *is* the pattern. The law is, as Bavinck reminds us, through God's own work, "writ[ten] on the hearts of men (Jeremiah 31:33)" ("Imitation II, 413). On account of this first, and primary, aspect of the imitation of Christ, our understanding of the law also changes; it moves from something external to us *to* something internal, given our union with Christ. Once again, as we'll see with the content of the law, there is a sense of *restoration* to the creational intent. Bavinck writes argues that Adam "stood *in* the law. . . . Because of the fall, the law came to stand *above* and humanity to stand *under*" (*Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 218). The law standing outside of us, simply as judge and standard, is not the way the law was intended to be. In our union with Christ—the first and primary aspect of the imitation of Christ—our relationship with the law is also restored.

Anabaptist tradition. Theologian John Howard Yoder, for example, affirms that a uniquely *Christian* ethic must take seriously the radical nature of Christ's work and the believer's new life in him. The "morality of the gospel," he argues, "Is concentrated in [the] one word, resurrection."[72] It is in the life of Jesus, and *only* in the life of Jesus, that a distinctly Christian ethic emerges. Importantly, for Yoder, such an understanding of Christian ethics is in stark contrast to an ethic that is grounded in creation and law. Christian ethics must go beyond the Ten Commandments to take seriously the life and work of Jesus, for Jesus "quite literally fill[s] full the Ten Commandments."[73] Yoder writes:

> If we are to affirm that God became flesh in [Jesus] alone and was known to us as he could not be known through the words of God's prophets, then this must mean that *the life of Jesus is a revelation of true humanity*—as the Ten Commandments could not be—and a revelation of what it means to do God's will in this world. . . . If, however, our ethics are to be guided by Jesus, then we reject the morality of . . . the "orders of creation" because of its content. . . . It is an inadequate moral guide because its standards are wrong.[74]

The starting point to ascertain the substance of Christian morality, Yoder argues, must be dictated by Jesus and Jesus alone.[75] Following Jesus asks *more* of Christians than the law could, on account of the radical nature of Jesus's life and teaching.[76]

Bavinck's understanding of the role of Christ in Christian ethics is deeply intertwined with the law. In his law-based imitation ethic, he breaks the categories that Yoder puts forward of an ethic that is either based on the law *or* the example of Jesus. For Bavinck, Christian ethics must include both! But Yoder's critique of the Reformed tradition at large offers an opportunity to reflect on the exact relationship between Christ and the law: does Christ demonstrate the enduring content of the law

72. John Howard Yoder, "Walking in the Resurrection," in *Revolutionary Christianity: 1966 South American Lectures*, ed. Paul Martens, Mark Thiessen Nation, Matthew Porter, and Myles Werntz (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 36.

73. John Howard Yoder, *The Original Revolution* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1977), 44. An ethic grounded in the law, he argues, does not take seriously enough the ways in which Jesus *fulfills* the Old Testament law.

74. Yoder, "Walking in the Resurrection," 39–40.

75. Yoder continues this claim in "Helpful and Deceptive Dualisms" where he takes specific aim at the Reformed tradition, among others, writing that the starting point for Christian ethics is Jesus. "This is important especially in the light of Lutheran, Reformed, and Enlightenment predilections for finding better guidance for ethics in the orders of creation. Those positions argue that social ethics should be drawn from creation more than from redemption, guided by reason more than by revelation, rooted in the work of the Father more than that of the Son. In all of the practices here described, the apostolic communities did it the other way 'round. All of these practices represent the realm of redemption." John Howard Yoder, "Helpful and Deceptive Dualisms," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10, no. 2 (December 1988), 71.

76. See: Yoder, "Walking in the Resurrection" and Yoder, "The Otherness of the Church," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35, no. 4 (October 1961): 286–96.

(that is, introduce nothing substantially new) or does Christ, in some way, transform the content of the law by his word and example?

In both his thesis on the *Imitatio Christi* in Bavinck and his short essay "Christ and the Law in Herman Bavinck," John Bolt makes the strong case that both law and imitation are critical in Bavinck's ethics, but the law must be seen as ontologically, and logically, prior to the example of Christ. "Ethically," Bolt argues, "the imitation of Christ is seen principally in terms of creation and law."[77] He expands on that claim in this way, arguing that in Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ,

> Clearly, the law — representing universal, creational, human obligations — is ontologically prior. The law, including our obligations to God as well as to our neighbor, is the touchstone for a genuinely human existence. Love, the fulfillment of the law, is constitutive of humanity. However, because sin distorts both our awareness of and our ability to do the good required by the law, Christ the Redeemer, obediently fulfilled the moral law and clarified its true meaning. In a sinful world, self-giving love results in suffering. The *imitatio Christi*, our incorporation into his death and resurrection and following him in a life of sacrificial, self-giving love, is the *sine qua non* both to *knowing* and *doing* the will of God which alone is life indeed for human beings. In short, we are Christian in order to be truly human.[78]

Bavinck's ethics are not complete without both Christ and the law, Bolt shows—but the law guides Bavinck's interpretation of the imitation of Christ. As Bavinck himself writes, "The Ten Commandments form the constitution of a life of obedience to God and, in the final analysis determine that which may and must not be imitated in the life of Jesus."[79]

One may read this claim and then wonder: is Bavinck's ethic also functionally a law-based ethic, rather than an ethic based on the life of Jesus? Does Jesus's life and example actually matter for the Christian life, or do they simply serve as a helpful, illustrative example for what the law requires? Stated even more strongly, we might ask: if the imitation of Christ were removed from Bavinck's ethic, would anything change?

To get to the heart of Bavinck's response to this question, it is helpful to examine an extended excerpt from *Reformed Ethics,* where Bavinck discusses the relationship between the law and the gospel in relationship to the obligations of the first commandment. In it, he affirms both the necessary continuity between the two while also taking seriously the weight and importance of the particular teachings of Jesus. Bavinck writes:

77. Bolt, *Theological Analysis,* 115.
78. Bolt, "Christ and the Law," 73.
79. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 400.

> But does the commandment also demand the uniquely Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love toward God? This is a difficult question; if one says yes, law and gospel seem to be confused, for the law does not mention faith in the uniquely Christian sense, but then the law is inserted and sought in the gospel. If one says no, then one may decide to join the Socinians in making Christ a new Legislator, who has not only fulfilled the law, but added to it, supplemented it, deepened it, and added new commandments to it, and introduced new virtues. The answer to this should be that the law certainly had no knowledge of Christ at all, knew nothing of saving faith, etc., but as soon as the gospel comes with proclamation— believe in Jesus and be saved— then that believing comes to us as a demand and obligation on the basis of the law. The law requires that we believe and do whatever God may command and demand later; the law considers the command to believe as part of it, as it were, and makes it binding and mandatory for all of us. For it is a command from the God who is also the author of the law.[80]

In this passage, Bavinck recognizes the difficulty that a theologian like Yoder points to in a law-based ethic: there is a potential for law and gospel to be blurred, or the teachings of Jesus to be underemphasized. There is also, he cautions, a potential error in the opposite direction: to divorce Jesus's teachings from those that laid out in the Old Testament. Attempting to avoid each of these pitfalls, Bavinck affirms both the enduring normativity and continuity of the law in Christian morality and the unique ways in which the proclamation of the gospel comes alongside the demands of the law.

Bavinck rejects versions of Christian ethics that divorce Jesus's teaching and example from the moral law, while seeking to maintain the particularity of Jesus's teaching. This is directly tied, once again, to his insistence that grace *restores* nature. "Nature and grace, creation and re-creation, must be related to each other in the way Scripture relates them," he argues.[81] In Scripture, we see that Jesus is "the mediator of both creation and re-creation," a theological claim that, for Bavinck, definitively situates the relationship between grace and nature.[82]

80. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek,* ed. Dirk van Keulen (Utrecht: Uitgeverij KokBoekencentrum, 2019. English translation forthcoming in *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 2. ("Maar gebiedt de wet dan ook reeds de eigenaardige christelijke deugden van geloof, hoop [en] liefde tot God? Dit is [een] moeilijke vraag. Zegt men ja, dan schijnt wet en evangelie verward te worden, de wet weet toch van geen geloof enz. in eigenaardig christelijke zin, dan wordt de wet dus in het Evangelie gelegd en gezocht. Zegt men neen, dan komt men ertoe, om met de socinianen Christus te maken tot een novus legislator, die de wet niet maar heeft vervuld, maar aangevuld, vervolledigd, verdiept in nieuwe geboden eraan toegevoegd, en nieuwe deugden ingevoerd. Daarop dient geantwoord, dat de wet zeer zeker niets van Christus, niets van het zaligmakend geloof enz. weet, maar zodra het Evangelie komt met de prediking: geloof in Jezus etc., dan komt dat geloof als eis tot ons en is voor ons verplichtend, op grond der wet. Tot geloven en alwat God bevelen en eisen moge later, zijn we krachtens de wet verplicht. De wet subsumeert als het vare dat geloof onder zich, geeft er een ons allen bindend, verplichtend karakter aan. Het is toch een bevel van die God, die ook Auteur is der wet.")

81. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 3, 216.

82. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, 363. Bavinck's colleague, Abraham Kuyper, wonders

If one were to affirm that Christ "brings with him from heaven another, higher human nature," as he charges Anabaptism with, that would necessitate that "Adam . . . creation and all of nature is a lower order: material, physical, carnal, impure." A theological system that teaches this, he argues, "sacrifices nature to grace."[83] Such a sacrifice produces a dualism that devalues the created order on account of Christ's redemption. This cannot be, argues Bavinck, for "grace does not cancel nature but establishes and restores it."[84] Thus, for Bavinck, ethical systems that see the law and creation order as lower, needing to be replaced by the teaching of Christ, make a grave error in the relationship between nature and grace. Because grace restores nature, Christ restores the interpretation and application of the law; he does not replace it.[85]

Bavinck's understanding of the imitation of Christ underscores the way that grace does indeed restore nature, and thus Christ, in some way, restores the law. As we'll see, this results in Jesus both introducing something *new* ethically, and simultaneously affirming the created order. Functionally, Jesus introduces new ethical content. His word and example are importantly different than that which was being taught and practiced in his day. But that new ethical content is, foundationally, what was instituted at creation. In his 1918 essay on imitation, Bavinck unpacks both the continuity and newness of Jesus's ethical teaching and example:

> There is, therefore, no legitimate foundation to the claim of Marcion and many after him that Jesus, rejecting the moral law of the Old Testament, comes as a new law-giver and promulgates an entirely new law in the Sermon on the Mount. The whole tendency of the Sermon is diametrically opposed to such an interpretation.[86]

Jesus does not produce a new *law,* but he does bring something new: a new "*understanding* of the law."[87] Bavinck continues:

marvellously at the implications of this in his *Lectures on Calvinism* when he writes: "Can we imagine that at one time God willed to rule things in a certain moral order, but that now, in Christ, He wills to rule it otherwise? As though He were not the Eternal, the Unchangeable, Who, from the very hour of creation, even unto all eternity, had willed, wills, and shall will and maintain, one and the same firm moral world-order! Verily Christ has swept away the dust with which man's sinful limitations had covered up this world-order, and has made it glitter again in its original brilliancy. Verily Christ, and He alone, has disclosed to us the eternal love of Christ which was, from the beginning, the moving principle of this world-order." Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 71.

83. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1: *Prolegomena,* ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 184.

84. Bavinck, "Common Grace," 62.

85. Importantly, Jan Veenhof stresses that this *restoration* is not *repristination*. Grace restores nature means that "the natural" is "raised to a higher level than it originally occupied" Veenhoff, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck*, 24–5. As Bavinck says in "Common Grace" (59), "Christ gives more than sin stole; grace was made much more to abound." We can see glimmers of a similar impulse in Bavinck in his discussion of the law and gospel.

86. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 414.

87. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 415; emphasis added.

> The interpretation of the Pharisees and Scribes is now inadequate. . . . The Pharisees and Scribes not only instructed their followers to adhere to a literal reading of the law but also included traditional explication, implication and application as a binding rule upon the conscience. . . . While it is true that Jesus does not always make specific reference to these interpretations of the Scribes (e.g. as he does in vss. 27, 31, 33, 38), there can be no doubt about the fact that *he takes issue, not with the words of the law itself, but with its incorrect interpretation and application*. Jesus never contradicts what is written in the Old Testament law but always that which his disciples had heard of old from the Scribes, that which had been told to the fathers. It is over against this interpretation and teaching of the Scribes that Jesus sets his, "But I say unto you." It was because Jesus set aside the traditions of men and returned to the very Word of God that the crowd perceived his teaching as having authority.[88]

Jesus, in his words and examples, thus, does introduce something new—that is simultaneously part of the original fabric and design of creation. He introduces the proper interpretation of the law, which does not contradict the Old Testament nor creational norms, but does contradict and alter the teaching and interpretation of his day.

Bavinck understands Jesus to be the "living law;" in his life there is "no discord with the law."[89] Christians imitate him as *the* concrete, perfect example of the virtues that the law requires of them, and the one who fulfills the law. What does it mean for Christ to fulfill the law? Here, again, Bavinck differs from an interpretation like that of Yoder who writes that Jesus "fill[s] full" the law. Instead, "having completely fulfilled the law," Bavinck argues in his early essays on imitation, the law is "part of [Jesus's] innermost being. There is thus in him no tension between being and consciousness, between word and deed, since, as the truth itself, he is what he says. All the requirements of the law, knowledge and trust, righteousness and holiness, love to God and to man, are incarnate in him. In him the law itself became personified and lived among us."[90] Jesus comes, Bavinck affirms again in 1918, "not to annul the law and the prophets but to fulfill them" or to "concretize" the "demands of the law and prophets."[91] Fulfilling, for Bavinck, is not primarily about introducing radically different content than the law; it is about fully and perfectly embodying and enacting the law's demands, inwardly and outwardly.[92]

In his words and examples, Jesus introduces something importantly corrective to ethical teaching of his day. But he does not introduce these different—or new—ethical ideals by abolishing the old. Rather, the new ethical content that he brings

88. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 415–6; emphasis added.

89. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 341, 337.

90. Bavinck, "Imitation I," 395.

91. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 414.

92. See: Bavinck, "Imitation I," 396, Bavinck, "Imitation II," 412, and Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics* vol. 1, 337.

to his disciples is a rearticulation of the old. Nothing is lost in the law; the original meaning and intent is gained. Bavinck stresses the way the imitating Christ as he follows the law points back to the original nature of humanity and creation again in the necessary connection he weaves between imitation and the restoration of the image of God, that is, God's original intent and design for humanity.[93] "True imitation," Bavinck writes, "is thus a matter of being conformed to the image of God. [Jesus] is not only an example but the archetype."[94] Thus, as grace restores nature, Christ—in his ethical teaching—restores the original intent and import of the law.

Conclusion

Known for its insistence on the normative place of the law in Christian ethics, the Reformed tradition has not typically highlighted the role of Jesus Christ as an *example* in Christian ethics. While this is the majority report of Reformed ethics, there are examples throughout the Reformed tradition, of theological ethics that continue to stress the normative nature of the law in the Christian life alongside the insistence of the ongoing normativity of Christ's words and deeds for the Christian.

Following, and expanding upon, the work of John Calvin, Herman Bavinck provides one such example, articulating a distinctly Reformed understanding of the relationship between Christ and the law that affirms the normative role of both for Christian ethics. In doing so, Bavinck pre-empts a challenge that emerges both within and outside the Reformed tradition regarding its ethics: Jesus *must* matter in the Christian life, not only as savior, but as example.

For Bavinck, the imitation of Christ is the heart of the Christian life; it constitutes the "shape" and form of how the Christian should live.[95] The Christian life should be directed towards a law-patterned imitation of the virtues of Christ. Bavinck's insistence that *the* form of the Christian life is found in the example of Jesus, and that the example of Jesus must be understood through the lens of the moral law uniquely brings together two dominant themes in Christian ethics, without forcing a binary choice between one or the other: Christ and the law.

Such a picture of the imitation of Christ, firmly rooted in the moral law, does raise a question, however: if we understand the imitation of Christ through the lens of the law, does the example of Jesus really matter for Christian ethics? Or is Bavinck's ethics still, functionally, a law-based ethic that merely sees Jesus as a helpful, concrete example of that law, rather than one who has direct import on the content of ethics?

93. See: Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 340: in the imitation of Christ, "We are conformed to the image of the Son . . . God re-creating us in his image is what Christ has earned and acquired for us. The content of our life, therefore, is nothing other than the image of God—namely, knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, which are ethical qualities that correspond to those in Christ, who is the perfect Image of God."

94. Bavinck, "Imitation II," 412–3.

95. Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, 341.

Throughout this essay, we have explored this question, arguing that the answer to this question, in Bavinck's theology, is both yes and no: yes, Jesus *functionally* alters the content of ethics. Without him, we do not, and could not, see the original intent of the law. In word and deed, he presents something meaningfully different and other than the ethical norms of his day, including those based on the law. But, simultaneously, no, Jesus does not *foundationally* alter the content of ethics, introducing something wholly new. Instead, he reintroduces what was instituted at creation, with more clarity than could have been attainable in a postlapsarian world. Without the example of Jesus, we cannot attain a full picture of God's ethical call, but the example of Jesus points us to what was there all along, found in the law.

Bavinck's imitation of Christ continues to stress the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, and the ongoing import of the creational norms, while simultaneously affirming the newness that Jesus brings.[96] As grace restores nature, Jesus restores the intent and application of the law. He is not a new law*giver*, but a law-*restorer*.

96. In his essay, "Creational Politics," Richard Mouw briefly responds to this challenge as well. See Richard J. Mouw, "Creational Politics: Some Calvinist Amendments," in *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship: Essays in the Line of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 122.

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Bavinck's Doctrine of God: Absolute, Divine Personality

Gayle Doornbos

Gayle Doornbos (PhD, University of St. Michael's College) is an Associate Professor of Theology at Dordt University. She has also taught in Calvin Theological Seminary's distance program. She lives in Sioux Center, IA.

Introduction[1]

Given the Dutch Reformed Theologian Herman Bavinck's insistence on the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity and the serious debates surrounding the doctrine at the turn of the twentieth century, it is surprising that there remain few extended treatments of Bavinck's doctrine of God within secondary scholarship, especially those situating his theology proper within his theological and philosophical context. While there remains a widespread recognition of the trinitarian nature of Bavinck's theology as well as examinations of the triniform structure of various doctrines,[2] the structure, shape, sources, and context of Bavinck's doctrine of God remains

1. The material for this article is a combination of a paper given for the Advanced Theological Studies Fellowship at Kampen Theological University and the author's doctoral dissertation. The materials have often been altered for the sake of this paper. See Gayle Doornbos, "Absolute Divine Personality: Herman Bavinck and Isaak A. Dorner's Doctrines of God," Advanced Theological Studies Fellowship, June 2019," and Gayle Doornbos, "Herman Bavinck's Trinitarian Theology: The Ontological, Cosmological, and Soteriological Dimensions of the Doctrine of the Trinity" (PhD Dissertation: University of St. Michael's College, 2019).

2. Epistemology: Bruce Pass, "Herman Bavinck and the Problem of New Wine in Old Wineskins," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 4 (2015): 432–49; Scott Oliphint, "Bavinck's Realism, The Logos Principle, and *Sola Scriptura,"* in *Westminster Theological Journal* (2010): 359–90; and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck and Thomas Reid on Perception and Knowing God," *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 1 (January 2018): 115–34. Creation: See Clayton Bryant Cooke, "World-Formative Rest: Faithful Cultural Discipleship in a Secular Age" (PhD Dissertation. Fuller Theological Seminary, 2015), 174–94; Wolter Huttinga, "Participation and Communicability: Herman Bavinck and John Milbank on the Relation between God and the World" (PhD Dissertation, Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Kampen, 2014), 105–188; and Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny,* chapter 1. The Pactum Salutis: Anthony Andrew Hoekema, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant" (ThD Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953), 81–86 (NB: This dissertation follows the page numbers of the re-typeset edition printed on demand from Full Bible Publications: Clover, SC, 2007); Laurence R. O'Donnell III, "Not Subtle Enough: An Assessment of Modern Scholarship on Bavinck's Reformulation of the *Pactum Salutis* Contra 'Scholastic Subtlety'" *Mid America Theological Journal* 22 (2011): 89–106. Ethics: John Bolt, *Imitatio Christi,* 264–66. Soteriology: Syd Heilema, "Eschatological Understanding of Redemption," chapter 3. The Motif of Grace Restores Nature: See especially Eugene Heideman, *Reason and Revelation,* 191–95 and J. Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspratie,* 346ff. Formation of a Christian World-and-Life-View: See especially Eugene Heideman, *Reason and Revelation,* 191–95 and J. Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspratie,* 346ff.

underexamined (at best) and unexamined (at worst).[3] Why is this? Syd Hielema's treatment of Bavinck's doctrine of God in his 1998 dissertation "Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption" illuminates at least two potential reasons in older scholarship. First, describing the doctrine of the Trinity, Hielema claims that Bavinck's treatment is "certainly not remarkable or unusual *in any way*."[4] Second, describing Bavinck's development of the divine attributes, Hielema claims that he occasionally lapses into "abstract speculation concerning the nature of God" and "scholastic detours."[5] While not indicative of all Bavinck scholarship, Hielema's estimation of Bavinck's doctrine of God as unremarkable combined with a tendency to fall prey to scholastic speculation is representative of a line of interpretation that perceived Bavinck's doctrine of God as both unoriginal and continuing traditional forms within his theology proper even as he developed a triniform account of various doctrines.[6] And, depending on one's stance towards classical articulations of the doctrine of God, the unoriginal and particularly scholastic nature of Bavinck's theology proper are grounds for either its *dismissal* or its *utilization* as a rare, contemporary example of classical theism to martial for one's own theological project.[7]

Recent scholarship, however, has started to gesture in a different direction. Following James Eglinton's re-interpretation of Bavinck's organic motif as rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity, Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto have both indicated that Bavinck's doctrine of God might contain more originality than previously thought, particularly Bavinck's predication of God as 'absolute personality.' In Sutanto's, *God and Knowledge*, he notes,

> If there is a potential and modest point of uniqueness in Bavinck's treatment of theology proper (outside of the organic motif and characterization of reality in light of God's triune being), it is Bavinck's predication of the divine being as the 'absolute personality' in response to modern theology's emphasis on the psychological depth that attends talks of personality.[8]

3. The main thrust of this author's dissertation was to explore this area of Bavinck's thought. Several aspects of this article are derived or taken from the dissertation. See Gayle Doornbos, "Herman Bavinck's Trinitarian Theology."

4. Hielema, "Eschatological Understanding of Redemption," 112. Emphasis added.

5. Hielema, "Eschatological Understanding of Redemption," 104, 124.

6. While utilized in a few publications prior to *Trinity and Organism,* Eglinton introduced the term "triniform" to the discussion of Bavinck's theology. This work is indebted to him for the word "triniform," especially its applicability to Bavinck's theology. See James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

7. See, for example, Steven J. Duby, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 30–31; Jordan P. Barrett, *Divine Simplicity: A Biblical and Trinitarian Account* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 109–113. James E. Dolezal, *God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 9, 57–58, 68–89; and Hans Burger, *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009), Chapter 3.

8. Nathanial Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck's Theological Epistemology*

For Sutanto, Bavinck's utilization of 'absolute personality' indicates his engagement with modern conceptions of personality.[9] Similarly, Brock also notes Bavinck's predication of God as 'absolute personality' in his dissertation and utilizes it to argue for the truly catholic, ecclesial, and ecumenical nature of Bavinck's theology. For Brock, this shows Bavinck's utilization of modern sources within his doctrinal construction and willingness to place traditional doctrines in modern theological grammar. With regard to 'absolute personality,' Brock cites a quote by the German mediating theologian Isaak Dorner and specifies Dorner as the source of Bavinck's predication of God as 'absolute personality.'[10] According to Brock, this utilization and identification of God using the language of 'absolute personality' is enough to suggest that Bavinck used "Aquinas and Calvin" but also "in moments . . . Dorner, Schelling, and others, to construct his doctrine of God."[11]

While both Brock and Sutanto gesture towards a potentially unique and unexplored aspect within Bavinck's doctrine of God, both are brief and modest. Modest in that neither suggests that Bavinck's predication of God as 'absolute, divine personality' is indicative of a radical shift away from Bavinck's development of a Reformed, historic, and creedal doctrine of God. Brief in that both gesture to this element with Bavinck so quickly that if their treatments of Bavinck were like marvel movies, 'absolute personality' would be considered something like a Stan Lee cameo: important but easy to miss. The lack of in-depth study is understandable given the scope and aim of their projects, but it is unfortunate because the lack of investigation leaves readers thinking Bavinck used the term 'absolute personality'—a favorite of nineteenth-century theistic personalists—when he specifically uses the phrase absolute, divine personality (*absolute, Goddelijke persoonlijkheid*).[12] It also identifies Dorner as Bavinck's potential source for this predication without further investigation. However, even if they do not explore Bavinck's attribution of 'absolute, divine personality' to God in-depth, they do (rightly) indicate that previous scholarship may have missed important elements within Bavinck's doctrine of God—particularly in relation to Bavinck's sources, Bavinck's utilization of modern

(London: T&T Clark, 2020), 29.

9. Besides Sutanto and Brock, there is only one other writer who has mentioned Bavinck's treatment of absoluteness and personality in a significant way: Henry Jansen. In his book, *Relationality and the Concept of God*, Jansen notes that Bavinck talks about God "as Absolute and as personal." See Henry Jansen, *Relationality and the Concept of God,* (Amsterdam: Rodophi, 1995), 48.

10. Cory Brock, "Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Appropriation of Schleiermacher." (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Edinburgh, 2017), 55.

11. Brock, "Orthodox yet Modern," 55–6. Brock notably leaves this claim out of the published version of his dissertation.

12. Bavinck's exact phrasing is: "Absolute, Goddelijke persoonlijkheid." Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, Deel 2 (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1897), 275. Bavinck's first edition of his second volume will be referenced as *GD* for the remainder of this paper. His second, revised edition will be referenced using the English transition of that edition.

theological and philosophical grammar, and whether or not Bavinck's use of modern theological grammar is indicative of substantial developments within his doctrine of God, merely restating classical doctrines in modern dress, *or* something in-between.

This essay seeks to fill this gap in Bavinck studies by exploring three pertinent aspects of Bavinck's utilization of 'absoluteness' and 'personality' in his doctrine of God proper including his predication of God as 'absolute, divine personality.' In doing so, it will seek to show—as Sutanto and Brock have suggested—that this aspect of Bavinck's thought represents a creative appropriation of modern philosophical concepts from within his classical, Reformed tradition in order to develop it in and for the context of modernity. It will do this by focusing on (1) situating Bavinck's doctrine of God within the context of the nineteenth century the philosophical debate concerning absoluteness and personality, (2) identifying a few key places where Bavinck seeks to reconcile absoluteness and personality in his development of theology proper within the *Reformed Dogmatics;* and (3) pointing towards why this area of Bavinck studies is a fruitful area for future study.

Absoluteness and Personality in Context

One of the urgent questions within nineteenth theology and philosophy was the relationship between absoluteness and personality.[13] Bequeathed to theology by a series of complex developments in philosophical metaphysics running from Descartes through Spinoza and Kant to Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling that increasingly conceptualized God as Absolute and Infinite *in contrast* to that which is conditioned, finite, and limited, one of the most significant questions facing theologians by the nineteenth century was whether or not it was even conceptually possible to affirm an Infinite, Absolute, personal God.[14] Why? In the wake of Kant, Fichte, and others,

13. There is an ongoing debate concerning whether or not the debate was a necessary result of an internal deficiency within the classical Christian doctrine of God. Many contemporary commentators do see it as deeply rooted in a fundamental deficiency in the classical doctrine of God. However, they disagree on which elements within the Christian doctrine of God caused this debate to arise, the reasons why it developed as it did after the Enlightenment, and what doctrine of God should be developed as a result. Barth, for example, argues that the problem is has its roots in the theological tradition's shift to discussing the nature and attributes of God prior to the doctrine of the Trinity. Barth sees the increasing distance between *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* as creating a wedge between God's being and his personality that allowed denials of God's personality and assertion of his absoluteness to develop, especially in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Idealism. Others, however, like Pannenberg and Clayton identify issues within Christian conceptualizations of the divine but locate the origins of the nineteenth-century debate in Descartes. The treatment of the debate in this article will follow Pannenberg and Clayton in locating the specific form of the modern debate in Descartes. See Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* II/1, 288; Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000), Chapter 2; and Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 19.

14. Philip Clayton, reflecting on this issue, has claimed the following: "Let me put it bluntly: *after Fichte it can no longer be presupposed that the traditional philosophical/theological doctrine of an infinite personal God represents a defensible conceptual position.* (Of course, that there are difficulties with the idea of an infinite personal God does not prove that no solution can ever

personality shifted such that personality was seen as a mode of finite existence, simultaneously including notions of self-consciousness, self-determination, and dependence.[15] To ascribe personality to the Absolute would be to apply a condition to the Absolute, thereby denying the free, unconditioned, and unbound nature of the Absolute.[16] To resolve this dilemma, some Idealist philosophers like Hegel and Schelling sought to conceptualize the Absolute as a Self-positing, Subject who becomes in and through positing that which is other (finite) and reconciling the finite with itself (synthesis).

These developments in philosophical metaphysics presented Christian theologians with a particularly difficult problem. Classically, Christian conceptions of God affirmed both his absoluteness and personality in its affirmations that the infinite God was also related to his creation. This relation did not bring about a change in God, but it was still 'personal' insofar as it was conscious and willed.[17] Thus, several proposals, many of which reworked the doctrine of God, arose throughout the nineteenth century in response. These proposals ranged from identifying the personality of God as purely symbolic—something that is subjectively important for the religious life but not philosophically valid—to trying to recover personality in God by ascribing personality to God in an absolute sense.

Bavinck: Absolute, Divine Personality

To grapple with the relationship between absoluteness and personality was to attend to the philosophical and theological questions of the day. It was within this context that Bavinck wrote and developed his understanding of how to reconcile absoluteness and personality as well as described God as 'absolute, divine personality.' As such, it is important to remember that as we look at Bavinck's own response, he was not the only one who perceived the issues and potentially problematic implications

be found)." For Clayton, Fichte made the classical Christian description of an infinite, absolute personal God an issue to defend conceptually rather than one to accept and articulate. Clayton, *Modern Concept of God,* 447.

15. See J.G. Fichte, "On the Ground of Our Belief in a Divine World-Governance," in *J.G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798–1800),* ed. Yolanda Estes and Curtis Bowman, trans. Curtis Bowan, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 21–29.

16. For a summary of this development, see Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God,* Chapter 3, "Self-consciousness and Subjectivity."

17. This is not to say that classical conceptions of God were monolithic. However, there were tenants of classical conceptions of God that many theologians shared. One such tenant was that God's infinity and his unchangeable nature did not exclude the possibility of creating and relating to a non-divine creation. This relation, however, was not conceptualized under the category of God as a singular "person" because "person" was traditionally utilized in reference to the three persons of the Trinity. See Clayton, *Modern Concept of God,* 447, and Craig A. Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), Part 1.

of this debate, nor was he the only one who found insights within contemporary philosophy for developing his own theological reconciliation of absoluteness and personality. However, his approach can be classified as a specifically Neo-Calvinist response, as he seeks to develop the Reformed tradition from within for the sake of his modern context.

What's Old is New Again: Absoluteness and Personality . . . A Contemporary Question?

Before looking at Bavinck's articulation of the relationship between absoluteness and personality and the role it plays in his systematic treatment of the doctrine of God, it is vital to examine how Bavinck presents and situates the contemporary debate. Why? Because Bavinck's presentation and estimation that the contemporary debate over absoluteness and personality as a novel manifestation of a perennial theological issue is one of the grounds that he utilizes to draw upon the theological tradition and develop it.

Bavinck's works, from the first edition of the second volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics* (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1897)) to his 1911 speech "Modernism and Orthodoxy," contain several statements that reveal Bavinck's growing understanding of where the contemporary debate should be situated within the history of theology. There are three particularly illuminating statements—one from the first edition *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1897), one from the second edition of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (1908), and one from "Modernism and Orthodoxy"—that demonstrate Bavinck's continued interest and awareness of the importance of the debate as well as a subtle development in his assessment of it.[18]

First, in the first edition of the second volume of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* following a section that traces the apparent contradiction between absoluteness and personality in contemporary philosophy, particularly following Kant and Fichte, Bavinck makes the following assessment: "at the bottom this antithesis between absoluteness and personality is none other than that which in Christian theology was always felt and expressed in negative and positive (apophatic and cataphatic) theology."[19] In other words, according to Bavinck, the historical Christian affirmation of the unknowability of the divine essence transposed into modern key is absoluteness, albeit with one key difference. Unlike contemporary philosophical

18. The adjective, subtle, is a crucial one here. Bavinck's statements and connection of absoluteness and personality to the duality of God's incomprehensibility and knowability in revelation present in each one of these works. However, his does develop statements through these works that provide clarity or summarize elements implicit within earlier treatments.

19. "In het wezen der zaak is deze tegenstelling tusschen absoluut en persoonlijk geen andere, dan die in de christelijke theologie altijd werd gevoeld en uitgedrukt werd in de negatieve en positieve, de apophatische en de kataphatische theologie." *GD*, 18. The transition above is from the English translation of the second edition, in which this statement remained the same. See Bavinck, *RD*, 2:46.

accounts of the unknowability of the Absolute, Christian theology while affirming the incomprehensibility of the divine essence, does not deny the possibility of knowing God through revelation.[20]

Bavinck expands this emphasis on divine revelation, found throughout his first edition, in the second, revised edition of the *Reformed Dogmatics*. Published in 1908, the second edition contains many additions, one of which is illuminating with regard to Bavinck's assessment of the contemporary debate. Already situating it within the perennial theological articulation of negative and positive theology, Bavinck plunks the contemporary question squarely within the waters of Scripture. Following a section tracing the dynamic between the revelation of a personal, relational God and a God who dwells in inaccessible light in Scripture, Bavinck writes: "or to put this into modern theological language, in Scripture the personality and absoluteness of God go hand in hand."[21] This section makes a clear and striking claim that the duality present in Scripture, translated into modern theological grammar is absoluteness and personality. Bavinck also adds a secondary claim to the assertion that the "moment we step outside of the domain of…special revelation in Scripture… the unity of absoluteness and personality of God is broken."[22] Thus, according to Bavinck, the contemporary debate is not novel but a new manifestation of an enduring theological problem of how to do justice the duality revealed in Scripture. Furthermore, Bavinck makes it clear that because Scripture alone maintains the unity of absoluteness and personality, the Christian conception of the divine is the only place where these two can be unified. Outside of revelation the divine is conceived of as *either* Absolute, direct knowledge of whom is unattainable, *or* the divine is made personal, knowledge of whom is equated with human cognition or self-consciousness.[23] To back up this claim, Bavinck repurposes a section from the first edition that he used to trace historical attestation of divine incomprehensibility in non-Christian traditions to demonstrate how the unity of God's personality and absoluteness immediately disintegrates outside of special revelation's domain.

Finally, in "Modernism and Orthodoxy," Bavinck makes a statement that clearly ties his previous assessments together. In the midst of his argument against the charge that he and other neo-Calvinists were neither orthodox nor modern but rather using orthodox terms and filling them with modern content, Bavinck claims in this lengthy statement is worth quoting in full:

20. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:48–49.

21. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34.

22. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34. This phrase is an addition to the second edition.

23. Of note in Bavinck's assessment is his refusal to claim that the God of the philosophers is solely the Absolute God whose being is unknowable and distant. Rather it is both the Absolute, unknowable God, distant and distinct from creation (deistic) *and* the personal one, totally knowable and relatable (pantheistic) that Bavinck equates with the God of the philosophers.

> One shall soon make the surprising discovery that the *alleged contrariety* [between absoluteness and personality, the God of science and the God of religion] does not exist between Scriptures and contemporary theology and neither does it exist between the old and the new Calvinism but that it appears in Scripture itself and is encountered in every theologian…In principle the question has always been there and it comes down to this…How can the infinite eternal being, that is the power in all power and the life of all life be at the same time the gracious, and the caring Father of his children?[24]

Here Bavinck claims that the question raised within contemporary philosophy and theology is not a new question but rather one that every theologian must wrestle with because Scripture and God's divine revelation itself presents God as "incomparable, indescribable, infinite and eternal," and "… the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and in him the Father of all his children."[25] Thus, according to Bavinck, the seemingly novel contemporary debate is not new. Rather, just like his claim in his *Philosophy of Revelation* that worldviews cycle in "rhythmic waves" throughout the history of thought,[26] so too the debate concerning absoluteness and personality is not unique but a recurring challenge for theologians to grapple with. Within the context of "Modernism and Orthodoxy," Bavinck use this to argue that the conflict is not between the new Calvinism and the old nor Scripture and contemporary theology but rather is one found in God's self-revelation that challenges theologians of every age to do justice to the unity of God's revelation of himself as absolute and personal.[27] It also shows Bavinck's continued engagement with the questions of absoluteness and personality and his continued development of the concepts.

Bavinck's way of casting the contemporary questions swirling around absoluteness and personality within Scripture and the tradition provides the impetus for him to enter the debate and engage it in a particular way. First, he firmly grounds

24. Herman Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," trans. Bruce R. Pass, *Bavinck Review* 7 (2016): 96–97. This translation was recently published along with three other translated articles in Herman Bavinck and Bruce R. Pass, *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

25. Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 97.

26. Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*, ed. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson, 2018), 30–31: "They rather recur in rhythmical waves, more or less intermingle, and subsist side by side. Thus, Greek philosophy was born out of the Orphic theology, passed over into the naturalism of the old nature-philosophy, and became humanistic in the Sophists and the wisdom-philosophy of Socrates. Plato in his doctrine of ideas went back to the old theology and to Pythagoras; but, after Aristotle, his philosophy gave way to the naturalistic systems of Epicurus and the Stoics; and these, in turn, by way of reaction, gave birth to the teachings of the sceptical and mystical schools. Christianity gave theism the ascendancy for many centuries; but modern philosophy, which began with Descartes and Bacon, assumed in ever increasing measure a naturalistic character till Kant and Fichte in the ego once more took their starting point from man. After a brief period of the supremacy of the theistic philosophy in the nineteenth century, naturalism in its materialistic or pantheistic form resumed its sway, only to induce during these recent years a new return to Kant and the principles of humanism."

27. Bavinck, "Modernism and Orthodoxy," 96–102.

both the problem and the solution within the bounds of revelation. The problem arises because of the unity and duality of God's revelation. God's revelation is one, but he is revealed as both known and unknown, named and nameless, immanent and transcendent.[28] Second, his claim that this is not a novel issue allows Bavinck to reach into the past and use the theological tradition as a guide and resource for addressing his contemporary context. Finally, grounding his response in Scripture and the theological tradition also allows Bavinck to incorporate genuine insights from contemporary theology and philosophy.[29] While this approach may seem to indicate a tendency to simply parrot the tradition, for Bavinck it actually opens up the space within which new insights can be appropriated.[30] Rather it is the opposite; because Scripture provides the framework and the tradition serves as a guide, Bavinck is free to take in and utilize contemporary insights. According to Bavinck, there is no need to pit the theological tradition against theological development.

Bavinck's Absolutely Personal, Triune God

Central to Bavinck's reconciliation of absoluteness and personality is to show how the Scriptural reality of God as hidden and revealed, incomprehensible and knowable, unnamed and named are not contradictory but 'go hand and hand' to create a uniquely Christian understanding of the triune God who is personal and absolute. To do so, Bavinck attends to a series of epistemological and ontological issues throughout his doctrine of God proper. While his specific treatment and engagement with the debate occur within particular sections, the systematic conclusions he draws undergirds his positive development of the divine essence, attributes, and persons.

Bavinck's attempts to reconcile absoluteness and personality begin epistemologically at the beginning of the second volume of the *Reformed Dogmatics.* He makes two-fold epistemological affirmation that he roots in Scripture: God is incomprehensible yet knowable. According to Bavinck, Scripture attests to the distance between God and creation and affirms the mysterious and ineffable nature of God, but "it nevertheless sets forth a doctrine of God that upholds his knowability."[31] Scripture does not seek to prove God's existence, "but simply presupposes it."[32] It presents God as "a personal being, self-existent, with a life, consciousness, and will

28. See Bavinck, *RD*, vol. 2.

29. Bavinck himself identifies this approach to philosophical conceptions of the divine as derived from the theological method of the church fathers: "The church father already observed that this doctrine [Trinity] rejects the errors of, while absorbing the elements of truth inherent in, Deism and pantheism, monism and polytheism." Bavinck, *RD*, 2:331.

30. Bavinck himself notes that he does not simply wish to parrot the tradition in forward to the first edition of the *Gereformeerde dogmatiek:* "To cherish the ancient simply because it is ancient is neither Reformed nor Christian." Herman Bavinck, "Foreword to the First Edition (volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010), 10.

31. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:30.

32. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:30.

of his own, not confined to nature but highly exalted above it, the Creator of heaven and earth" who can and does "manifest himself" on earth, is personally involved in creation, reveals himself, and can be truly known.[33] God is transcendent and immanent. He is an ineffable, incomprehensible, "adorable mystery," or Absolute; and he is knowable, or personal.[34] He is, according to Bavinck, absolute and personal.[35]

The problem with contemporary philosophy, according to Bavinck, is not that it utilizes absoluteness and personality but that it rends asunder what Scripture presents together and thereby develops a reductionistic and problematic conception of the divine.[36] Contemporary philosophy either renders God as the Absolute—the One who is unknowable and unnameable *or* God as a Person who is fully known. God is either conceived of as Absolute and unconscious but not personal *or* personal and self-conscious but not absolute.[37] One leads to agnosticism concerning the divine, and the other leads to rationalism.[38] According to Bavinck, these are not just noetic positions but rest in certain ontological commitments that have religious implications. Assessing them, Bavinck identifies each position as the outworking of either deism or pantheism. To assume that God is unknowable is to simultaneously claim that the world is devoid of the divine (Deism), and to assume that God is nothing more than an enlarged human person is to claim that the world is divinized (pantheism).[39]

33. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:30.

34. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:49. Mystery is an important motif in Bavinck's work. As Bruce R. Pass's recent article has pointed out, Bavinck utilizes mystery throughout his corpus in three different ways. First, utilizing the NT sense of the term, Bavinck often defines mystery as that which was hidden by God but now made known to believers. Thus, something mysterious is that which was previously hidden but has now been made known. Second, Bavinck uses the term mystery to denote things that are presently unknown. Bavinck uses this sense to highlight the limits of scientific knowledge. Third, he uses mystery to denote that which can be apprehended by human reason but remain indemonstrable to human reason. As Pass articulates, these three uses of reason are important and prominent in Bavinck's treatment and are fitting to the epistemological treatment of divine absoluteness and personality found in this chapter. See Bruce R. Pass, "Revelation and Reason in Herman Bavinck," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 80 (2018): 250–51.

35. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34.

36. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34–6.

37. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34–35. Bavinck engages Islam and Buddhism in this section. While he does often mention religion and trace alternative conceptions of various doctrines, he has often been criticized for failing to engage seriously with other religious. On many occasions, this critique is warranted, especially with regard to Bavinck's development of worldview and epistemological typologies. However, this is a delightful example of his knowledge of and engagement with other religious traditions. See Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny,* 43.

38. There is an overlap here between Bavinck's assessment of divine absoluteness and personality and his later discussion on Arianism and Sabellianism. Fitting with his assessment that every error in doctrine is at its core an error in the doctrine of the Trinity, Bavinck's articulation of the inability to reconcile divine absoluteness and personality bears striking similarities to his assessment of Arian and Sabellian approaches to the Trinity. See Bavinck, *RD*, 2:291–96.

39. Bavinck's use of pantheism needs to be nuanced. Occasionally, he will use pantheism to refer to understandings of the world in which there is no differentiation between God and the world. However, he also uses the term pantheism to describe what is more commonly referred to now as panentheism wherein God and the world are distinct but are part of one, God-world complex.

However, even though Bavinck sees agnosticism and rationalism as the noetic correlates of deism and pantheism, he is quick to point out that they are really two sides of the same coin. Neither can maintain immanence and transcendence, divine incomprehensibility and knowability, absoluteness and personality. And, because neither can hold together what Scripture presents as unified, they constantly merge and collapse into one another. Bavinck is particularly interested in the way agnosticism collapses into and ends up "justify[ing] a pantheistic God-concept."[40] In making the world mundane, agnosticism quickly tries to re-divinize the world by claiming that symbolic or representational knowledge of the Absolute is possible. However, it still denies personal consciousness and purposive intent to the Absolute. The Absolute remains unknown, incapable of revelation, even as it turns to a fairly well-defined God-concept.[41] Thinly veiled here is Bavinck's criticism of approaches that deny objective knowledge of the divine and treat theology's knowledge as merely symbolic (Schleiermacher). As agnosticism and rationalism, deism and pantheism develop and merge together in the history of philosophy and religion, they present God as either a "cold abstraction that freezes religion and destroys the religion of the heart," or as "is nothing but an enlarged version of a human person."[42]

While criticizing contemporary positions, Bavinck does not simply discard the insights of contemporary philosophy. Most strikingly, Bavinck judges the agnosticism of Kant and Fichte as a helpful corrective to overly rationalistic theological discourse. However, he rejects the corresponding claims that God (or the Absolute) *remains completely* behind the epistemological veil. Bavinck also agrees with Fichte's assessment that "Personality *is a concept borrowed from the human* realm and hence, when applied to God, always to some extent falls short."[43] According to Bavinck, Fichte's claim concerning the limitations of all God-concepts is helpful not only as a corrective to theistic philosophers who sought to reconcile absoluteness and personality by applying the new philosophical and psychological conceptions

Bavinck will often categorize panentheistic theologians and philosophers as fundamentally agnostic with regard to the divine. What he is not doing in these cases is arguing that they represent deistic philosophical conceptions. He is, however, trying to show how agnosticism collapses into and often ends up articulating a pantheistic or, in modern terms, panentheistic view of God and the world. For a more thorough treatment and definition of various types of panentheism see John Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

40. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:52.

41. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:52. It is clear throughout this section that Bavinck is far less concerned with the traditional, modernist deists like Descartes, Locke, and Hume. He is much more concerned with the late-modern agnosticism of the Absolute that still claimed to have arrived at some type of God-concept. In this concern, Bavinck is in accord with Kuyper. See Abraham Kuyper, *Pantheism's Destruction of Boundaries,* trans. J. Hendrick de Vries (n.p.: 1893).

42. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:47.

43. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:50. Emphasis added.

of person and personality to God but also as a reminder about the anthropomorphic nature of all human language for the divine.[44]

Fichte's problem, however, according to Bavinck, is that he did not take his argument about human predication of the divine far enough. Thus, he uses Fichte's argument and pushes it further to show that the radical anthropomorphic and analogical nature of *all* human language for God—including the predication 'Absolute.' This argument opens the door for Bavinck to affirm the possibility of predicating attributes to the divine based on God's revelation through a re-articulate the classical Calvinistic doctrine of divine accommodation.[45] Following that, Bavinck appropriates and redefines absoluteness and personality from within the tradition and situates it within his distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology as he develops his account of God's attributes.[46] First, God's absoluteness becomes an affirmation of divine incomprehensibility, and aseity and personality become an affirmation of the possibility of attributing positive characteristics to the divine being, relatively, analogically, and anthropomorphically on the basis of the self-conscious, purposive revelation of the divine being.[47]

Furthermore, Bavinck argues, divine absoluteness should not be defined via abstraction and negation; it is not divine boundlessness, lifelessness, or infinite expression in all directions, as in Fichte and other idealist philosophers. God's

44. Theistic personalism represented a widespread and varied nineteenth-century movement to reconcile divine absoluteness and personality. It has also been widely influential in twentieth-century dialogues concerning the nature of the divine. Brian Davies in his book *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* identifies theistic personalism in contrast to classical theism and defines them as the two different approaches to God. While Davies primarily focuses on theistic personalism in analytic philosophy, the contrast between theistic personalism and classical theism is one helpful way to map the landscape of contemporary theological and philosophical dialogues concerning the divine. See Brian Davies, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapter 1 "The Concept of God." For a standard treatment of philosophical personalism, particularly theistic personalism and its worldview see Keith Yandell, "Personalism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward Craig (Taylor and Francis), accessed February 19, 2019, https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/personalism/v-1

45. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:50.

46. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:128. Bavinck's use of analogy presupposes the distinction and difference between the creator and the creature even as it grounds the possibility of divine predication. The analogy is grounded in God's action of creation by which he communicates himself. However, even as creatures imitate the divine and articulate truths about him by echoing his divine speech in creation, they remain radically different. There is an infinite gulf between the divine and creation, Infinite and finite, eternity and time in Bavinck. The analogy is derived from God's divine initiative, his self-communication in creation. Bavinck uses the concept of God placing the words on human lips as a way to articulate the truth that no knowledge of God is possible unless he has revealed himself. Furthermore, according to Bavinck, even though God remains distinctly different than anything in the world, everything in the world is like him. Therefore, creaturely language is a divinely given gift by which human beings come to know God analogically and anthropomorphically. This metaphor, however, should not be equated with Barth's articulation of the *analogia fidei*. Bavinck is not presenting a view in which God seizes language by revelation and ascribes meaning to it 'from without.'

47. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:49.

divine absoluteness is the fullness of the triune life itself apart from creation. It is an analogical and anthropomorphic description of the fullness of the divine being who is beyond comprehension, or in scriptural language, 'dwells in inaccessible light.'[48] But God is not just absolute; he is also personal.[49] God does not become a personality; personality is *a* description of the absolute Being of God and that which affirms the knowability of God because it includes self-consciousness and self-determination.[50] God's self-consciousness and self-determination are absolute because it is "equally deep and rich, equally infinite, as his being."[51] Understood in this way, Bavinck claims, God is both absolute and personal, incomprehensible and knowable, transcendent and immanent. Thus, absoluteness and personality become a frame through which Bavinck presents the divine attributes. God is absolute in his personality and personal in his absoluteness. God's divine personality not only grounds the possibility of knowledge because the predication of personality indicates God's self-consciousness and self-determination but also affirms a true knowledge of the divine. God is able to reveal himself in a relative way to creatures that which he knows absolutely in his essence. Personality, however, remains an anthropomorphic description of the divine being, for God's essence is absolute and beyond comprehension or grasp.

Although Bavinck affirms the unity of absoluteness and personality of God and utilizes these concepts to frame and undergird his treatment of the divine attributes, when he moves to his treatment of the divine essence, he is hesitant about defining it as 'absolute personality.' Why? Bavinck gives two reasons. First, he is wary of using 'absolute personality' as a unifying ontological concept because it easily leads to thinking God is 'unipersonal' rather than "tripersonal."[52] Second, Bavinck argues that describing the divine essence primarily as 'absolute personality' often leads to collapsing the analogical interval between God and humanity.[53] Thus, rather than following theistic personalists, like Isaac Dorner, Bavinck prefers to define God's essence as absolute being because he sees this definition as allowing all of the other attributes (fatherhood, personality, love, wisdom, goodness, etc.) to be fully encompassed because they are seen (anthropologically and analogously) as belonging to God's being in an absolute sense.[54] As such, Bavinck sees 'absolute Being' as

48. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:34.

49. Personality, then, is not just the relatability and knowability of God but the ontological ground that makes knowing and relating to God possible. Key here for Bavinck is the notion that divine, infinite self-knowledge and self-determination are not something God achieves through a dialectical, dynamic process in time, but they are eternally and infinitely present in the divine being.

50. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:49.

51. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:49.

52. Bavinck's judgement here is correct. Many nineteenth-century theistic personalists utilized the concept of personality to develop distinctly non-trinitarian accounts of God. See Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought,* 166–171.

53. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:122.

54. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:123.

being able to do justice to the rich and manifold self-revelation in Scripture of God more than 'absolute personality.'[55]

While careful not to define the divine essence as 'absolute personality,' Bavinck does creatively appropriate absoluteness and personality to develop an Augustinian yet contemporary account of the relationship between the divine essence and persons. Keenly aware of the consequences of applying modern philosophical and psychological conceptions of personality univocally to theological articulations of the divine life, Bavinck appropriates the language of personality in his *De Deo Trino* with constant appeals to the broad historical consensus concerning the doctrine of the Trinity across ecclesiastical traditions. His goal is not novelty; his goal is to communicate the deeply historic, broadly catholic doctrine of the Trinity in and for modernity. However, while significant in his approach, Bavinck's development here opens the doors for some confusion, particularly because he starts to utilize person and personality in multiple ways.

First, in his *De Deo Trino* Bavinck does not dismiss his earlier usage of personality and affirmation of divine self-consciousness and self-determination. In fact, as he highlights at the beginning of his doctrine of God, "It is certain that God is a person."[56] Quick to qualify that this means that God is "a conscious and free willing being, not confined to the world but exalted high above it." Bavinck seems to equate personhood with intellect and volition. Insofar as these are absolute (as deep and as rich as his being), Bavinck is able to describe God as personal.[57]

Second, Bavinck explores the use of contemporary concepts of personality within the doctrine of the Trinity. In his locus on the Trinity, Bavinck seeks to address how "personality" can be utilized within trinitarian theology.[58] Building on his previous

55. Bavinck's description of the divine essence has several overlaps with Thomas's account of the divine as *actus purus*, pure act. Bavinck does utilize this definition of the divine being in a few places. But, his appeal to this definition is one way that he articulates the divine essence in his writing. Yet, it is not the only way he conceptualizes the divine essence. In this section, he purposively utilizes absolute Being as his description of the divine life to articulate the fullness and richness of the one divine Being. In fact, in this section, Bavinck articulates God as the one in whom being and living coincide. Thus, while Bavinck does show an affinity for Thomas's account of God as *actus purus,* he does not articulate or develop it in the same manner. Bavinck's affinity with Thomas here is not surprising as many of the Reformed Scholastics drew on Thomas's Aristotelian metaphysics in their doctrines of God. Bavinck's description of the divine life shows his historical rootedness within the Reformed orthodoxy but also his willingness to appropriate it in and for modernity. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans., Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger, 1948), I, Q.ii.A.3; Idem *Summa Contra Gentiles,* trans. Anton C. Pegis et al., ed. Joseph Kenny, O.P. (New York: Hanover House, 1955–57), I, c. 17. See also *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation,* vol. 1 *Disputations 1–23,* eds. Dolf te Velde et al., trans. Riemer A. Faber (Leiden: Brill, 2014), Disputation 1. For a good treatment of Reformed orthodoxy's relationship to Aristotelianism see Richard A. Muller, "Reformation, Orthodoxy, 'Christian Aristotelianism,' and the Eclecticism of Early Modern Philosophy," in *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis* 81, no. 3 (2001): 306–325 and Muller, *PRRD,* I. 71–73.

56. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:30.

57. See Bavinck, *RD*, 2:30, 49.

58. Bavinck adds a significant amount of material to this part of his dogmatics in the second

affirmations in his *De Deo Uno,* Bavinck maintains the contemporary conception of personality as that which includes self-knowledge (or self-consciousness) and self-determination. Second, he also adopts contemporary notions of the structure of self-consciousness, especially in its Schleiermachian form. He writes: "Personality in humans arises only because they are subjects who confront themselves as an object and unite the two (subject and object) in an act of self-consciousness. Hence, three moments (constituents) constitute the essence of human personality."[59] However, in affirming these elements of modern notions of personality, Bavinck also recognizes the problem that contemporary language (even his own) poses to the doctrine of the Trinity. If God is and has been revealed as a person, or personal, a being having self-consciousness and self-determination, then what does one do with the traditional language person in reference to the Father, Son, and Spirit? Is God both unipersonal and tripersonal? If personality is something that "arises" in and through the distinct moments, does God become? Does personhood imply that the Father, Son, and Spirit each have self-knowledge and self-determination of their own? Is God a one-conscious and triconscious being?[60]

It is here that Bavinck seeks to do two things to maintain the usefulness of contemporary notions of personality and relationality while not opening the door to tritheism or introducing the notion of becoming into the divine essence. First, Bavinck strongly opposes the predication of distinct self-knowledge and self-determination to the Father, Son, and Spirit. The persons *are not* separate personalities who each have distinct self-knowledge and self-volition and become on the ord.[61] In other words, the predication of intellect and volition belongs to the divine essence. Furthermore, Bavinck opposes conceptualizing the persons as mere revelational 'modes' of the one divine personality whereby the Father, Son, and Spirit are mere names for the same divine personality. This, according to Bavinck, would lead to Sabellianism.[62] However, even though it starts to muddy the waters, he suggests that "person" is still the best term theology has for the Father, Son, and Spirit. Appealing to Augustine, Bavinck argues that theology uses the term person "not to express what that is only not to be silent."[63] And, because Scripture reveals God to us as Father, Son, and

edition, showing a development in his thought and further engagement with contemporary notions of personality.

59. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:303.

60. Although Bavinck never states it this way, one can hear why Cornelius Van Til, who drew heavily from Bavinck to articulate his doctrine of God, writes "God is a one-conscious being, and yet, he is also a triconscious being." Bavinck does not make this assertion, but it could be derived from statements like, God's personality unfolds tripersonaly. See Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Philipsburg: P&R, 2007), 348.

61. Had Bavinck been writing today, he would have likely identified this position as social trinitarianism at best and tritheism at worst.

62. See Bavinck, *RD*, 2:294.

63. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:302. This is a direct citation from Augustine, *The Trinity,* V, 9; VI, 10. See also, *Our Reasonable Faith,* 158.

Holy Spirit, theology cannot be silent but must acknowledge the three-fold nature of the divine being.

According to Bavinck, then, the term person is used within trinitarian dogma "simply [to] mean that the three persons in the divine being are not 'modes' but have a distinct existence of their own."[64] Drawing from Richard of St. Victor, Bavinck affirms each person as an "incommunicable existence of the divine nature" in relation to their personal properties.[65] The difference between the persons is not in essence but in their mutual relations to one another, meaning the distinctions between the persons arise from personal properties known through their mutual relations.[66] Person does not refer to the individual self-consciousness or self-determination of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Instead, it refers to the distinct existence of each person as they subsist within the absolute Being of God, who is the triune, absolutely personal, God.

Rather than identifying each person in the Trinity as an individuated personality (having a self-consciousness and volition *of their own*) within the divine essence,[67] Bavinck sees within contemporary conceptions of personality a helpful analogy to understand the relationship between the essence and the persons. Rooting his assessment within the tradition, Bavinck argues, along with Augustine that the divine essence is not derived from the person of the Father but from the unity of the divine essence, which unfolds tripersonally as one, divine, triune being.[68] Bavinck insists, "It belongs to God's very essence to be triune. In that regard personhood is identical with God's being itself . . . Each person, therefore, is identical with the entire being and equal to the other two or all three together."[69] The essence is not a fourth thing alongside the Father, Son, and Spirit, but the essence of God *is triune.* Or, in modern theological grammar, "The divine being is tripersonal precisely because it is the absolute, divine personality."[70]

64. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:302 According to Bavinck, this is the truth that both Boethius and Richard of St. Victor were trying to communicate. He situates his definition closer to Richard of St. Victor, but more significantly he sees any further definition of person within trinitarian dogma as ultimately expressing the simple truth that the persons do not introduce substantive differences within the divine being but that are modes of existence within the divine being.

65. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:302. Bavinck cites Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate,* IV, 21.

66. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:305. Bavinck describes the personal properties in classical trinitarian language: paternity (unbegotteness, active generation, active spiration), filiation or sonship (passive generation, active spiration), and procession or passive spiration. None of the mutual relations add anything substantially to the divine essence.

67. Bavinck's treatment of the persons of the Trinity does occasionally utilize the term personality to refer to a person within the Godhead. This is particularly the case with the Spirit. This is one of the areas in which Bavinck's utilization of modern concepts of personality and his desire to maintain the language of person in reference to the Father, Son, and Spirit can cause some confusion.

68. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:305. Unfolding should not be equated with becoming here. Instead, Bavinck utilizes unfolding as a dynamic term to indicate the fullness of the divine life, which is a fullness that exists in three persons eternally.

69. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:304.

70. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:302.

Bavinck sees within contemporary notions of personality two helpful analogies to aid in human, analogical understanding of the triune divine personality. Follows what he perceives as Augustinian logic, Bavinck finds faint analogies of the divine life within contemporary philosophical articulations of the structure of self-consciousness. First, just like human personality unfolds, so too "the absolute, divine personality arises out of and by means of the unfolding of the three persons. Yet, unlike human personality, divine personality arises simultaneously and completely. Second, human personality, Bavinck argues is far too rich to be embodied "in a single individual."[71] Humanity, according to Bavinck, unfolds the riches of human personality collectively and communally. Each person is a diverse manifestation of what it means to be human, and therefore the unity of human personality only comes in and through the unity of the whole.[72] In God, however, "the unfolding of his being into personality coincides with that of his being unfolded into three persons. The three persons are the one divine personality brought to complete self-unfolding, a self-unfolding arising out of, by the agency of, and within the divine being."[73] In humans, personality unfolds through time and collectively; in God, it unfolds instantaneously and in his triune being. There is no becoming in the divine essence, but there is an eternal unfolding that "immediately, absolutely, and completely convinces with, and includes, the unfolding of his being into persons."[74] In sum, personality and the structure of self-consciousness are *faint analogies* of the divine life. One can hear echoes of Schleiermacher's analysis of the structure of consciousness as well as Schelling and Hegel's accounts of the unfolding of the Triune life. But one can also see Bavinck's efforts to guard against notions of divine becoming as well as anything that opens the door to tritheism even as he describes the trinitarian being of God as tripersonal and absolute, divine personality.[75]

Conclusion

Bavinck's systematic reconciliation of absoluteness and personality is an integral aspect of his doctrine of God proper. Brock and Sutanto were right to highlight this aspect, and it shows that Hielema's earlier estimation of Bavinck's doctrine of God needs to be revised. Even in this brief investigation of Bavinck's doctrine of God, one can see that Bavinck weaves absoluteness and personality throughout his systematic development and the systematic conclusions he draws undergirds his positive development of the divine essence, attributes, and persons. Bavinck utilizes the grammar of absoluteness and personality to express his two-fold epistemological

71. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:303.
72. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:303.
73. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:303.
74. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:305.
75. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:302.

claim concerning knowledge of God: God is incomprehensible yet knowable. Second, he draws on it within his development of his doctrine of the Trinity, drawing on the language of absoluteness and personality in his description of the relationship between the essence and persons. Throughout his treatment Bavinck seeks to demonstrate how the Christian doctrine of God is unique in its ability to hold absoluteness and personality together. And, as such, this brief exploration shows various ways that Bavinck creatively appropriates modern philosophical concepts from within his classical, Reformed tradition in order to develop them in and for the context of modernity. Thus, more attention should continue to be paid to Bavinck's articulation of the relationship between absoluteness and personality. Some areas that remain to be explored are how absoluteness and personality bear on Bavinck's trinitarian metaphysics, along with an understanding of how it grounds the possibility of divine revelation as well as a more thorough investigation into the sources he draws on to develop his doctrine of the Trinity. Finally, it's also apparent that the cracks that start to form in Bavinck's appropriation need to be further studied. Does his reconciliation ultimately fall apart because of the confusing application of person and personality to the divine essence? In sum, this is a unique aspect of Bavinck's treatment of the doctrine of God that is wide open for further investigation.

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Dogmatics: A Progressive Science?

Cameron Clausing

Cameron Clausing (PhD University of Edinburgh) is Lecturer in Applied Theology and Missional Engagement at Christ College, Sydney, Australia.

Introduction

In an interview with economist, Russell Roberts, John Maynard Keynes' biographer, Robert Skidelsky, stated, "Economics is not a progressive science."[1] By this Skidelsky was asserting that economics, unlike physics or chemistry, is not a science in which the body of knowledge has seen growth on a macrolevel. One wonders if this provocative comment about the science of economics could be made about the theology as a science. To what extent is theology a progressive science? To what extent does the body of knowledge grow?[2]

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) was unequivocal in his assertion that the science of dogmatics includes a progressive quality. In one article Bavinck asserted that dogmatics has a characteristic of "being progressive and striving for perfection."[3] For the contemporary reader this statement does not seem to be radical. The obvious appeal, at least in the Reformed tradition, that the church is *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* is taken for granted. There is a sense in which the church is striving for perfection. However, the assertion that dogmatic theology is progressive in nature was a particularly new concept in theological studies. Accepting Bavinck's assertion, this essay will examine the way Bavinck envisions dogmatics as a progressive science. It will argue that this was an innovative move that was uniquely connected to his nineteenth century milieu and theological method. To sustain this argument, the essay will consider those two aspects. First, I will explore how the Reformed tradition understood the "*reformanda*" sayings in light of Bavinck's cultural milieu. Second, I will examine Bavinck's theological method in light and the nineteenth

1. Robert Skidelsky interviewed by Russell Roberts available at https://youtu.be/ZRvaxUNDTKY (October 24, 2010). Roberts has asserted this is where the Skidelsky has stated this. However, this comment is not made in this interview. Nevertheless, in another interview with Skidelsky, Roberts refers to this statement as being made by Skidelsky, and Skidelsky does not disagree with the claim that "Economics is not a progressive science." See: Robert Skidelsky interviewed by Russell Roberts available at http://www.econtalk.org/capitalism-government-and-the-good-society/ (September 4, 2013).

2. This article is adapted from parts my PhD thesis, *"A Christian Dogmatics does not yet Exist": The Influence of the Nineteenth Century Historical Turn on the Theological Methodology of Herman Bavinck* (Edinburgh: PhD Thesis, 2020).

3. Herman Bavinck, "Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *The Bavinck Review* 5 (2014): 64.

century modification of the "*reformanda*" sayings. These two considerations will come together to show that Bavinck's understanding of dogmatics as a progressive science was innovative even while not being unique to him.

Reformed Tradition and the *Reformanda* Sayings

In a 1911 speech, which was delivered in the aula of the *Gebouw voor den Werkenden Stand* in central Amsterdam, Bavinck argued that "Reformed" was a more helpful moniker than "orthodox," "Calvinist," or "neo-Calvinist" (a label which did not exist until 1892 and then was understood as a pejorative term).[4] Bavinck's argument was that "Reformed" bears a character of being in a constant state of growing, development, and reform. He states,

> The university that brings us together here in this hour does not place itself on an orthodox but on a Reformed basis, and the churches with which its theological faculty is affiliated are not called orthodox but Reformed churches. This name deserves preference far above orthodox and also that of Calvinistic or Neo-Calvinistic. For, on the one hand, within the name Reformed there lies a connection to the past, historical continuity, and maintenance of the Christian confession just as those in the Reformation in like manner cleansed the Holy Scriptures of Roman error. On the other hand, [the name Reformed has within it] the demand and obligation to continually review the doctrine and life of one's own person and household, and, in addition, our whole environs according to these scriptural and historical principles. [We are] reformed for reform [*Reformati quia reformandi*] and vice versa.[5]

Following Bavinck's logic, the titles of orthodox or Calvinist cause the theologian to look back without an eye toward moving forward. Bavinck believed that it was incumbent upon the theologian not only to look back but to strive for perfection to progress.[6] In his thinking, "Reformed" was able to do both. It held onto the past while also looking to the future. Bavinck suggested, "It did not reject all tradition as such; it was *reformation*, not *revolution*."[7]

4. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 370n119.

5. Bruce Pass, "Herman Bavinck's *Modernisme en Orthodoxie*: A Translation", ed. John Bolt, *The Bavinck Review* 7 (2016), 82; cf. Herman Bavinck, *Modernisme en Orthodoxie: rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het Rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 October 1911* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1911), 16–17.

6. Herman Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 97; Herman Bavinck, "Het voor en tegen," 64. This is not to say that Bavinck did not defend the titles "orthodoxy" or "Calvinism." They had utility for different purposes than the ones that Bavinck employed here. "Reformed" indicates the developmental nature of theology.

7. Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, vol. 1, Prolegomena, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 493.

The phrase "*Ecclesia semper reformanda*" appears ubiquitously in contemporary theological conversation. It is taken as orthodox that the church is always to be reforming. Over the course of the last two centuries, the Western church has embraced these sayings to the point that even largely unchanging institutions like the Roman Catholic church have had to grapple with their implications. Henri de Lubac, a Catholic theologian and philosopher, stated "The conciliar formula '*Ecclesia semper perificanda*' seems to me as to others 'much superior to the '*Ecclesia semper reformanda*' which is used so extensively nearly everywhere.'"[8] De Lubac's observation that the "*reformanda*" statements are "nearly everywhere" in the contemporary context makes sense given that, as Michael Bush points out, it was Karl Barth that popularised them.[9]

Even while Bavinck was living a generation before Barth, one can see the language and thoughts that Barth embodied encapsulated in Bavinck's language. Bavinck did not use the "*reformanda*" statements frequently, but he saw development in the church's doctrine and practice. As stated above, for Bavinck, dogmatics was to be "progressive and striving for perfection."[10] Bavinck argued that the work of a theologian was not to "repristinate" the past but to "make progress to escape from the deadly embrace of dead conservatism."[11] Thus, Bavinck believed that theological development was a vital part of a constructive project, going so far as to declare in 1881, "a Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* exist."[12] The reason for this being that, for Bavinck, dogma is not the source of a single theologian or church but the confession of the "Christian Church as a whole."[13] There is no ideal theology on earth, for all theological reflection is mixed with both pure and impure elements. Therefore, theological development is necessary.

This understanding, however, is out of accord with how Calvin and the post-Reformation orthodox theologians understood the task of dogmatic reflection. This becomes apparent when considering the historical usage of "*reformanda*" statements. According to Bush, the first and only use of both *reformanda* and *reformata* "in a single context" in the early modern period was by Jerome Zanchius (1516–1590)

8. Henri De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, trans. Sr. Sergia Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 33. Gregory Parker makes an intriguing connection between Bavinck and De Lubac in his "Reformation or Revolution? Herman Bavinck and Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace," *Perichoresis* 15, no. 3 (2017), 81–95.

9. Michael Bush, "Calvin and the *Reformanda* Sayings," in *Calvinus sacrarum literarum interpres: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 289.

10. Herman Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 64.

11. Herman Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," trans. Geerhardus Vos, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5 (1894): 13; Bavinck, "Het calvinisme in Nederland en zijne toekomst," *Tijdschrift voor Gereformeerde Theologie* 3 (1896): 146.

12. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 94; "Het voor en tegen," 60.

13. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 94; "Het voor en tegen," 60.

and this was "to speak of the problem of reformation in the church."[14] In the case of Zanchius, for a church to be reformed, it needed to have completely removed all vestiges of Roman Catholic practice. As long as the old Roman Catholic ways continued, the church was simply reforming (*reformanda*) and was not truly reformed (*reformata*). It can be seen from this that for Zanchius an "*ecclesia reformata*" was an ideal. It was not impossible though it was difficult.[15]

If Zanchius is the only instance of a "*reformanda*" saying being used, then one should not be surprise that it cannot be encountered in Calvin. Nevertheless, one does not need the words to have the concept present in one's thoughts. Calvin did use the word *reformanda* to discuss the "reforming" of the church. This is easily seen in his short work *De Necessitate Reformandæ Ecclessiæ* (*The Necessity of Reforming the Church*). While this is a short work, it helps to show how Calvin used "*reformanda*" in his writing. Near the end of this work as Calvin was appealing for aid from the emperor he wrote, "But if they will not, to what end is the care of reforming (*reformanda*) the church committed to them, unless it be to expose the sheep to wolves?"[16] It is helpful here to see that Calvin is not using this in an adjectival form (i.e. the church as *ecclesia reformanda*) but as a participle. At this point in *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, Calvin is arguing for the emperor to be active in reformation and he should *reformanda* the church, so that it will be *reformata*.[17] Added to this evidence, one can observe that at the end of Calvin's life, Beza records Calvin's encouragement not to change anything about the ordering of the church in Calvin's farewell address to his company of pastors.[18] So, while Calvin saw that there could be room for improvement, he did not see reformation as open-ended concept with no goal. For Calvin a church could be reformed and when it was reformed, it was the job of the leaders to keep it reformed.

Exploring Calvin's own understanding of the *reformanda* saying, Michael Bush has convincingly demonstrated the sayings, as they are now deployed and consequently as Bavinck would receive them in his day, do not emerge until the seventeenth century and the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* and even here the use is not identical with the use in the late nineteenth into the twentieth century.[19] One does

14. Bush, "Calvin and the *Reformanda*," 291.

15. Bush, "Calvin and the *Reformanda*," 292.

16. John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Dallas: Protestant Heritage Press, 1995), 145.

17. Bush points to other instances of this in his article. See: "Calvin and the *Reformanda*," 294.

18. Theodore Beza, "Life of John Calvin," in *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church by John Calvin*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), cxxxi–cxxxiii.

19. The *Nadere Reformatie* (usually translated as the Dutch Further Reformation), was a movement in the Netherlands analogous (while not the same as) the Puritan movement in England around the same time. It took place during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Many of the most influential early modern Dutch Reformed orthodox thinkers come out of the movement chief among them Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676). For more on the *Nadere Reformatie*, see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New

not see a popularisation of the phrase *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* or an equivalent like what is found here in Bavinck until the late nineteenth century and the explosion of the use of *reformanda* sayings does not appear until post-World War II.[20] Bavinck's understanding of the church that is always reforming and never definitively reformed would have been a surprising idea for Calvin. One can even observe a divergence in use between Bavinck and that of the earliest examples of the *reformanda* sayings coming out of the *Nadere Reformatie*. For those who first developed the concept of *reformanda* it was tied to maintaining the purity of the church, rather than theological development.[21] While it cannot be denied that Bavinck saw the idea of *reformanda* to be connected to purity, he pushed it further by arguing that *reformati quia reformandi* means theological development.

This application of the phrase by Bavinck to theological development demonstrates Bavinck's historical situatedness, specifically that he lived in a post-Schleiermacher world. In the generations after Schleiermacher, Schleiermacher's *Brief Outline*, a concise understanding of theology as a scientific discipline in the university, was the road map for the theological faculty in Berlin, and subsequently many other theological faculties throughout Germany and the Netherlands. His text was formative for the study of theology in Berlin which took on a distinctly historicist character.[22] Albert Ritschl would call Schleiermacher the theological 'lawgiver' (*Gesetzgeber*), with *Brief Outline* as his legal code.[23] In this work, Schleiermacher calls for understanding theology as *Wissenschaft* and for it to be taken seriously as *Wissenschaft*, for its body of knowledge needed to grow. He claims

> If one desires to master a particular discipline in its fullest extent, one must make it one's aim to sift and supplement what others have contributed to it. Without such an effort, no matter how complete one's information may be, one would be a mere carrier of tradition—the lowest rank of all activities open to a person, and the least significant.[24]

Bavinck too saw theology as a *Wissenschaft*, or in Dutch, a *wetenschap* which implied that theology was necessarily a progressive science. Thus, Bavinck's project implies a system that develops over time. He demonstrated this point at the end of his introduction to the *Leiden Synopsis*, noting not only that there is a renewed interest in the work, but also that the questions addressed in it had changed. Bavinck stated,

York: Peter Lang, 1991), 383–413.

20. Bush, "Calvin and the *Reformanda* Sayings," 290–91.

21. Bush, "Calvin and the *Reformanda* Sayings," 298.

22. Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 159–160.

23. Albert Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, vol. 1, *Die Geschicte der Lehre* 3rd ed. (Bonn: Marcus, 1888–1889), 486.

24. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, 3rd ed., trans. Terrence N. Tice (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 9.

"But times change. The long domination of the *Synopsis* has ended. Another time required something different."[25] Bavinck made the same point even more strongly in the introduction to *Magnalia Dei*. There, when referencing major thinkers in early modern Reformed orthodoxy (i.e. Aegidius Francken, Johannes Marckius, Wilhelmus à Brakel), he stated: "We are children of a new time and live in another century. And it is futile to desire to maintain the old forms, and to desire to retain the old solely because it is old."[26] For Bavinck, a theological system is an organism and theology is *Wissenschaft* and, therefore, it is not beholden to one particular time and place but is constantly growing and developing.

This progressive nature of theology informed his view of catholicity. Bavinck understood catholicity to consist of three things: 1) the church as a unified whole, 2) the church as inclusive of all believers from every nation, in all times and places, and 3) the church as it embraces the whole of human experience.[27] As Brock and Sutanto assert, Bavinck made it clear that part of the theologian's task is to "search for what is true and valid no matter where it is found."[28] Thus, for Bavinck, theological reflection continues to develop. It is not bound to a particular time and place, including the past or even a particular Calvinist or orthodox tradition. Being catholic is more than an appeal to a certain set of doctrines that have once been held and are now held. It is also an embrace of the reforming character of the church. As such, being catholic requires searching for truth in the contemporary Christian experience.

What has been demonstrated thus far, is that Bavinck's view of church as *ecclesia reformata quia reformanda* meant the church is constantly developing and perfecting her doctrines. She is growing and evolving. The intellectual context in which this concept matured for Bavinck was one in which theology was being established as *Wissenschaft*. By its very nature *Wissenschaft* implied a growth in knowledge. Thus, in Bavinck's context theology was not a static discipline, but a dynamic one. This concept would have been foreign to Calvin and the early modern Reformed theologians who viewed the church as "reforming" when it was throwing off all vestiges of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. However, as has been shown, for these earlier Reformed thinkers, there was a definite point at which the

25. Herman Bavinck, "Praefati,"' in *Synopsis purioris theologiae: disputationibus quinquaginta daubus comprehensa ac conscripta per Johannem Polyandrum, Andream Rivetum, Antonium Walaeum, Antonium Thysium, S.S. Theologiae Doctores et Professores in Academia Leidensi*, 6th ed. (Leiden: Donner, 1881), vi, "Sed tempora mutantur. Transiit etiam Synopseos hujus imperium diuturnum. Aliud tempus aliud postulabat. Coccejus aliique theologi aliam methodum introduxerunt, et Synopsis paulatim in oblivionem abiit."

26. Herman Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1931), 6.

27. Herman Bavinck, "The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church," trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 220; compare with. Herman Bavinck, *De katholiciteit van Christendom en kerk: rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 18 December 1888* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1888), 5–6.

28. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicity, Consciousness and Theological Epistemology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70, no. 3 (2017): 317.

church was "reformed." From then on, it was the duty of the following generations to ensure the church stayed "reformed." This evidence demonstrates part one of my argument: Bavinck's conception of doctrinal development was innovative, and this was intimately tied to his cultural milieu. The next section will examine Bavinck's theological method to determine how Bavinck's understanding of theology as a progressive science required him to engage with his theological method in a novel way.

Bavinck's Theological Method

Methodology follows epistemology. Bavinck argued this when he says: "A person is not simply alive, but is also aware that he is alive. Within him all of nature, as it were, including himself, attains consciousness. Within him, it seeks its explanation, attempts to discern and behold itself in him."[29] Therefore, the theologian seeks to find the *principium* for theology. The *principium* is always derived from the object that is being studied. The epistemological convictions determine the method for finding this *principium*.

> The dogmatician does not have to invent or devise the system and the principium; but by means of serious research, by means of living into what he wants to study and describe, let him attempt to arrive at the discovery of what, out of all those truths, comprises the constitutive, governing basic idea, the innermost driving force, the hidden stirrings, the deepest root.[30]

To uncover the *principium* of dogmatics, the dogmatician goes to Scripture. However, it is never Scripture in isolation from the church or contemporary concerns. Dogmatics must have an ecclesiastical and provisional character to it. As Barth would counsel young theologians in the future, "Take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible."[31] Bavinck held a similar view that the interaction between Scripture and the church in dogmatics must *always* be done in conversation with the contemporary situation of the theologian. This piece of Bavinck's methodology allows Bavinck to be grounded in Scripture in conversation with the past but always looking forward, growing, evolving, developing. Dogmatics has a progressive nature to it, it is always "striving for perfection."[32] Each of these elements (Scripture, church, and Christian consciousness) will be looked at in turn. However, what must not be overlooked is that each of these elements is interdependent. Dogmatic reflection takes place with all three of these together simultaneously.[33] There is a unity to the diversity that pertains to theological methodology.

29. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 92; "Het voor en tegen," 59.
30. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 97; "Het voor en tegen," 63.
31. Barth, "Barth in Retirement," *Time* (May 31, 1963) 356.
32. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 97; "Het voor en tegen," 64.
33. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 100; "Het voor en tegen," 66.

As Bavinck understood it, post-Kantian religious reflection tended toward a reading of one *principium* in isolation from the other two. Separated from each other, Bavinck argued that the *principia* – Scripture, the church, and individual consciousness – could be considered roughly analogous to a distinct religious movement. He believed that when isolated these elements devolved into a mere rationalism, mysticism, and pietism.[34] For Bavinck, Reformed theology maintained a particular ability to overcome this one-sidedness in religion. He argued,

> Reformed theologians sought that central point for religion in (as Calvin called it) the seed of religion [*semen religionis*] or sense of divinity [*sensus divinitatis*], and in the Christian religion [*religio Christiana*] theologians went behind faith and conversion to regeneration, which in principle is a renewal of the whole man. When they took a position on this center of man, they saw opportunity to avoid all one-sidedness of rationalism, mysticism, and ethicism, and to maintain that religion is the animating principle of all life.[35]

A dogmatic system cannot be reduced to merely one piece but must encompass the whole. It cannot be solely rational, mystical, or ethical, but must be all three equally. A dogmatic system must be an organic whole.[36]

While in Bavinck's estimation the three *principia* correlated to various religious movements (rationalism, mysticism, and pietism), he also connected with three human faculties: mind, feeling, and will. Even though these three faculties exist, Bavinck acknowledged only two faculties in a person: knowing and desiring (will). With regard to primacy, Bavinck wrote that knowledge is the first among equals: "[k]nowledge is primary. There can be no true service of God without true knowledge: 'I do not desire anything I do not know' (*Ignoti nulla cupido*)."[37] Bavinck saw a place for feeling in religious reflection, yet he was careful to reject it as a faculty.[38] The concern for Bavinck in giving feeling the status of a faculty was that it necessarily takes away from knowing and willing, which he believed had produced disastrous results in modern theology.[39]

34. Herman Bavinck, "Philosophy of Religion (Faith)," in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 26–27; Bavinck, "Philosophie des geloofs," in *Verzamelde opstellen op het gebied van godsdienst en wetenschap* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1921), 10–11.

35. Bavinck, "Philosophy of Religion," 29–30; "Philosophie des geloofs," 14.

36. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 95; "Het voor en tegen," 61.

37. Bavinck, *RD* 1, 268.

38. Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie* (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1897), 62.

39. Pass makes this same observation in *Heart of Dogmatics* (65). While in contradiction to some of the observations that Cory Brock has made, this point does not diminish the central thrust of his project. Brock has done a masterful job of showing how Bavinck appropriates much of Schleiermacher's structure and questions. However, the evidence seems to point to the need to nuance some of Brock's view regarding "feeling" as a "faculty."

In Bavinck's account, the modern theological trends that followed the lines of Schleiermacher had slipped into subjectivism, which he deemed to be little more than pantheistic mysticism. To safeguard against this, Bavinck contended that one needed to place Scripture as the sole *principium* of theology.[40] The problematic part of this is that, unlike *principia* in mathematics and physics, in scientific theology there is a subjective work of the Spirit that is necessary to accept this axiom. That is to say, to accept Scripture as the sole *principium* of theology requires a work of the Spirit on the subject. Corresponding to Bavinck's contention regarding the faculties that knowledge is primary in the *principia* of theological methodology, the same could be said of Scripture. For Bavinck, with regard to its nature, Scripture stood above both church confession and individual consciousness. Yet, the apprehension of this requires the subjective work of the Holy Spirit.

This difficulty is highlighted in Bavinck's correspondence with his friend from Leiden and world-renowned Dutch Arabist, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936). In a letter responding to Bavinck's 1883 inaugural address, Hurgronje explained to Bavinck that given Snouck Hurgronje's own commitment to higher critical readings of the Bible, he found it impossible to take Scripture to an absolute and infallible axiom of theology. Ultimately, Snouck Hurgronje contended that while Bavinck had intended the address to be aimed at the theology emerging from Leiden, it "was directed to people with whom you agree."[41] In response to this concern, Bavinck admitted that theology must start with a leap, "but not a *salto mortale*."[42] Bavinck admitted that his goal was to show the theological character of theology, and he conceded that he and his friend simply start in different spots. Bavinck commented,

> This is the difference between you and me (let me speak personally for a moment): you want, through and after research to come to this premise [that is, an *a posteriori* commitment to Scripture], I go forward from there [that is, an *a priori* premise of Scripture] and continue my research. I believe that this must be done if there is ever to be discussion of theology in a real sense.[43]

Dogma rests on the divine witness, revelation. The pressing question, therefore, for the theologian is, where does one locate divine revelation? Once again Bavinck makes

40. Herman Bavinck, *De wetenschap der H. Godgeleerdheid: rede ter aanvaarding van het leeraarsambt aan de Theologische School te Kampen, uitgesproken den 10 Jan. 1883* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1883), 10.

41. *Een Leidse vriendschap: De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje 1875–1921*, ed. J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck (Baarn: Ten Have, 1999), 107–108. ("Uwe rede nu was gericht tot met u eensdenkenden, bij wie deze met zoo harde woorden genoemde zaken niet bestreden behoeven te worden").

42. *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 111. "Ze moet dus beginnen met een sprong – maar geen salto mortale").

43. *Een Leidse vriendschap*, 111. ("Dit is het verschil tusschen u en mij [laat me zoo maar eens persoonlijk spreken]: gij wilt door en na onderzoek tot deze stelling komen, ik ga er van uit en ga dan aan 't verder onderzoeken. Ik meen, dat dit laatste moet, zal er ooit van theologie in den eigenlijken zin sprake kunnen zijn").

a connection to the three *principia*. In his estimation Roman Catholicism located revelation in the church, whereas Schleiermacher (or modern theology) found it in the individual. However, according to Bavinck, the Reformed understood Scripture to be the principal location of divine revelation. He argued, "Among Reformed theologians, therefore, the following proposition returns again and again: 'the principle into which all theological dogmas are distilled is: God has said it.' [*principium, in quod omnia dogmata theologia resolvuntur: Deus Dixit*.]"[44] Ontologically, while affirming Scripture's weak human form, Bavinck still affirmed that Scripture stood far above church tradition and individual consciousness. Nevertheless, methodologically Scripture played a different role. As Bavinck understood the Reformed tradition, when a conflict arose among the three *principia*, Scripture, due to its nature, settled controversies. Methodologically, however, it was the first *principia* among equals. It was the source from which the other two *principia* derive their nature.

When speaking of methodology, the *principium cognoscendi* is revelation.[45] Conceding the need for both an objective and subjective side to the *principium cognoscendi*, Bavinck called Scripture the *principium cognoscendi externum*. In making this move, Bavinck believed he had safeguarded his project from rationalism, on the one side, which takes human reason to be the sole *principium*, and the mysticism of Schleiermacher, on the other side, which gave 'feeling' the pride of place.[46] This is not to say that Bavinck's aim was to produce an arid cerebral piety. One can observe a place for mysticism within Bavinck's methodology in *Reformed Ethics*, an unfinished manuscript he never published, but a work he prepared while writing the first edition of the *Dogmatics*.[47]

For Bavinck, Scripture is the *principium* of theology. As a result, when Bavinck searched for the *principium* of theology, he defaulted to Scripture to find that *principium*: "The source from which all dogmatic truth has sprung forth and continues to spring forth is only Holy Scripture alone."[48] The difficulty in accepting this view arises from the concern of circular reasoning: how can a method assume

44. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:30.

45. Bavinck, *Wetenschap der Godgeleerdeid*, 12.

46. Herman Bavinck, *Wetenschap der Godgeleerdeid*, 12 n14. Bavinck cites Charles Hodge in this footnote: "So legitimate and powerful is this inward teaching of the Spirit, that it is no uncommon thing to find men having two theologies, — one of the intellect, and another of the heart. The one may find expression in creeds and systems of divinity, the other in their prayers and hymns. It would be safe for a man to resolve to admit into his theology nothing which is not sustained by the devotional writings of true Christians of every denomination. It would be easy to construct from such writings, received and sanctioned by Romanists, Lutherans, Reformed, and Remonstrants, a system of Pauline or Augustinian theology, such as would satisfy any intelligent and devout Calvinist in the world." See: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Theology* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 16–17.

47. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, ed. Dirk van Keulen (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019), §20; Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics,* vol. 1, *Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity,* ed. John Bolt, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 279–88.

48. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 97; "Het voor en tegen," 63.

the *principium* of the method when it is trying to show what the *principium* of the method is? Bavinck acknowledged this difficulty.[49] As he understood it and argued, the answer rests in the place from which the *principium* comes. Whereas with other sciences the *principium* of reason arises in the individual person, in theology the *principium* comes from outside the individual.

While Bavinck wanted to maintain Scripture as the *principium* for dogmatics, he also acknowledged that when it was abstracted from all else, Scripture produced a dogmatic system that bore a character which was at best nonecclesiastical and at worst antiecclesiastical.[50] However, in bringing the church into the conversation, once again Bavinck opened himself to the possible question of where authority ultimately rests. Yet, he remained unequivocal in this contention that "Scripture did not receive its authority from the church but itself, and it must be believed on its own account (*autopistie*), Scripture rests not on the church, but the other way round the church on Scripture."[51] As Bavinck argued to Snouck Hurgronje, the authority of Scripture is a necessary *a priori* commitment in theology. Thus, for Bavinck, the source of dogmatic truth is not the knowing subject, the church, or subjective faith. The source for truth in dogmatic reflection is objective revelation: it is Scripture.

In sum, Bavinck demonstrated the basis for constructing a dogmatic system. As has been shown above, Bavinck believed that a good dogmatic system was built on three elements: Scripture, the church, and the individual consciousness.[52] Divine revelation comes from Scripture to the church, and, then, into the consciousness of the individual believer. In order of pedagogy, the church is antecedent to Scripture, yet Bavinck was clear when he stated that "Scripture is self-authenticating [αὐτοπιστος], the judge of controversies [*iudex controversiarum*], and its own interpreter [*sui ipsius interpres*]. Nothing may be put on a level with Scripture. Church, confession, tradition—all must be ordered and adjusted by it and submit themselves to it."[53] In

49. Bavinck, *Wetenschap der Godgeleerdeid*, 20.

50. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 98–99; "Het voor en tegen," 64–65.

51. Bavinck, *Handleiding bij het onderwijs in den christelijken godsdienst* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1913), 41. ("De eerstgenoemde eigenschap hield in, dat de Schrift haar gezag niet aan de kerk, maar aan zichzelve ontleende, en om zichzelve geloofd moest worden (autopistie); de Schrift rust niet op de kerk, maar omgekeerd de kerk op de Schrift").

One could make the argument, and Bavinck acknowledges this, that the actual situation is more complicated than Bavinck makes out. That is there is a mutual relationship between Scripture and the church in the process of canonization in which the church chose certain books and did not choose others to be in the canon. Yet, for Bavinck this would be a denial of the self-authenticating nature of Scripture. Bavinck's argument is that the church does not choose what is canonical and what is not canonical, but the church acknowledges that which is already canonical. At a purely historical level this argument is made in that while there was list of canonical books circulating in the early church, the church did not have an officially accepted list of canonical books until the Council of Trent (1545–63). This begs the historical question relating to the process of canonization: if the church chose the canon, why does not it produce an officially accepted list until the sixteenth century and that in response to the Reformation?

52. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:84.

53. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:86.

line with the Reformed tradition, Scripture is not solely one *principium* among many for theology but the *principium unicum*.[54] For Bavinck, this belief is because Scripture is where divine revelation is principally located.

Standing in the line of Reformed theology, Bavinck maintained that it is Scripture, and not the church, that is αὐτοπιστος. The confession of the church witnesses to the truth, which is found in Scripture and maintains it, but the confession of the church is not self-attesting. Nevertheless, confessions are not superfluous to Bavinck. Strictly speaking, it is impossible to have a dogmatic system that is devoid of confessions. This is because dogmatics is not a mere recitation of the biblical material, but a "development of the truth of Scripture' and therefore bears 'an ecclesiastical and confessional color."[55] Confessions are necessary for there to be a truly dogmatic theology.[56] While Scripture is the *principium unicum*, the theologian's task is not to repeat Scripture but by means of Scripture "to think God's thoughts after him."[57] The church witnesses to the truth of Scripture. The church has a role that is pedagogical in authority, but the church's activity is not the ground of faith. As Scripture and the church are *principia* of theology, so also faith is a *principium*. However, it is never its own final grounds. Bavinck argued, "There is a huge difference between subjective certainty and objective truth. In the case of faith or belief, everything depends on the grounds on which it rests."[58]

Thus, for Bavinck, the church maintained an important role in theological reflection. It is not enough for the church simply to receive the Word of God. The church was given the Word of God "to preserve, to explain, to preach, to translate, to spread, to praise, to defend, in a word, to make the thoughts of God, laid down in Scripture, triumph over the thoughts of humanity everywhere and at all times."[59] Therefore, in Bavinck's view the Word of God prompted the church to action. Confession is the action which is produced when the church encounters Scripture. The church moves from Scripture to confession yet never moves beyond Scripture.[60]

As such, Bavinck contended that there is a place for tradition in theological method: "Tradition is the means by which all the treasures and possessions of our

54. Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:159–160.

55. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:54.

56. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 98; "Het voor en tegen," 64; compare with Herman Bavinck, *RD*, 4:420–21.

57. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:44.

58. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:578.

59. Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei*, 104. ("Zij heeft integendeel de roeping, om dit Woord Gods te bewaren, uit te leggen, te verkondigen, toe te passen, te vertalen, te verspreiden, aan te prijzen, te verdedigen, in één woord, om de gedachten Gods, in de Schrift neergelegd, overal en ten allen tijde te doen triomfeeren over de gedachten van den mensch").

60. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:474.

ancestors are transmitted to the present and the future."[61] This broad definition of tradition makes clear that in a certain sense, all of human society is bound up in tradition; religion no less than the family. Tradition, in Bavinck's account, allowed a sense of cohesion and identity-building for a group of people. One could go so far as to say that there is no unified society where there is no shared tradition. With this, Bavinck made a provocative move,

> The times have changed, and with the times people, their life, thought, and feelings, have changed. Therefore, a tradition is needed that preserves the connectedness between Scripture and the religious life of our time. Tradition in its proper sense is the interpretation and application of the eternal truth in the vernacular and life of the present generation. Scripture without such a tradition is impossible.[62]

On the surface of this explanation, Bavinck could be accused of a contradiction. It has already been shown that he has put Scripture forward as the *principium unicum*, for Scripture is the *principium* on which all theological reflection is derived. Nevertheless, here he claimed that there can be no Scripture without tradition. Thus, one wonders if Bavinck's project fails before it even begins because of his inability to provide a coherent account of the relationship between these two *principia*; giving each equal authority, even asserting that there can be no Scripture without tradition.

The accusation would have been substantial, had Bavinck not incorporated the organic motif into his theological methodology. Thus, it is to the organic that Bavinck turned to reconcile this apparent contradiction:

> The Reformation recognizes only a tradition that is founded on and flows from Scripture [*traditio e Scriptura fluens*]. To the mind of the Reformation, Scripture was an organic principle from which the entire tradition, living on in preaching, confession, liturgy, worship, theology, devotional literature, etc., arises and is nurtured.[63]

In Bavinck's eyes, the three *principia* do not compete against each other because the three are in an organic relationship. Thus, the question is not one of a particular *principium* dominating the other two but of the three being a relationship of mutuality. It could be said that in Bavinck, Scripture bears a magisterial authority and is thus the starting point for theological reflection, yet pedagogically the starting point is the tradition in which the Christian finds herself because that is where she

61. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:492.

62. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:493. Bavinck's comment here also brings out some interesting connections to historicism. Arguing that there are eternal truths, but that those truths are historically bound and need to be communicated in contemporary language. Once again, this quote is evidence that Bavinck's context in the nineteenth century turn to history effects how he thinks about theology and theological reasoning.

63. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:493.

learns to read Scripture. No wonder Bavinck claimed, "Scripture without such a tradition is impossible."[64]

Scripture and the church give theological method its grounding and stability. However, Bavinck still saw a subjective element in theological method. It was this subjective element which provided theology its progressive character. In revelation the Spirit witnesses to Christ. Bavinck argued that the Spirit does this objectively in Scripture and subjectively in the hearts of individual people or Bavinck's third *principium*, Christian consciousness.[65] Bavinck noted that this *principium* for theological methodology had become more prominent in the post-Schleiermacher era.[66] The tying in of Christian consciousness permits a dogmatic system to display its organic character. Just as an organism continues to grow and develop, because it is an organic whole a dogmatic system demonstrates the attributes of growth and development. Christian consciousness as a *principium* goes together with the confession *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. As such, Bavinck wrote that

> First, there is no church nor school which fully identifies its view of Christianity with the original Christianity itself.… each church and each school distinguishes between the truth that has appeared in Christ and the insight it has, therein, gained and expressed in a fallible manner in its confession.[67]

Thus, he asserted that the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit is the confession that at no particular time or place did the church receive all the truth, but that the Spirit is still leading the church into the truth.[68]

Yet, with this turn to the subject, it seems that Bavinck could have left himself open to the charge of subjectivism. If a dogmatic system is constantly growing and developing, what is the place of creeds and confessions, church history and tradition, in the dogmatic system? It could be said that, at least for the purpose of defending Scripture and protecting against heresies, confessions are invaluable. They guard against an overly subjective theological method. Yet even in this construction it could be argued that creeds and confessions are higher than Scripture if they defend Scripture. Nevertheless, Bavinck contended that confessions play a secondary role, and the authority of Scripture is unparalleled: "Scripture alone is the norm and rule of faith and life (*norma et regula fidei et vitae*). The confession deserves credence only

64. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:493.

65. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:506.

66. Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 99–100; "Het voor en tegen," 65–66.

67. Herman Bavinck, *Het Christendom* (Baarn: Hollandia, 1912), 5–6. ("Ten eerste is er geen kerk en geen richting, die hare opvatting van het Christendom geheel en al met het oorspronkelijk Christendom vereenzelvigt. Wel is waar houdt iedere partij hare interpretatie voor de juiste en verdedigt ze als zoodanig tegen alle andere, maar desniettemin maakt elke kerk en elke richting onderscheid tusschen de waarheid, die in Christus verschenen is, en het inzicht, dat zij daarin verkregen en op gebrekkige, feilbare wijze in hare belijdenis uitgedrukt heeft").

68. Herman Bavinck, "Pros and Cons," 100; "Het voor en tegen," 66.

because and insofar as it agrees with Scripture and, as the fallible work of human hands, remains open to revision and examination by the standard of Scripture."[69]

Bavinck embraced the epistemological turn to the subject. His critique of the philosophical context in which he finds himself is not that they are too subjective, but rather that they are not subjective enough. In this, Bavinck is careful to maintain an objective principle in his theological method, objective revelation (*principium externum*). Yet, it would seem that Bavinck was self-consciously doing something that he had already done unconsciously: namely, he was maintaining the connection of the subjective and objective principles. It is not the mind, reason, heart, or will that is the *principium internum*, but rather, faith itself.[70] In view of Bavinck's own argument, the charge of subjectivism seems unfounded. He argued,

> For, in the first place, in no area of knowledge and science is there any other starting point. Light presupposes the eye, and sound is perceptible only by the ear. All that is objective exists for us only by means of a subjective consciousness; without consciousness the whole world is dead for us. Always in human beings an internal principle [*principium internum*] has to correspond to the external principle [*principium externum*] if there is to be a relation between object and subject.[71]

While Bavinck sees that modern theology has made the right move in starting in the subject, he believed that the fault lies in making the subject the first principle of theology.[72] He claimed, "Yes, the whole world, all things, God himself exists for us only in and through our consciousness. Without consciousness, I am dead to the world and the whole world is dead to me."[73]

To keep the subjective principle from becoming the first principle and, therefore descending into subjectivism, Bavinck asserts that the *prinicipium internum* is the

69. Herman Bavinck, *RD*, 1:86. It is interesting to note Bavinck's use of the phrase "because and in so far as" in light of his historical context. The question over confessional subscription loomed large over the history of the Secession church. The issue that surrounded the church in early years was did one subscribe to the Reformed confessions "because" (*quia*) they were in conformity with Scripture or did one subscribe "to the extent" (*quatenus*) that they were in conformity to Scripture. In Bavinck's description of the confessions, he unites both of these phrases. See: George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, "The Nineteenth Century," in *The Handbook of Dutch Church History*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 457–60.

70. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:563.

71. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:564. In this one can hear echoes of the debate in which Barth and Brunner would engage in the coming years. Brunner would argue that all humans seek after God in some ways. Barth, on the other hand, argued that humanity's search for God had no meaning. Thus, all theology must start with the Word of God. See: John Webster, *Barth* (London: Continuum, 2000); Colin Gunton, *The Barth Lectures* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Paul Nimmo, *Barth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

72. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:565. Interestingly, Bavinck attributes this error to Schleiermacher.

73. Bavinck, "Het dualisme in de Theologie," *De Vrije Kerk* 13:1(January 1887): 33–34. ("Ja, heel de wereld, alle dingen, God zelf bestaan voor ons alleen in en door middel van ons bewustzijn. Zonder het bewustzijn ben ik voor de wereld en is de gansche wereld dood voor mij").

illumination of the Spirit or the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. Bavinck can make this claim because while objective revelation is the *principium cognoscendi externum*, it is the Holy Spirit who is the *principia cognoscendi internum*. The Spirit witnesses to Christ in the objective revelation of the Scripture and "subjectively in the very hearts of human beings."[74] This assertion guards against subjectivism because God is author of both objective and subjective revelation. The person of the Spirit indwelling the believer gives them a fitting organ for receiving the objective revelation. "God can be known only by God."[75] Bavinck maintained that while his theological method was subjective, it did not descend into subjectivism for two reasons: first, the subject is not made the first principle, and secondly, there is a correspondence between *principium externum* and *principium internum*.

Bavinck's theological method engaged three *principia*: Scripture, the church, and Christian consciousness. These three together allowed for Bavinck to see a stability in theological construction while allowing for development. As Christine Helmer states, "Theology's lure is eternal truth, while time is its crisis."[76] In Bavinck's thinking, Scripture provides the stability necessary for theology, for it focuses on eternal truth. Consequently, over time the Church's beliefs are embodied in her creeds and confessions. Bavinck's argument held that there was a pedagogical authority that creeds and confession hold while Scripture maintained its magisterial authority. Finally, Bavinck saw the place the subjective experience in the theological method. He argued that even if the eternal truths do not change times do, and, thus, the theologian must be willing to reconceptualise their theological systems. It is this element of theology always being in dialogue is the contemporary context that both demonstrates Bavinck's indebtedness to Schleiermacher and those that follow after Schleiermacher. Taken with his understanding of theology as *Wissenschaft* and the church being *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, it is apparent that he understood theology to be a progressive science.

Conclusion

This essay has set out to show that for Bavinck theology is a progressive science. For him the body of knowledge grew and evolved over time. He understood the *reformanda* sayings in a way that was a shift away from how thinker in the early-modern period would have understood the church as *reformanda*. His theological method also demonstrated a willingness to bring the post-Kantian idea of the subject into consideration when developing theological categories. These two aspects of Bavinck's thinking together show him to be an innovative thinker. This essay has opened new avenues of research. One interesting area that could be considered in

74. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:506.

75. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:506.

76. Christine Helmer, *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 11.

the future is space of "affect theory" and Bavinck's understanding of Christian consciousness for theological systems.[77]

Nevertheless, one wants to be careful in claiming that he is unique. Matt Ridley contends that "Innovation . . . is a process of constantly discovering ways of rearranging the world into forms that are unlikely by chance – and that happen to be useful. The resulting entities are the opposite of entropy: they are more ordered, less random, than their ingredients were before."[78] Ridley goes on to show that often time innovations are not unique to one person but multiple people innovate similar things at the same time. Bavinck was not unique to his time. One can count many theologians that were doing comparable projects. Bavinck happened to be one of the few people who identified himself inside an orthodox stream of the Christian tradition as he was doing it. This is what makes his project important.

77. Simeon Zahl's work in this area could provide a great conversation for those in the Reformed tradition. Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

78. Matt Ridley, *How Innovation Works and Why It Flourishes in Freedom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 2.

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Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision

Cory C. Brock

Cory Brock (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is an assistant pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi. He serves as lecturer in Christian thought at Belhaven University, and he is the author of Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher *(Lexham Press, 2020).*

Introduction

This current year, 2021, marks the centenary death of Herman Bavinck—a season in which the world lost several superior theologians. With such an occasion, one reflects on the most noteworthy and meaningful contributions of the Dutch theologian with such magisterial influence in the discipline of theology as well as the life of the church. As Bavinck's readership rises in the twenty-first century, it has been common for readers to reflect on the doxological character of his dogmatics, his irenic, catholic spirit that accompanied his catholic theological vision, and his unflinching commitment to biblical and confessional dogmatic logic. In all these ways and in all his efforts, his writing is a typically Godward, theological theology, to borrow a phrase from Webster, where dogmatics proceeds according to its own principia despite the modern turn to *Wissenschaft*.[1]

Bavinck defined his theological project commensurate with the history of Christian theological orthodoxy: theology is the science concerning God. The focus of this definition is on God. God is the object of theology insofar as the theologian desires to know God by means of God's self-revelation, or to "think God's thoughts after him."[2] The first order of theology is to know God according to God's revelation and second to know all things in turn in the light of the knowledge of God. Bavinck believed, "The Christian mind remains unsatisfied until all of existence is referred back to the triune God, and until the confession of God's Trinity functions at the center of our thought and life."[3] Thus, theology is praise to God, and, for Bavinck, the entire point of existence is to abide with the living God and conform the whole of one's self Godward, in intellect, desire, and feeling. Such emphasis on God is apparent even in the introductory pages to his dogmatic project, emphasizing the theological task in the face of nineteenth-century redefinitions.

1. John Webster, Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 11–31. This essay is a republication of his 1977 lecture titled "Theological Theology."

2. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008), 1:588. Hereafter, *RD* with corresponding volume and page number.

3. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:330.

With such a theocentric project like the *Reformed Dogmatics*, among other texts, organized according to the economy of God's revelation in history—the Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Spirit perfects—it is unexpected then to see recent critiques of Bavinck, which argue that he uncharacteristically diminished the notion that salvation is primarily to see and experience God. In particular, Hans Boersma argues this point in his otherwise astute, penetrating, and thoroughly helpful work, *Seeing God*.[4] For Boersma, Bavinck is a primary catalyst in undermining the importance of the concept of salvation as seeing God with preference for a material eschatological imagination, and, consequently contributes to the decline of a teleological account of creaturely life. While Bavinck did indeed offer criticisms of a particular reading of the doctrine of the vision of God, Boersma's argument is antithetical to much of Bavinck's overall reception today. As Ragusa states (and a common reading of Bavinck it is indeed): The Trinity "is the architectonic principle of the whole theological and apologetic enterprise of Herman Bavinck. In contrast to those who would deemphasize the Trinity as a matter of secondary importance, Bavinck was self-consciously committed to the triune God of Scripture as the alpha and omega point of his thought."[5] From this foundation, this essay will argue that the Trinity frames Bavinck's eschatological vision. Boersma's argument concludes, sed contra, that the Trinity was not the omega point of Bavinck's thought, particularly with regard to Bavinck's eschatological logic. Rather, Boersma resolves, Bavinck undermined the glory of the vision of God by over-affirming material creation in the Parousia of Christ. First, we will consider Boersma's argument in "Sidelining the Vision of God?". Second, we will examine Bavinck's texts and unveil the fact that this critique is overstated and does not correspond to a careful analysis of Bavinck's corpus in "Revisiting Bavinck."

Sidelining the Vision of God?

Boersma, in *Seeing God*, cites Bavinck as the catalyst of a neo-Calvinist failure: the concept that instead "of gaz[ing] eternally into the face of God, we will carry our cultural accomplishments over into the hereafter, and also in the eschaton we

4. Hans Boersma, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018). Hereafter, *Seeing God*. In addition to Boersma, Michael Allen follows Boersma's indictment in the likewise helpful book *Grounded in Heaven: Recentering Christian Hope and Life on God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018). Allen first appeals to N. T. Wright and Rob Bell as examples of "eschatological naturalism" and then states that figures such as these are preceded by the neo-Calvinist tradition. He then turns to Kuyper briefly but maintains Kuyper's eschatological balance and lands on Bavinck, whose normal evenhanded judgments were abandoned, Allen argues, in his overly naturalistic eschatology in *RD*, 4 (see also RD, 5–6n12). Allen later states that recovering the *visio Dei* means "reorienting the conversation" on the century-long problem of eschatological naturalism, where Bavinck is one of the instigators in the presented narrative (18).

5. Daniel Ragusa, "The Trinity at the Center of Thought and Life: Herman Bavinck's Organic Apologetic," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 28 (2017): 149.

will be actively engaged in social and cultural endeavours of various kinds."[6] Of immediate note in this indictment is the dichotomy. For both Bavinck and Kuyper, the dualism manifest in the either/or is unnecessary and disallowed according to their own biblical exegesis. One need not choose between seeing the face of God in the heavenly life and engagement in social and cultural realities in that life. But, before we unpack Bavinck's holism on this point, we must consider carefully Boersma's precise argument.

We can take Boersma's claims presented in the quote above along with others as follows: (1) Bavinck is "sharply critical" of the doctrine of the vision of God;[7] (2) he sacrifices the *visio Dei* to an over-emphasized continuity between the now and not yet with respect to our cultural artifacts in eternity; (3) and he places too much emphasis on being engaged in social endeavors in the eschatological life. Boersma argues that this naturalistic emphasis in neo-Calvinism is more the product of Bavinck's theology than Kuyper's, arguing that Kuyper "warmly embraced the doctrine."[8] Before engaging Boersma's argument, it is important to note how this reading participates in a much older reading of Bavinck. Eugene Heideman had already identified a "restoration" motif and "glorification" motif in Bavinck's theology. The former is creation-affirming and the latter creation-negating, as Jon Stanley argues.[9] Heideman perceived a contradiction between the two in Bavinck's corpus that is eventually overwhelmed by the creation-affirming aspect of the nature-grace relation. Boersma's argument is similar but applied more acutely to the *visio Dei*. This thesis, however, as it relates to Boersma's recent argument reading dualism into Bavinck's eschatology between the beatific vision and the material goods of the eschatological life, does not adequately convey the content of the primary sources. For Bavinck, because the Bible draws no dichotomy between creaturely, earthly life and the glorified, spiritual life in the immediate presence of God, theologians should not either.

Boersma's more specific claim, that Bavinck undermines the beatific vision, is a narrower doctrinal claim that participates in a broader argument. According to Boersma, Herman Bavinck "sideline[d]" the doctrine of the beatific vision[10] and so "we witness the modern decline of the plausibility structure of a sacramental ontology—and of the corresponding sense that the future telos of created objects is

6. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 33. His first examples of this particular indictment include J. Richard Middleton, N. T. Wright, and Anthony A. Hoekema. When he turns to Bavinck it is difficult to see the direct relationship between Bavinck and these cited figures.

7. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 34.

8. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 33–34.

9. Jon Stanley, "Restoration and Renewal: The Nature of Grace in the Theology of Herman Bavinck," in *The Kuyper Center Review*, vol 2, *Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 88–89.

10. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 14.

inscribed in their nature."[11] This is an important claim to investigate. The broader claim beyond sidelining the *visio Dei* is that in Bavinck (1) due to a modernization of the relation between nature/supernature, we witness the undoing of the plausibility structure that nature relates to supernature in a participatory manner or that nature is disassociated from supernature thereby moving towards a natural end at the expense of a supernatural end; (2) that final causation (teleology) is thereby either denied or at least initially undermined. Boersma does state that "it is possible to detect significant elements of a participatory . . . ontology in [his] theology."[12] Yet, Boersma's broadest conclusion is that Bavinck undermined teleology, or a teleological account of creation, subverting the classical sense of natures, what Boersma calls the "sacramental metaphysic underlying the Christian tradition."[13] And, significantly, Boersma states that Bavinck was "out of sync" with the metaphysics of the Christian tradition, evidenced particularly in Bavinck's moments of critique directed to the doctrine of the beatific vision as well as in some criticisms of neo-Platonic philosophy found in Bavinck's *RD*.[14] Boersma then uses Bavinck's critique of the beatific vision to show how Bavinck aided in the undermining of said teleology.

While Boersma does credit Bavinck with elements of a "participatory ontology" within his corpus, he laments the fact that Bavinck "opted mostly to criticize the tradition on this topic."[15] Boersma, however, does qualify, "I should note that Bavinck did not oppose the notion of the beatific vision per se."[16] This qualification is maximized a few sentences later, "Although he nowhere denies the future of our face-to-face vision of God, he was clearly not of a mind to dwell on it at any length."[17] The claim has migrated from asserting that Bavinck is one of two theologians (the other is Balthasar) that caused a decline in the plausibility structure of the world's participatory relation to God, the concept of final causation, and the subjugation of the beatific vision, to the claim that while Bavinck affirmed the *visio Dei*, he did not write about it enough.

Boersma also states clearly that Bavinck in *RD* 4, argues that the essence of blessedness is "contemplation (visio), understanding (comprehensio), and enjoyment of God (fruition Dei)."[18] Bavinck states the highest end of humanity explicitly, the vision of God, which is for Bavinck, unsurprisingly, beheld in the face of Jesus Christ, and includes the immediate presence of the Triune God in fellowship with his people. Yet, the problem, for Boersma, is that the discussion is "brief" and that

11. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 27.
12. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 27.
13. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 28.
14. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 28.
15. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 27–28.
16. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 34.
17. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 34.
18. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 34; Bavinck, *RD*, 4:722.

it still "remains true that most of Bavinck's affirmations of the beatific vision are perfunctory."[19]

Therein, Boersma, in some manner, answers his own objection to Bavinck's critiques by showing that Bavinck was very specifically critiquing a presentation of the beatific vision per his understanding of the Roman Catholic context of his time. Boersma argues that Bavinck, while affirming the beatific vision, complained against a nineteenth-century Roman Catholic presentation of that doctrine in four ways. Bavinck wanted to emphasize (1) that believers cannot come to know the very essence of God in some manner of deification wherein there is a substantial union with the ontological Trinity; (2) that the natural is not to be elevated to supernature by some super-added gift; (3) that we do not conceive of arriving at the vision of God by condign merit; and (4) that the notion of the beatific vision not leave Christ aside and understand the vision in some sense apart from the coming of Christ. All of these qualifications of the vision of God are unsurprising for Bavinck's Reformed Protestant theology.

Boersma notes that Bavinck, within these nuances of the doctrine of the beatific vision, discounts the concept of deification if it means that a Christian can see God per the divine ontological essence. Emphasizing the biblical pattern of God's divine condescension to humanity, rather than human ascension into the divine, Bavinck makes much of the creator-creature distinction alongside a vision of God in the face of Christ, protecting theo-logic from the unbiblical conclusion that human creatures could enter into the essence of God. And Boersma accordingly acknowledges that Bavinck's critique of the alternate nineteenth-century neo-Thomist scholasticism with regard to a *visio Dei* per God's essence is "understandable."[20] While Boersma disagrees with some of Bavinck's criticisms of the neo-Platonic and Christian synthesis throughout theological history, he seems to register no strong disagreement with any of Bavinck's conditions except that Bavinck could have talked more about how there are nuances in the Roman Catholic tradition that avoid these pitfalls. Boersma writes of Bavinck's criticisms of a Roman dichotomy between nature and supernature that "he could have presented a more nuanced portrayal of Catholic teaching."[21] This is a fair comment. Nevertheless, that is an altogether different note than the claim that Bavinck is one of two modern theologians that participated in the undermining of the beatific vision and participatory ontology. Here, Bavinck critiqued the particular presentation of the *visio Dei* in his own context and according to his reading of the majority tradition of Roman Catholic history with which he disagreed, while simultaneously affirming the doctrine of the vision of God fully.

Bavinck argues in *RD* 4, for example, that "eternal life is our portion here already and consists in knowing God in the face of Christ. . . . Christ is and remains

19. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 34.
20. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 36.
21. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 36.

the way to the Father, the knowledge and vision of God. . . . The Son is the mediator of union (*mediator unionis*) between God and his creation."[22] Boersma's complaint then is that Bavinck does not unpack that claim, one with which Boersma registers no disagreement. Boersma laments the fact that in the particular section from which this quote comes Bavinck does not spend significant pages on explaining in a positive way just what the *visio Dei* entails. The real issue then is the problem of not saying enough, and more specifically, not saying enough in one of the eschatology sections of the *Dogmatics*. Yet, Bavinck argued that a primary reason for not speculating into the positive nature of the *visio Dei* in detail is because of his conviction that eschatology must remain a modest endeavor. One can only go where Scripture goes, in his Reformed-theological logic. Scripture does not give positive explanation of the eschatological vision. So, Bavinck writes, "The end of things, like their origin and essence, is unknown to us."[23]

What we arrive at, according to Boersma's own argument, is the fact that Bavinck affirmed the beatific vision emphatically and was simultaneously critical of some theological expressions of that vision, particularly the nineteenth-century neo-Thomist understanding present within his own context, as Bavinck understood it. One could claim that Bavinck misunderstood the neo-Thomist presentation of the *visio Dei*. However, that is a separate claim. Bavinck made distinctions between unbiblical ways of rendering the idea and ones more attuned to the logic of Scripture. Did Bavinck fail to understand that there are Roman Catholic presentations of the vision of God that are more attuned to his rendering? Perhaps so. But, Boersma's original claim is that Bavinck undermines the premodern plausibility structure of participatory ontology by a thoroughgoing critique of the beatific vision and thereby undermines the notion of final causation. While later aspects of the neo-Calvinist tradition may participate in over-materialized eschatologies that downplay the immediate presence of God in the face of Christ as the only hope of humankind and its highest good, neither Kuyper *nor* Bavinck do. In other words, and as Boersma admits, Bavinck was critiquing one stream of theological reflection on the *visio dei*. Yet, it is untenable to move to the claim that Bavinck was deviating from the Christian tradition on this issue in such a manner that he was a significant catalyst in the undermining of a Christian teleology.

Additionally, it is important to note that Boersma's argument against Bavinck depends on assertions that are not directly derivative of the logic of Bavinck's quotations. For example, after quoting Bavinck's claim that in the eschaton there is not a mere passive rest but a communion with God in activity as well, Boersma writes: "Bavinck seems more at ease with an eschaton that continues the regular work week than with an eschaton that celebrates Sabbath rest."[24] This line is a hasty

22. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:685.
23. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:589.
24. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 39.

generalization and mere assertion that cannot be derived directly from the logic of the quote and gives no attention to the other remarks Bavinck makes about Sabbath rest throughout his corpus. Boersma uses phrases like "Bavinck waxes eloquent" that slant the presentation critically before the reader arrives at the argument disallowing analysis of the quotes themselves. Indeed, Boersma's final summary of Bavinck's failure is a psychologism, "Bavinck simply was too much interested in the hustle and bustle of human activity in the hereafter to give any real thought to a positive articulation of the beatific vision."[25] It is important to note the indefensibility of claiming that a person gave no "real thought" to a concept. Boersma's presentation of Bavinck as one who affirmed the beatific vision and qualified what he took to be its erroneous expressions manifests the opposite claim: it is no "simple" interest in this-worldly hustle and bustle.

Boersma notes that Bavinck, all in all, "Goes out of his way to underscore continuity rather than discontinuity between this world and the next."[26] He marks out some of Bavinck's eschatological theological commitments: that the present world will not be finally destroyed; that salvation includes the union of the material and spiritual; that one must not embrace a one-sided spiritualism; that the end is the city of God renewed and glorified in the presence of Christ; that Sabbath rest in the eschaton does not undermine human activity in the life eternal. For Boersma, these emphases sideline the doctrine of the vision of God "as the ultimate human telos."[27] However, Bavinck, and Kuyper alike, sought to eschew all dualisms in their theology. Bavinck did not draw a dichotomy between spirit and matter, between seeing God and cultural agency in the eschatological life, but emphasized the one-sidedness of a choice between these poles and we will explore this more below.

Finally, toward the conclusion of Boersma's presentation of Bavinck, stating that Bavinck over-emphasized the this-worldly character of the new heaven and earth, he, in footnote 89 cites *RD* 4:715 to make the point.[28] Boersma quotes, however, not from Bavinck but from the added editorial summaries in the English version of the *Reformed Dogmatics*. The editor writes, "While the kingdom of God is first planted spiritually in human hearts, the future blessedness is not to be spiritualized. Biblical hope, rooted in incarnation and resurrection, is creational, this worldly, visible, physical, bodily hope."[29] It is important to note the difference here with what Bavinck says in the chapter that follows this introduction. One can surmise that the editors were drawing their summary from the following quote (and other arguments like it in this chapter) which has a strikingly different accent.

25. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 38.
26. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 39.
27. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 40.
28. Boersma, *Seeing God*, 40n89.
29. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:715.

> Since Jesus's advent breaks up into a first and a second coming, the kingdom of God is first planted in human hearts spiritually, and the benefits of that kingdom are all internal and invisible: forgiveness, peace, righteousness, and eternal life. The essence of future blessedness, accordingly, is also construed more spiritually, especially by Paul and John, as a being always with the Lord (John 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:17; 5:10; 1 John 3:2). But this does not confine this blessedness to heaven. This cannot be the case as is basically evident from the fact that the New Testament teaches the incarnation of the Word and the physical resurrection of Christ; it further expects his physical return at the end of time and immediately thereafter has in view the physical resurrection of all human beings, especially that of believers. All this spells the collapse of spiritualism, which if it remains true to its principle—as in Origen—has nothing left after the day of judgment other than spirits in an uncreated heaven.[30]

Note the balance in the quote above that is absent in the summary that Boersma quoted. There is no dichotomy presented between the goodness of spiritual salvation as "always being with the Lord" and the fact that the incarnation and resurrection materializes the eschatological life. Spiritualism, for Bavinck, is essentially a denial of the resurrection. Yet, the Bible, according to Bavinck's reading, presents a holistic view.

Revisiting Bavinck

In addition to the point just made, we can look to other places to establish Bavinck's understanding of the eschatological vision. Vision is not the only metaphor of Scripture and so Bavinck grabs hold of many images for understanding the holism of God's redemptive work. For Bavinck, rather, "God, and God alone, is man's highest good."[31] Indeed, Bavinck begins his magisterial and popular work of theology, *The Wonderful Works of God* (originally titled *Magnalia Dei*), with the following statement. He spends, across so much of his corpus, ample ink declaring that the human creature "cannot be satisfied with what the whole corporeal world has to offer."[32] Hence, "all men are really seeking after God … man is an enigma whose solution can only be found in God."[33] At the high point of his Christology, he overviews the benefits of Christ, which, "are so rich that they simply cannot be calculated or estimated at their

30. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:718.

31. Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God* (Glenside, PA: Westiminster Seminary Press, 2019), 1. Hereafter, WWG.

32. Bavinck, WWG, 2.

33. Bavinck, WWG, 6–7.

just value. They comprehend no less than a whole and perfect salvation. They consist of . . . the granting of the highest good, namely, the fellowship with God."[34]

Recall our summary of Boersma's claim: (1) Bavinck undermines the eschatological vision of the face of God; (2) sacrifices the *visio Dei* to a carry-over of our cultural artifacts into eternity; and (3) places too much emphasis on being engaged in social endeavors in the eschaton. Regarding (2), Bavinck, *sed contra*, is similar to Kuyper (in Bavinck's chapter that Boersma is referring to throughout his argument) stating that although the accidents of the world will indeed perish, the substance of the world will not. Kuyper argues that the individual accomplishments of common grace will fade, but the germ will be reborn.[35] So, Bavinck: "so also this world passes away in its present form as well, in order out of its womb, at God's word of power, to give birth and being to a new world."[36] Bavinck does state that this a spiritual renewal and rebirth, cleansing the material from its ethical corruption. In another place, Bavinck gives a more nuanced presentation than the idea that we will carry our cultural accomplishments into the hereafter *simpliciter*: "the new heaven and the new earth will one day emerge from the fire-purged elements of this world."[37] Regarding (1), Bavinck fully affirms the beatific vision in the face of Christ, as Boersma admits, and this is without considering Bavinck's corpus as a whole but with focus on a section of *RD* 4. And, regarding (3), it is odd to suppose that for a Reformed theologian, being engaged in social relations in the afterlife undermines the spirituality of that life. Kuyper could not affirm more clearly that social endeavors proceed in the afterlife.

From early in Bavinck's career he defined the aim of theology as seeking the knowledge of God unto the glory of God. The object of God's revelation of His own self is the knowledge of God that glorifies God, he argues in *RD* 1.213. Seeking the face of God, which is the object of theology itself, is the current upon which his doxological dogmatics flows throughout his corpus and career. Bavinck does not downplay the beatific vision but critiques doctrinal formulations that sacrifice the creator-creature distinction. Again, while often using other biblical terms and imagery besides sight to describe the eschatological life in the presence of God, the most common of which is "fellowship" or "to dwell" with God, as well as often referring to "communion with God," each operate within the magisterial metaphors of being at home with God or friendship with God. In WWG, after opening his theological handbook by stating that the immediate presence of God is man's highest good, he appeals at the end to the Old Testament to argue that "fellowship with God is the first and most important benefit of the covenant."[38] For Israel, there is no

34. Bavinck, WWG, 338.
35. Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 1:572.
36. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:717.
37. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:720.
38. Bavinck, WWG, 530.

joy except in fellowship with God. The Lord is the rock and fortress, the Shepherd, and the fountainhead of living water—without the presence of God, the people have nothing, he states. For Israel, death could only fully be dealt with when the Lord came to dwell with his people, purge it of sin, and remain with them in the land that he had chosen.[39] All of this hope is fulfilled in Christ's first and second comings. Bavinck emphasizes Christ, having laid the foundation, will bring the Kingdom into completion when he comes.[40] New Covenant believers, then, he states, look forward with great longing to the return of Christ to this world. All hope and expectation are laid before him and with him. Bavinck believes that Christ will return to earth in a "great chariot of victory" through the clouds of heaven, just as he departed.[41] Bavinck does not suppose the Church capable of ushering in this kingdom, but rather that it is fully cataclysmic, according to divine agency alone.

He goes on to express in multiple pages the glory and majesty of Christ's return, subduing Satan, putting an end to the beast of death, wherein Christ is all in all, and his Church with him. For Bavinck, the appearance of Christ is everything, in which the whole of the Kingdom is comprehended. In WWG, in fact, he spends very little time explaining the secondary benefits of life in the kingdom, only describing the bounty of material life in one short paragraph.[42] His emphasis within remains on the "immediate presence of God" where "all the citizens in that city share in the fellowship of God."[43] In the final paragraph of the same book, he reiterates: "For all the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will behold God's face, and will bear his name upon their foreheads."[44] This is the definitive statement of his eschatology in that work.

In *RD* 4, as Boersma points out, Bavinck does indeed address "spiritualism" in the final chapter of his dogmatics. It is important to note however that this appears after two hundred pages of eschatological reflection on a whole host of other topics, which are not addressed in the critique. He makes the point that "this renewal of the visible world highlights the one-sidedness of the spiritualism that limits future blessedness to heaven. In the case of Old Testament prophecy one cannot doubt that it describes earthly blessedness."[45] Again, his point is not to limit emphasis on the presence of God, but to restate the basic exegetical insight that eternal life is not merely spiritual but also physical, as Christ himself is a man. He was addressing the error of denying the material reality of eternal life within his own day. It is odd to use this point to make the claim that Bavinck is a primary catalyst for the undermining of final causation and participatory ontology (particularly when his emphasis is on

39. Bavinck, WWG, 530–31.
40. Bavinck, WWG, 534.
41. Bavinck, WWG, 339.
42. See Bavinck, WWG, 548.
43. Bavinck, WWG, 548.
44. Bavinck, WWG, 549.
45. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:717.

the union and compatibility of heaven and earth as the end of cosmic existence). One can see the nuance in his point in the lengthier version of this quote stated above: "The essence of future blessedness, accordingly, is also construed more spiritually, especially by Paul and John, as a being always with the Lord (John 12:26; 14:3; 17:24; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 1 Thess. 4:17; 5:10; 1 John 3:2). But this does not confine this blessedness to heaven."[46] This cannot be the case as is basically evident from the fact that the New Testament teaches the incarnation of the Word and the physical resurrection of Christ and his people.[47] Again (and it is worth quoting in full),

> Scripture consistently maintains the intimate connectedness of the spiritual and the natural. Inasmuch as the world consists of heaven and earth and humans consist of soul and body, so also sanctity and glory, virtue and happiness, the moral and the natural world order ought finally to be harmoniously united. The blessed will therefore not only be free from sin but also from all the consequences of sin, from ignorance and error (John 6:45), from death (Luke 20:36; 1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14), from poverty and disease, from pain and fear, hunger and thirst, cold and heat (Matt. 5:4; Luke 6:21; Rev. 7:16–17; 21:4), and from all weakness, dishonor, and corruption (1 Cor. 15:42; etc.).[48]

Yet, attention is not given in Boersma's critique to Bavinck's actual point and emphasis:

> *Still the spiritual blessings are the more important and innumerably abundant*: holiness (Rev. 3:4–5; 7:14; 19:8; 21:27); salvation (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:9; Heb. 1:14; 5:9); glory (Luke 24:26; Rom. 2:10; 8:18, 21); adoption (Rom. 8:23); eternal life (Matt. 19:16–17, 29; etc.); *the vision of, and conformity to, God and Christ* (Matt. 5:18; John 17:24; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4); and fellowship with, and the service and praise of, God and Christ.[49]

Here, he summarizes his understanding of the benefits of eternal life appealing to the beatific vision as the center as he did in the partial quote mentioned above:

> Contemplation (*visio*), understanding (*comprehensio*), and enjoyment of God (*fruitio Dei*) make up the essence of our future blessedness. The redeemed see God, not—to be sure—with physical eyes, but still in a way that far outstrips all revelation in this dispensation via nature and Scripture. And thus they will all know him, each in the measure of his mental capacity, with a knowledge that has its image and likeness in God's knowledge—directly, immediately, unambiguously, and purely. Then they will receive and possess everything they expected here only in hope. Thus contemplating and possessing God,

46. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:718.
47. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:718.
48. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:720.
49. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:720–721. Emphasis added.

> they enjoy him and are blessed in his fellowship: blessed in soul and body, in intellect and will.[50]

None of these examples take into consideration the many other instances where he affirms the beatific vision throughout his corpus. In the other volumes of *RD*, for example, he concludes: Religion aims at nothing less than eternal blessedness in fellowship with God.[51] Prior in *RD* 1, he states that in the heavenly hosts and the blessed, the triumphant Church, the people of God experience *theologia visionis* – a theology of vision where the ectypal theology of the creaturely consciousness is closely aligned with God's self-knowledge.[52] Bavinck also makes much of gazing and worshiping God in eternal life persistently. When we behold the Kingdom, he exegetes, "the song will flow from our lips: every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. God himself is it Designer and Builder."[53] In *RD* 1.310, he qualifies the vision of God, arguing that no creature can behold the ontological Trinity, as he is in himself. For this reason, the beatific vision is beheld in the face of Christ. He carries on a similar discussion in the lengthiest treatment of the *visio Dei* in *RD* 2.189 and following. He overviews the history of the doctrine and comes to the following conclusions: "modesty [concerning the doctrine] is certainly in keeping with Scripture. The Bible indeed teaches that the blessed in heaven behold God, but does not go into any detail, and elsewhere expressly calls God invisible. The vision awaiting believers is described by Paul as 'knowing as we are known.'"[54] Again, "Humanity's blessedness indeed lies in the "beatific vision of God," but this vision will always be such that finite and limited human nature is capable of it."[55] The issue here is not one of "eschatological naturalism"[56] but eschatological modesty. For Bavinck, the theologian must take one's understanding of the holistic quality of salvation as far as Scripture, but disallow the imagination to over-determine that for which there is no definitive answer.

Consider his explanation of the vision of eternal life in the Old Testament especially and its focus on the holistic character of God's redemptive work: "Life was not thought of in an abstract, philosophical manner, as a kind of naked existence. By its very nature, life comprised a fullness of blessings: the fellowship of God *first of all*, but then too, the fellowship of His people, and the fellowship of the land that the Lord had given to his people."[57] In Christ, all is fulfilled. For Bavinck, there

50. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:722.

51. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:269.

52. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:214.

53. Bavinck, "Kingdom of God the Highest Good," trans. Nelson Kloosterman, *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 170. Hereafter, *KGHG*.

54. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:190.

55. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:191.

56. See Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*, 8.

57. Bavinck, WWG, 529.

is no choice to make between creation and spiritual glorification. Eternal life for humanity includes "unity in his soul and body, unity with God and in harmony with his surroundings."[58] For Bavinck, fellowship with God, the Immanuel principle, is the entire point of human existence. Yet, one need not draw a dichotomy between fellowship with God and sociality in the heavenly life among fellow creatures and the land. For *Adam* was made to dwell in the *adamah*.

Likewise, in "KGHG," he argues, the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom *of God*.[59] Christ is the head of this living body. The Kingdom exists unto the glory of God. That is its first purpose. "In the Kingdom of God, God himself is the King-Sovereign."[60] Accordingly, the goal of the individual is that one's essence be "reflected in the mirror of [their] consciousness, and that [they] thus become like God, who is nothing but light and in whom is no darkness (1 John 1:5)."[61] In other words, the end of each person is that they be restored by grace to full humanity, to being in themselves the nature that God pronounced over his image-bearers: fully dependent upon God, and without any internal conflict between the law of God and the desires of the personality, to become like God in the presence of God.

For Bavinck, there is no reason to draw a dualistic dichotomy then between heaven and earth. He understood salvation as the union of heaven and earth in the second coming of Christ. To speak merely of heaven without earth or earth without heaven is to miss the biblical emphasis on the eschatological life. Bavinck attempted to derive a balance in the fact of organic union that begins even in the Old Testament: in the covenant with Israel, "Salvation is expected on earth, not in heaven."[62] That is not stated at the expense of heaven but according to the revelation that heaven will condescend to earth. The Israelites were looking for Messiah to bring the rule of God fully and finally to earth, to a people in a land. In the New Covenant, Bavinck explains, in *RD* 4 even, that Christ is the center of eternal life, and *the final cause* of creation. It is worth quoting him in detail,

> Eschatology, therefore, is rooted in Christology and is itself Christology, the teaching of the final, complete triumph of Christ and his kingdom over all his enemies. In accord with Scripture, we can go back even further. The Son is not only the mediator of reconciliation (*mediator reconciliationis*) on account of sin, but even apart from sin he is the mediator of union (*mediator unionis*) between God and his creation. He is not only the exemplary cause (*causa exemplaris*) but also the final cause (*causa finalis*) of creation. In the Son the world has its foundation and example, and therefore it has in him its goal as well. It is created through him and for him as well (Col. 1:16). Because the

58. Bavinck, WWG, 529.
59. Bavinck, "KGHG," 149.
60. Bavinck, "KGHG," 149.
61. Bavinck, "KGHG," 150.
62. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:654.

> creation is *his* work, it cannot and may not remain the booty of Satan. The Son is the head, Lord, and heir of all things. United in the Son, gathered under him as their head, all creatures return to the Father, the fountain of all good.[63]

For Bavinck, Jesus Christ is the goal of all human life. It is critical to point out as well, alongside Bavinck's holism, that Kuyper wholly rejects a dichotomy between spiritual and earthly goods in the Kingdom of God. He refuses to contrast the end of beatific vision with the facts of a renewed material order. Bavinck and Kuyper both reject mechanical dualism on this point, desiring an organic vision of the end of all things. There is no reason to dichotomize, in their logic, because the Scriptures do not. As briefly mentioned above, Kuyper uses the "dying of the grain of wheat" as "the pregnant metaphor" for the renewal of the human body, but not only the body. "At the same time" he argues, "we have the indication as to how one day this entire world will die and perish, but in order to bring forth out of its germ a similar, much more glorious world—except that it is purified from all curse and pain … the essence itself will emerge in new and more glorious forms." Here, Kuyper is emphasizing the material nature of the world, that is the same as the human body. "The present world which one day will perish before the coming new world, will continue its essence in that new world. That new world will be of the same kind as this old world, and will be able to be explained in terms of it."[64] Yet, what will life be like in this world?

Kuyper displays his Scriptural balance in his commentary on the book of Revelation, where he focuses on the *visio Dei and* life in the Kingdom. He argues that in that city, "The whole reborn humanity stands before God as a holy unity that is athrob with life," and this fully redeemed humanity "does not remain on its knees in uninterrupted worship of God," but it also engages in "new callings, new life-tasks, new commissions." The life of the future age "*will be a full human life* which will exhibit all the glory that God in the first creation had purposed and appointed for the same, but which by us was sinned away."[65] Contra the aforementioned attempt at contrasting the two, Kuyper and Bavinck are theologically unified on this point. And one need not, according to neo-Calvinist logic, separate the resurrection of the body and the shalom of earthly life from the beatific vision as the true end of the human existence. There is no choice to be made between nature and supernature.

Conclusion

In summation, for Bavinck, Christ is the center of the glory of the Kingdom. It is the vision of God in the face of Christ that we see clearly and immediately in eternal life. And indeed, Kuyper asks: "what end would be served by this bodily existence

63. Bavinck, *RD*, 4:685.
64. Kuyper, *Common Grace*, 1:572.
65. Kuyper, *The Revelation of St. John*, 331–32.

of our Savior if he would be dwelling in nothing else but a sphere of invisible spirits? … we see … that a purely spiritual kingdom could fit neither with our confession of Christ nor with our confession regarding our own future."[66] Bavinck makes clear the eschatological unity of his project driven by Reformation theology and biblical exegesis noting especially that the work of redemption is Christ's ethical renewal of a corrupted cosmos accordingly:

> The Christian religion does not, therefore, have the task of creating a new supernatural order of things. It does not intend to institute a totally new, heavenly kingdom such as Rome intends in the church and the Anabaptists undertook at Munster. Christianity does not introduce a single substantial foreign element into the creation. It creates no new cosmos but rather makes the cosmos new. It restores what was corrupted by sin. It atones the guilty and cures what is sick; the wounded it heals. Jesus was anointed by the Father with the Holy Spirit to bring good tidings to the afflicted, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive and the opening of prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and to comfort those who mourn (Isa. 61:1, 2). He makes the blind to see, the lame to walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor (Matt. 11:5) … He was Jesus—that is, Savior. But he was that totally and perfectly, not in the narrow Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Anabaptist sense but in the full, deep, and broad Reformed sense of the word. Christ did not come just to restore the religio-ethical life of man and to 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.[67]

66. Kuyper, Common Grace, 1:573.

67. Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, Calvin Theological Journal, 24 no. 1 (April 1989), 61–62.

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Christology and Economic Ethics: Herman Bavinck's Prophet, Priest, and King in the Marketplace

Matthew Kaemingk

Matthew Kaemingk (PhD, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is Richard John Mouw Assistant Professor of Faith and Public Life And Director of The Richard John Mouw Institute of Faith And Public Life at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Introduction

How should a Christian follow Jesus in the marketplace? Around the world Christian activists and academics, pastors and professionals offer a wide variety of dissenting answers to the critically important relationship between faith and economic life. This article explores a latent potential within Herman Bavinck's Christology to present a way forward for a divided church on the major marketplace questions of the day. An essay of "public theology," this brief article develops and applies Herman Bavinck's *munus triplex* Christology—Christ as prophet, priest, and king—to illustrate both the unity and diversity of the church's marketplace responsibilities. This article will examine a Jesus-follower's threefold vocation in the marketplace: a prophetic calling to speak words of economic truth and justice, a priestly calling to marketplace ministries of reconciliation, grace, and spiritual communion, and a royal calling to economic responsibility, creativity, productivity, and service.

A Christological Framework for Economic Engagement

How does one follow a first century carpenter in a twenty-first century global marketplace? In surveying the life of Jesus, which stories or commands, images or actions should one appropriate to develop faithful economic practices in the marketplace today? How should one *Christologically* frame complex economic issues of global wages and trade, corporate responsibility and governance, work and macroeconomics, vocational discernment and career ambition? Jesus of Nazareth never offered a course on economic ethics, business management, or marketplace spirituality. He gave no instructions on how to choose a career, how to structure employee salaries, how to streamline a corporation, or how to protest unjust global market structures.

To say that contemporary Christians are divided on the shape and contours of Christian faithfulness in the marketplace is, no doubt, an understatement. The debates and diversity within global Christianity over questions of faith, work, and economics is profound. Around the world subcultures of Christian activists and economists, pastors and professionals, theologians and entrepreneurs gather separately to discuss issues of work and wealth, industry and trade. These theo-economic subcultures each have their own idiosyncratic theological languages and interpretive economic lenses. Some of these groups call for a strenuous prophetic critique of the marketplace.[1] Others herald the free market and modern workplace as a potential space of divine blessing, productivity, and liberation.[2] Christian scholars gather in academic conferences to study, analyze, and reflect on market forces from a critical distance. Christian professionals embedded deeply within these market forces gather for prayer and mutual encouragement amidst the stress and strain of work and career.[3] Christian pastors gather to wrestle with how they might help, encourage, and guide workers as they navigate the economic forces of work and unemployment, poverty and consumerism.[4] Christian economists gather to discuss global economic theories, trends, and systems that are all active and powerful within their discipline.[5]

For the most part, these diverse discourses on faith, work, and economics rarely intersect with one another. Left on their own, it is not uncommon for these subcultures to select and elevate a single biblical image or Christological command that is meant to explain the whole of the global marketplace and direct the disciple's calling within it. Their favorite biblical image or command, once elevated, becomes *the* interpretive lens through which diverse and complex economic questions are understood. The unfortunate result of this singular focus can be a rather narrow and myopic account of "the" Christian response to diverse economic issues of property and markets, work and career, finance and trade. Inevitably, the complex

1. Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Ulrich Duchrow, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987), and his *Alternatives to Global Capitalism* (Kairos Europa: Heidelberg, 1995); Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford University, 2018); F. J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield); Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology Economic, and the Future* (Fortress Press, 2009); Kevin Hargaden, *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age* (Eugene, OR: Cascade books, 2018).

2. Samuel Gregg, *For God and Profit: How Banking and Finance Can Serve the Common Good* (Herder & Herder, 2020); Brent Waters, *Just Capitalism: A Christian Ethics of Economic Globalization* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2016); Kenneth Barnes, *Redeeming Capitalism* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2018).

3. See David Miller's helpful historical overview of America's faith and work movement *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

4. See the American pastoral resources, events, and networks that can be found within the Made to Flourish Network (madetoflourish.org) and the Theology of Work project (theologyofwork.org).

5. The Association of Christian Economists, "an academic society for Christians in the economics profession" (christianeconomists.org). See also the *Faith and Economics* journal.

and three-dimensional character, work, and mission of Christ in the world becomes one dimensional. Following Jesus in a complex global marketplace becomes simple, and rather simplistic.

It is an understatement to say that these diverse economic discourses and subcultures *need* to listen and learn from one another. They need each other's theo-economic insights. They need to dialogue with and even contest one another's Christological images and metaphors. In and through these discourses a more nuanced and generative understanding of economic faithfulness might begin to emerge. And yet, for a myriad of reasons, interdisciplinary and ecumenical conversations about faith, work, and economics rarely occur. By and large, these diverse theo-economic communities lack either the interest, desire, or ability to engage one other in meaningful discussion. All too often theologians and activists, entrepreneurs and economists, pastors and professionals are content to either ignore, dismiss, or demonize one another. Uninterested in what their sisters and brothers have to say about the theo-economic shape of marketplace faithfulness in the modern world, they continue to remain within their respective silos.

Seeing the problem, the public-theological purpose of this essay is two-fold. First, to make a *Christological* case as to why diverse theo-economic subcultures need one another. And second, to make this case by appealing to a more complex and multilayered Christology through which these diverse subcultures might begin to appreciate, learn from, and even collaborate with one another. Here we intend to demonstrate how a more multifaceted Christology can challenge some of the more myopic theo-economic images and lenses currently on offer within global Christianity. Further, a multilayered Christology promises a more kaleidoscopic range of ways in which Christian pastors and professionals, activists and academics might begin to engage the global marketplace.

The multilayered Christology developed within this essay emerges from Herman Bavinck's brief but potent reflections on the *munus triplex*—Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Resisting simplistic forms of Christological reductionism, Bavinck argues that, as Israel's promised Messiah, Christ embodies and fulfills all three of Israel's public offices. He is—at one and the same time—a prophetic, priestly, and royal force within Israel, the church, and ultimately the world. *As a public prophet*, Jesus speaks and reveals God's truth and justice to the world. Through his prophetic word, he confronts the darkness with the light of God's public demand for truth and justice. *As a public priest*, Jesus heals, redeems, and reconciles the brokenhearted in and through his life, death, and resurrection. Through his priestly sacrifice, Christ restores and reconciles humanity and all creation into right relationship with God. *As a public king,* Jesus reigns as the sovereign creator in power and justice, humility and service, inaugurating the kingdom of God on each. Through Christ's royal office he restores human beings to their own creational callings to steward the earth and work together in ways that are humble, just, and life-giving.

Bavinck's threefold Christology produces a corresponding threefold anthropology. For Bavinck, humanity is called—in their own finite and fallen ways—to participate in Christ's threefold offices in the world. In other words, the body of Christ should reflect the prophetic, priestly, and royal work of Christ in the world. Every disciple of Christ is called to a prophetic, priestly, and royal witness (see 1 Pet. 2:9). Moreover, their lives should not be reduced to any one of the these three. *Being in Christ*—the anointed *munus triplex*—disciples are called to follow him in all three offices never separating one from the other.

The historical roots of Bavinck's *munus triplex* Christology can be traced back to the early church and, indeed, to ancient Israel's sociopolitical leadership structure. While ancient in origin, the concept of the *munus triplex* experienced a revival during the protestant reformation. While Herman Bavinck is certainly not the inventor of the *munus triplex*, we will find that his brief formulation and nuance discussion of the doctrine offers the contemporary church a rather generative lens, one that can be particularly helpful in answering our primary question: *how should Christians engage the global marketplace in ways that are faithful to Christ*?

Here we must pause to consider a potential objection. There those who might wish to limit the mediatorial work of Christ to the sphere of private spirituality and personal salvation. While they would agree that Christ is a prophet, priest, and king, they would insist that he only assumes these roles within the four walls of institutional church. In short, Christ's mediatorial work has no meaningful relevance for public or economic life. Speaking anthropologically, Christians are called to be prophets, priests, and kings inside the church, but in the "kingdom of this world" they are called to simply be accountants, executives, activists, and economists. Christ's offices have no public import for their economic lives.

Herman Bavinck will have nothing of this sort of privatization of the gospel, nor will he abide by a Christology circumscribed by the four walls of the church. A thoroughgoing Neo-Calvinist, Bavinck sees the fruits of Christ's mediatorial work in every sphere of public life. Scripture, theology, and Christology should inform a disciple's personal, ecclesial, *and public* life. In his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck writes, "While scripture has a primarily religious and soteriological purpose, its nonetheless of primary significance for other areas of life."[6] Further, scripture must not be "isolated from everything," but "must be employed to explain all of human living."[7] For Bavinck, true Calvinism can never be limited to a "ecclesiastical distinction," nor is it a "purely theological conception." Instead, true Calvinism "is of wider application and denotes a specific type in the political, social, and civil spheres. It stands for that characteristic view of life and the world as a whole." A Calvinist is

6. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003–2008), 1:444. Hereafter *RD* with corresponding volume and page number. My thanks to Nathaniel Gray Sutanto for his helpful comments on this section.

7. Herman Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God: The Highest Good," *The Bavinck Review* 2 (2011): 166.

a person who "reveals a specific character . . . not merely in his church and theology, but also in social and political life, in science and art."[8]

These features within Bavinck's thought evidence his conviction that Christ came to earth not simply to save souls or start a church; he came to restore the whole of his creation. In this sense, the "benefits that accrue to us from the reconciliation of God-in-Christ are too numerous to mention . . . [They are] juridical . . . mystical . . . ethical . . . moral . . . economic . . . physical . . . In a word, the whole enterprise of re-creation, the complete restoration of the world and humanity . . . is the fruit of Christ's work."[9] Christ could not be privatized or reduced to either a teacher, healer, liberator, savior, or friend. The complex "work of Christ," Bavinck insisted, "is so multifaceted that it cannot be captured in a single word nor summarized in a single formula."[10] Public disciples require multiple images and facets, he argued, "To give us a deep impression and a clear sense of the riches and many-sidedness of the mediator's work."[11] These multiple facets of Christ's life would "supplement one another and enrich our knowledge."[12]

With this objection briefly noted, the remaining structure of this essay is rather straightforward. We begin by examining three prominent Christian responses to the marketplace currently on offer: namely *prophetic* economic critique and confrontation, *priestly* workplace spirituality and reconciliation, and *royal* economic stewardship and marketplace development. Having completed this threefold survey, we turn to Herman Bavinck's Christological reflections on the *munus triplex* in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. Here we explore how, according to Bavinck, Christ enacts his own threefold calling as prophet, priest, and king. Finally, we conclude with a brief articulation of a more variegated Christological account of marketplace discipleship.

Before we begin, it is necessary to briefly name a few of the limiting factors involved in appropriating a threefold typological structure like the *munus triplex*. First, the complex work of Jesus Christ can never be limited to or exhausted by any threefold office. In scripture Jesus is also rightly described as a shepherd, healer, protector, creator, liberator, defender, and friend. The same goes for the multifaceted callings of Christians in the world. Thus, the threefold office is not meant to exhaust the calling of Christ or his disciples. Within this essay the *munus triplex* is functionally meant to open the readers understanding of Christological complexity, not close it down. Second, we must make a critical distinction between the offices of Christ and the offices of the Christian. There is a critically important distance between the *primary* royal, priestly, and prophetic authority of Christ and the *secondary* authority

8. Herman Bavinck, "Future of Calvinism," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5, no. 17 (1894): 3.

9. Bavinck, *RD*, 3:451–52.

10. Bavinck, *RD*, 3:383–84.

11. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:383.

12. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:384.

of the Christian. Christ's Word, Christ's Healing, and Christ's Reign is always infinite, infallible, and unwavering. The Christian's, on the other hand, will always be finite, fallen, and contingent. To say, for example, that a Christian participates in Christ's royal reign is *not* to say that Christians are endowed with Christ's infinite, infallible, and unwavering power and justice. A critical distinction between the two must remain. Third, properly understood, the *munus triplex* is a catechetical tool. It should be appropriated as a limited heuristic device, one that can inform and cultivate a Christological imagination. Within the *munus triplex* the disciple is invited to consider the complex and variegated works of Christ and the manifold callings of his disciples in the world. When one's economic imagination has grown overly myopic and simplistic the munus triplex can serve to open up a multiplicity of ways in which disciples can faithfully engage the marketplace. In due course we will add more nuance to this statement.[13]

In the next section we press forward with a brief discussion of contemporary Christian engagements with the global marketplace. We *synthetically* structure their diverse discourses along the three lines of the prophetic, the royal, and the priestly for reasons that will soon be revealed.

Engaging the Market: Prophetic, Royal, and Priestly

Prophetic analysis, critique, and confrontation is a prominent lens through which many Christians engage the marketplace today. Speaking out publicly and organizing politically on behalf of economic justice is a particularly central *modus operandi* for many Christian activists, theologians, labor unions, and advocates for poor and marginalized populations.[14] Within this more prophetic camp, a strong and leading emphasis is placed on exposing and overturning the economic principalities and powers that be. Herein a clear line is drawn between the economy of the world and

13. Adam J. Johnson provides a helpful word of caution regarding the munus triplex in the following, "The Servant Lord: A Word of Caution Regarding the Munus Triplex in Karl Barth's Theology and the Church Today," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 65, no. 2 (2012): 159–73. See also Anthony Ekpo, "Triplex Munus in the 1983 Code: A Blessing or a Curse?" *The Australasian Catholic Record* 93, no. 3 (July 2016): 259–76; George W. Stroup III, "The Relevance of the Munus Triplex for Reformed Theology and Ministry," in *The Austin Presbyterian Seminary Bulletin* 98, no 9 (June 1983): 12–32; John Frederick Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clarke, 1956), 108.

14. See, for example, Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Ulrich Duchrow, *Global Economy: A Confessional Issue for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987); Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism* (Kairos Europa: Heidelberg, 1995); Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford University, 2018); F. J. Hinkelammert, *The Ideological Weapons of Death: A Theological Critique of Capitalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield); Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology Economic, and the Future* (Fortress Press, 2009); Kevin Hargaden, *Theological Ethics in a Neoliberal Age* (Eugene, OR: Cascade books, 2018).

the economy of God. The global "neo-liberal" status quo is often portrayed as a cursed economy that is wholly other from the economy of divine justice and shalom found in Jesus Christ. Within this prophetic imagination, the remnant church should embody a small and alternative economy of grace that stands apart and in antithetical opposition to the oppressive economies of the world. Here the prophetic economy of God's subaltern must oppose the rapacious economies of the world with the justice and truth of God. The diverse prophetic voices for economic justice in global Christianity are certainly not monolithic. However, their common traits often include a prophetic emphasis on economic analysis, critique, and confrontation.

Within academic circles the prophetic task is to intellectually expose the idolatry and injustice of neoliberalism, colonialism, and globalization embodied deep within its global institutional structures. Within Christian activist circles the prophetic task is to organize the church and various nonprofit organizations to publicly confront and contest economic injustice and environmental degradation through grassroots organizing and global action. Here, the prophetic task is to awaken the church to the radical corruption of the global economy and the radical otherness of the divine economy.

A *royal* engagement with the global marketplace—in contradistinction to the prophetic—seeks not so much to confront economic power from the outside but to actively wield economic power in a responsible, generative, and life-giving way from within. Here a royal marketplace posture is focused on developing engaging marketplace structures and wielding economic power in ways that are faithful to scripture. It should be no surprise that these more royal discourses are more prominent with Christian business leaders who already have already obtained at least a modicum of economic privilege and power within the global economic system.[15] The royal language of economic dominion, stewardship, responsibility, innovation, and entrepreneurship are particularly popular and prominent within middle and upper-class professional contexts in the West. Here Christian pastors and professionals wrestle together with the rather privileged discussions of which career and calling to pursue, how to manage employees with justice and grace, where and how to invest one's money, how to develop professional habits and patterns that are Godly and gracious.

Within royal discourses the themes of productivity, entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity are upheld as a divine and holy calling from a God who is also productive, creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial. According to this royal framework, Adam and Eve were invested with power, dominion, and responsibility

15. Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God: And What Still Needs to be Fixed* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010); R. Paul Stevens, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Kenman L. Wong, Scott B. Rae, *Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Academic, 2011); Albert M Erisman, *The Accidental Executive: Lessons on Business, Faith, and Calling from the Life of Joseph* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015).

in creation. Christ is the sovereign king and creator of the world, Christ—the second Adam—therefore calls women and men to go into the marketplace to cultivate and create good things. Sons of Adam and daughters of Eve are called by Christ to cultivate creation as they wield their economic dominion, gifts, and callings in ways that honor Christ their king.

Third and finally, many global Christians have assumed a *priestly* posture towards the marketplace. Here Christian workers are primarily concerned with being a spiritual force of healing, prayer, and reconciliation within their places of work.[16] In ancient Israel, priests served as divine mediators leading services of communal worship, intercessory prayer, and spiritual rituals of sacrifice, atonement, and harvest offering. They were mediators between God and the community. In contemporary Christianity a priestly method of marketplace engagement can take a variety of forms. Christian counselors, chaplains, pastors, and life-coaches come alongside Christian workers who are wrestling with a variety of spiritual struggles, heartbreaks, and questions in the marketplace. They provide priestly prayer, encouragement, community, and spiritual practices for healing. They help workers "integrate" their spiritual and economic lives, and workers themselves can take on a priestly role in the marketplace when they seek to heal severed workplace relationships, offer mercy and forgiveness, and humanize others within a particularly savage working environment.

These priestly workers embody Christ's sacrificial love, healing hand, and priestly ministry of gracious reconciliation. Christian business fellowships who pray, encourage, and intercede for one another in spiritual community reflect Christ's priestly work intercession on behalf of the working world. Throughout global Christianity, work-oriented prayers, devotionals, liturgies, and rituals are regularly developed to empower workers to carry their working lives to God in worship. Professional conferences and books are released arguing that the marketplace can be a place of Christian worship and service to God. Through participation in the global economy, the priesthood of all believers can offer glory, praise, and honor to God. Work can be worship, and the marketplace can be a sanctuary of praise. In all these marketplaces, priests work for a spiritual reconciliation and integration between faith and work, vocation and career, sanctuary and street.

16. Denise Daniels and Shannon Vandewarker, *Working in the Presence of God: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Work* (Hendrickson, 2019); Fiona Stewart-Darling, *Multifaith Chaplaincy in the Workplace* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017); Norvene Vest, *Friend of the Soul: A Benedictine Spirituality of Work* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life Leader's Guide: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011); Eric Sammons, *Holiness for Everyone: The Practical Spirituality of St. Josemaria Escriva* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012); Gregory F. A. Pierce, *Spirituality at Work: 10 Ways to Balance Your Life on the Job* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2001); Bill Peel, *Workplace Grace: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010); R. Paul Stevens and Alvin Ung, *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

The prophetic, the royal, and the priestly, bring their own wisdom, virtue, and Christological blessing to the marketplace. However, when they are disconnected from one another, their potential blind spots and weaknesses can quickly become exacerbated. The prophetic posture can quickly become self-righteous, detached, ungracious, irresponsible, and out of touch with the lived realities of the marketplace. The royal posture can begin to focus exclusively on creational dominion, productivity, power, expansion, and economic development for its own sake. The priestly posture can cultivate a self-serving form or spirituality or quietist complacency with the marketplace status quo. It is no surprise, therefore, that one can easily find gatherings of economic prophets who seem to do nothing but demonize Christian business leaders and entrepreneurs. Conversely, it is not difficult to find gatherings of Christian business leaders who cynically mock economic activists who yearn for a more just and liberating economy. More can be said here, but the point is rather straightforward: Marketplace prophets, priests, and kings need one another. Unfortunately, these communities rarely recognize this fact.

Organizing three exceedingly complex groups of human beings into a clean and simple threefold typology obviously has its limits. Real human beings—thankfully—don't fit neatly into these categories. Actual prophetic activists can be gracious and entrepreneurial. Royal managers can be prayerful and prophetic. Priestly prayer warriors can call out economic injustices and encourage responsible management. Complex human beings made in the image of God should never be reduced to a flat or simplistic caricature of a prophet, priest, or king. Moreover, it is worth noting that a close reading of the Old Testament reveals that Israel's prophets, priests, and kings rarely kept to the clean and clear boundaries of their office. In organizing these modern discourses into the ancient *munus triplex*, our aim is not to propose a grand or totalizing theological anthropology for economic life. Instead, our purpose is to briefly illustrate the variety of ways in which contemporary Christians are following their anointed prophet, priest, and king into the marketplace today.

For the remainder of this essay, our task is to explore both why and how these diverse discourses might begin to appreciate and ultimately learn from one another within the *munus triplex* of Christ. Holding this as our leading question, we turn to Herman Bavinck's account of the *munus triplex*. Appropriately, we will begin with his Christological formulations before we move to his anthropological conclusions.

> We need a prophet who proclaims God to us, a priest who reconciles us with God, and a king who in the name of God rules and protects us.
>
> —Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*

The *munus triplex* makes an appearance at several points within Herman Bavinck's four volume *Reformed Dogmatics*. The most extended discussion can be found in his section entitled "Christ's Threefold Office" in part three of volume three. Here, in the space of five pages, Bavinck deftly lays out a rich and multilayered Christological and anthropological reflection on the prophetic, priestly, and royal work of Christ in the world.

For Bavinck, Christ is the anointed and all-sufficient mediator between God and the world. Christ is the ultimate prophet who speaks God's final word of truth and justice. Christ is the high priest who offers God's ultimate act of grace and reconciliation. And Christ is the high king who comes to reign, not only over Israel, but over every nation and indeed the whole of creation. Succinctly put, "In Christ's God-to-humanity relation, he is a prophet; in his humanity-to-God relation he is a priest; in his headship over all humanity, he is a king."[17] From the very beginning of creation, Bavinck argues, Christ assumes all three offices at once. The anointed one had

> to be a prophet to know and to disclose the truth of God; a priest, to devote himself to God and, in our place to offer himself up to God; a king, to govern and protect us according to his will. To teach, to reconcile, and to lead; to instruct, to acquire, and to apply salvation; wisdom, righteousness, and redemption; truth, love, and power—all three are essential to the completeness of our salvation.[18]

This threefold office was foreseen by Israel's prophets. Bavinck writes,

> In Isaiah all three offices come to light in the servant of the Lord: he is the priest who by his suffering atones for the sins of his people; he is a prophet who, anointed with the Spirit of God, announces the acceptable year of the Lord; and he is the king who is glorified and enjoys the fruit of his labor.[19]

For Bavinck, each of these three offices has its own distinct integrity and function within the mediatorial work of Christ. No single office could "be reduced to the

17. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:368.
18. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:367.
19. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:245.

other two."[20] Further, "while it is not possible to separate them," Bavinck insists, "the distinction between them is most certainly there."[21]

While distinct, Bavinck sees these three offices as deeply interrelated with one another not only in the person of Jesus Christ but in his teachings, work, and mission. While Bavinck carefully distinguishes their functions, he refuses to separate them from one another. When speaking of Christ's kingship, for example, Bavinck argues that Christ's "kingship also includes the prophetic and priestly offices."[22] These diverse offices actually inform one another within Christ's person. Christ is our king, Bavinck writes, but "he rules not by the sword but by his Word and spirit. He is a prophet, but his word is power and [really] happens. He is a priest but lives by dying, conquers by suffering, and is all-powerful by his love." For Bavinck,

> no single activity of Christ can be exclusively restricted to one office. His words are a proclamation of law and gospel and thus point to the prophetic office; but he speaks as one having authority, and all things obey his command (Mark 1:22; 4:41 Luke 4:32; etc.); he calls himself king, comes into the world to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37). His miracles are signs of his teaching (John 2:11; 10:37; etc.) but also a revelation of his priestly compassion (Matt. 8:17) and his royal power (Matt 9:6,8; 21:23). In his intercessory prayer not only his high priestly but also his prophetic and royal offices are evidenced (John 17:2, 9–10, 24). His death is a confession and an example (1 Tim. 6:13; 1 Pet. 2:21; Rev. 1:5), but also a sacrifice (Eph 5:2) and a demonstration of his power (John 10:18. Dogmatics has been perplexed, therefore, as to what things from Jesus' life and works had to be assigned to each office in particular… It is, accordingly, an atomistic approach, which detaches certain specific activities from the life of Jesus and assigns some to his prophetic and others to his priestly or royal office. Christ . . . does not perform prophetic, priestly, and kingly activities but is himself, in his whole person, prophet, priest, and king. And everything he is, says, and does manifests that threefold dignity.[23]

While much of Bavinck's doctrine of the *munus triplex* is inherited from the Reformed theologians who preceded him, his imaginative exploration of the ways in which the prophetic, priestly, and royal natures of Christ inform one another while remaining distinct, may itself be an important theological contribution to the tradition—an avenue that invites further scholarly attention.

20. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:367.
21. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:367.
22. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:366.
23. Bavinck, *RD,* 366–67.

Human beings—created by, for, and in Christ—are specifically designed to reflect, follow, and participate in Christ's three offices. Bavinck argues that

> humanness already encompasses within itself this threefold dignity and activity. Human beings have a head to know, a heart to give themselves, a hand to govern and lead; correspondingly, they were in the beginning equipped by God with knowledge and understanding, with righteousness and holiness, with dominion and glory (blessedness).[24]

While Christ alone is the only high king who singularly wields unlimited divine sovereignty over all creation, Christ "nevertheless employs people in this process."[25] In a similar manner, human beings are invited to publicly participate in Christ's prophetic office in their everyday lives as they teach one another. The prophetic Christ is present and "active in teaching through parents in the home, through the teacher at school, through the presbyter at the time of home visitation, and through all believers in their mutual contacts and association with others."[26] Made in the image of the great prophet, human beings are called to the prophetic ministry of speaking the word and truth of God as it is revealed to us in scripture and creation. Similarly, while Christ is the high priest who bears the ultimate sacrifice and ministry of reconciliation, his disciples are empowered to participate in Christ's priestly ministry of reconciliation in their own daily lives.

It bears mentioning that the *munus triplex* emerges, not simply in Bavinck's discussion of anthropology, but within his discussion of ecclesiology as well. Here individual prophets, priests, and kings gather together and take on Christ's threefold office within a new community. Bavinck writes, "Accordingly, in connection with the threefold office of Christ—the prophetic, the royal, and the priestly office—we must distinguish three kinds of power in Christ's church: the power to teach, the power to govern (of which the power to discipline is a part), and the power or rather ministry of mercy."[27] Reflecting on these points, he argues that

> The power to teach has its roots in the prophetic office for which Christ has been anointed. . . . Christ never transferred it to any human being and never appointed any pope or bishop, pastor or teacher, to be his special deputy and surrogate, but he is still continually our chief prophet… Still, in this connection he regularly employs people as his organs, not only office-bearers in the strict sense, but all believers, every one of them according to the grace given them.

24. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:367.
25. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:421.
26. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:418.
27. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:418.

> The church itself is a prophetess, and all Christians share in Christ's anointing and are called to confess his name.[28]

While Adam and Eve were created to assume these three offices in creation, they fell into sin and corruption. Discussing the impact of the curse on humanity's *munus triplex*, Bavinck writes,

> Human beings, who themselves lost the image of God and could no longer act as prophets, priests, and kings, felt a need for special persons, who, invested with these offices, could take their place, plead God's cause with them and their cause with God. In that way, all human priesthood and sacrifice points—directly in Israel, indirectly also among other peoples—to the one perfect sacrifice that was brought in the fullness of time by Christ, the mediator between God and humankind, on Golgotha.[29]

The sons of Adam and daughters of Eve failed to execute their three offices and thus Christ came to stand in their place and "bear all three offices" on their behalf. Bavinck's Christological anthropology is here rooted in his global-historical understanding of humanity's creation, fall, redemption, and glorification. In the past, humanity's three offices were rooted in their original creation in Christ. In the present, humanity's three offices (though fallen) can be restored through a redemptive union with Christ. In the future, humanity's three offices will be glorified as they find their ultimate consummation Christ's glorification.

According to Bavinck, the mediatorial work of Christ (and his many prophets, priests, and kings) has an eschatological character in that it continues in the new heavens and the new earth. For, he argues, "the rest enjoyed in the new Jerusalem is not to be conceived . . . as blessed inaction . . . [God's] children remain his servants. . . They are prophets, priests, and kings who reign on earth forever."[30] In the eschatological fellowship,

> Everyone has a place and task of one's own, based on personality and character, just as this is the case in the believing community on earth… the prophetic, priestly, and royal office, which was humanity's original possession, is fully restored in them by Christ… the new heaven and the new earth undoubtedly offer abundant opportunity for the exercise of these offices, even though the form and manner of this exercise remain unknown to us.[31]

They call themselves *Christ*-followers because "in communion with this Christ they are themselves anointed as prophets, priests, and kings."[32] G. C. Berkouwer,

28. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:418.
29. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:374.
30. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:727.
31. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:729.
32. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:362.

one of Bavinck's initial theological interpreters in the Netherlands, sums up the anthropological implications of the *munus triplex* when he writes that

> By his office Christ gave service back to life again. Far from being an abstract idea or a logical schematization… [the *munus triplex* provides] insight into the fruit of Christ's work by which life can and does become restored. Whosoever follows him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. That which became full reality in him becomes now—in his footsteps—possible again… [In him, the *munus triplex*] becomes manifest in the ordinary relationships of life and is acknowledged wherever life is lived… in the footsteps of the One…For there is only one explanation for this new life and it has only one source: the dying grain of when which bears much fruit.[33]

The *Munus Triplex* and the Marketplace

There are several ways in which Bavinck's *munus triplex* might inform contemporary Christian debates and division regarding the relationship between faith, work, and economics. Within Bavinck's Christology we detect the seeds of a more complex, diverse, and multilayered vision for Christian discipleship in the marketplace—one that goes beyond the rather myopic and one-dimensional discourses currently on offer.

The first contribution is surely the generous posture of mutual respect Bavinck's Christology should cultivate between prophets, priests, and kings in the marketplace. Those engaging in either prophetic analysis and critique, royal administration and creation, or priestly reconciliation and healing are equal partners in the complex mission of Christ in the marketplace. According to Bavinck's schema, there can be no artificial hierarchy between royal, priestly, or prophetic marketplace vocations. Each calling finds a place of honor within the manifold offices of Christ.

The second Bavinckian contribution can be found in his well-known insistence that we must make "a distinction without a separation" when speaking of Christ's three offices. While the royal, prophetic, and priestly offices are unique, distinct, and have their own internal integrity, the three offices must always remain deeply interconnected. Furthermore, each office must *enrich* and *inform* the others. As Bavinck explains, Christ's "kingship also includes the prophetic and priestly offices."[34] Christ is a king, and his sovereign reign has an integrity of its own, however, "he rules not by the sword but by his Word and Spirit. He is a prophet, but his word is power and [really] happens. He is a priest but lives by dying, conquers by suffering, and is all-powerful by his love."[35] This interconnectivity has real consequences for

33. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Work of Christ*, trans. Cornelius Lambregtse (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 87.

34. Bavinck, *RD,* 3:366.

35. Bavinck, *RD*, 3:367–68.

today's marketplace prophets, priests, and kings. A Christian activist engaged in prophetic marketplace critique must be mindful of her priestly calling to grace and reconciliation and her royal calling to responsibly execute economic power within community. She has more than a voice to cry out and speak, she also has heart to love, and a hand to govern and create. Any and all prophetic speech she utters must be enriched and informed by Christ's priestly ministry of grace and reconciliation and his royal ministry of life-giving creativity and power.

In a similar manner, a powerful Christian executive engaged in royal administration, wealth creation, and economic stewardship within a major corporation, must always be mindful of her priestly and prophetic callings as well. Running her company, she has a priestly responsibility to intercede before the Lord in prayer and petition on behalf of her clients, partners, and employees. Moreover, she also has the prophetic responsibility to speak the truth. If there is injustice or wrongdoing within her sphere of corporate governance, she must not only speak its name she must use her royal office, power, and privilege to correct it. These prophetic and priestly responsibilities must actively inform her royal administration of the company. This businesswoman could, in this instance, stand to learn from her sisters and brothers who regularly engage in prophetic speech and priestly intercession in the marketplace.

Finally, a Christian worker regularly engages in the priestly practice of prayer, meditation, and spiritual discipline within the workplace, should be mindful of her own prophetic and royal responsibilities. While she is regularly engaged in intercessory prayer and priestly communion with God in the workplace, she must remember that these spiritual practices are not for their own sake. Instead, she must pray with a purpose, that God might strengthen and direct her to grow in her prophetic and royal responsibilities. This priestly worker might pray for the courage to speak prophetically of economic truth and justice when the time calls. She might pray that God would direct her hands and give them strength as she works and executes her royal dominion for the economic good and flourishing of her neighbors. Her priestly ministry of reconciliation and spiritual union is here directly informed by her prophetic and royal identity in Christ.

In each of these three examples we see how the complex fullness of Christ's *munus triplex* exposes ethical, spiritual, and vocational blind spots latent within today's marketplace prophets, priests, and kings. Having exposed our myopic approaches, Christ—in the fullness of his grace—offers the fullness of his threefold-self for our marketplace lives. This leads to Bavinck's third contribution to theo-economic discipleship. We spoke earlier of the dialogical silos that divide prophetic activists, royal managers, and priestly chaplains. Separated from one another these subcultures appropriate narrow and myopic understandings of marketplace discipleship. These three communities need one another and, more than that, they need the fullness of Christ's mediatorial work. In this way, it is only in submission to

the kaleidoscopic work of Christ's *munus triplex* that marketplace leaders can begin to envision to fullness of Christ's call.

Moreover, the diverse fullness of Christ can be witnessed today in Christ's body, the church as it gathers together (in one worshipping body) pastors and professionals, activists and academics, corporate managers and corporate chaplains. Each of these diverse vocations will necessarily view, experience, and engage the marketplace from a different angle. Herein diverse economic discourses begin to recognize their need for one another if the wish to fullness of Christ and his economy in the world.

Engaging Christ and his broader church in a transformative dialogue begin when disciples learn to not only respect those who engage the marketplace from a different angle, it begins when they begin to see their sisters and brothers *in the munus triplex of Christ*. The corporate chaplain begins to value the corporate activist in the light of Christ's prophetic justice. The activist begins to value the manager in the light of Christ's royal and life-giving reign. The manager begins to value the chaplain in the light of Christ's priestly ministry of intercession, reconciliation, and divine communion. Once a mutual process of valuing one another in Christ has begun, a deeper and more transformative dialogue between pastors and professionals, academics and activists can begin.

A fourth and final contribution can be witnessed in the "already, not yet" character of Bavinck's Christological anthropology. Here Bavinck's chastened anthropology humbles any eschatological dreams of realizing a perfect Christological form of marketplace justice, reconciliation, and productivity within this present epoch. There is a critical difference between this age and the one to come, between our *munus triplex* and Christ's. Thus, while royal managers participate in Christ's sovereign kingship in the marketplace, they are not *the* king (or queen). While prophetic activists and academics bear witness to Christ's truth and justice in the marketplace, they do not themselves *fully possess* Christ's truth and justice. And while priestly corporate chaplains can participate in Christ's ministry of reconciliation, intercession, and healing to others in the marketplace, Christ alone is the high priest who can offer full restoration and communion with God. Herman Bavinck here makes the critical distinction (not separation) between the threefold office of Christ and that of the Christian. In this present age followers of Christ will always fall short of the priestly, prophetic, and royal offices to which they have been called. For Bavinck, the fullness of our *munus triplex* will not be realized until the full consummation of the eschaton. For, in the new heavens and the new earth,

> Everyone has a place and task of one's own, based on personality and character… the prophetic, priestly, and royal office, which was humanity's original possession, is fully restored in them by Christ… the new heaven and the new earth undoubtedly offer abundant opportunity for the exercise

of these offices, even though the form and manner of this exercise remain unknown to us.[36]

Conclusion

So, how does one follow a first century carpenter in a twenty-first century global marketplace? How should one *Christologically* frame complex economic issues of global wages and trade, corporate responsibility and governance, work and macroeconomics, vocational discernment and career ambition?

In this brief essay we have explored and developed the Christological potential latent within Herman Bavinck's articulation of the *munus triplex* for a more nuanced Christian approach to the marketplace. We began by exploring the diverse and often divided ways in which various Christians engage the marketplace. We outlined a few of the negative consequences of this division. From there we explored Herman Bavinck's brief but nuanced exposition of the *munus triplex* in his *Reformed Dogmatics*. Finally, we examined how his threefold Christology—and its corresponding anthropology—might inform and even enrich our contemporary discussions around faith, work, and the marketplace.

As noted earlier, the *munus triplex* is not a universal panacea. It should never be allowed to become an overly tidy, rigid, brittle, or limiting theological system. Neither Christ nor than Christian life can be summarized or subsumed by the threefold office. The *munus triplex*, rightly understood, is a humble heuristic tool which, in limited ways, can disciples avoid myopic Christologies that lead to simplistic understandings of discipleship in the world. At its best, the *munus triplex* can invite marketplace prophets, priests, and kings into a more complex and generative Christological imagination. In this, they might begin to explore *together* emerging challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities for Christians in the marketplace today.

36. Bavinck, *RD,* 4:729.

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Book Reviews

Meilaender, Gilbert. *Thy Will Be Done: The Ten Commandments and the Christian Life.* Baker Academic, 2020. pp. 125, $21.99, hardcover.

Gilbert Meilaender, a Lutheran research professor at Valparaiso University in Indiana, is a leading ethicist. His textbook on bioethics is generally considered a standard. In *Thy Will Be Done* he follows in a long line of Christian tradition that reflects on the Christian life in terms of the Ten Commandments.

On the basis of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, it is difficult exegetically to know how to number the Ten Commandments. Three different numbering systems have developed. The Catholic-Lutheran numbering, which Meilaender follows, treats the prohibition against other gods and graven images as the first, the prohibition against using God's name in vain as the second, the command to sanctify the Sabbath as the third, the command to honor parents as the fourth, the prohibitions against murder, adultery, and stealing as the fifth, sixth, and seventh, the prohibition against bearing false witness as the eighth, the prohibition against coveting the neighbor's house as the ninth, and the prohibition against coveting the neighbor's wife, servants, and possessions as the tenth. The Eastern Orthodox-Reformed numbering treats no other gods and no graven images as two commandments and unites the no coveting statements into one commandment. The Jewish numbering considers the first "word" (technically the Old Testament calls them "ten words") to be "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Exegetically speaking, the Catholic-Lutheran numbering is doubtful. It would mean that the ninth commandment changed from "neighbor's house" in Exodus 20:17 to "neighbor's wife" in Deuteronomy 5:21. Perhaps the Jewish numbering is the most plausible from an exegetical point of view. At any rate, we know that there are "ten words" (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4).

Meilaender discusses the Ten Commandments by considering five bonds: the marriage bond (prohibition against adultery), the family bond (honor parents), the life bond (prohibition against murder), the possessions bond (sanctify the Sabbath day, prohibitions against stealing and coveting), and the speech bond (prohibitions against taking the Lord's name in vain and against bearing false witness against the neighbor). In the last chapter he considers the first commandment. He looks at God's will as expressed in the Ten Commandments from three angles by asking how they relate to us as creatures created by the Creator, as sinners in need of healing and reconciled to God in Jesus, and as heirs of the future promised by God when we will be perfected. All three angles are important for understanding God's will for the Christian life through the framework of the Ten Commandments. That third angle is often overlooked. "What we cannot do for ourselves or make of ourselves, the Spirit

of the risen Christ promises to do in us" (p. 123). In that sense one might say that for Christians the Ten Commandments also become the "Ten Predictions." In the last chapter he reflects on the two great commandments, to love God and to love the neighbor. He stresses that they summon us to live both loves simultaneously and, at the same time, to love God first, which will inevitably lead to a tension.

By way of evaluation I found the volume to be quite strong, thoughtful, and well-written. In a short compass of 125 pages Meilaender covers a wide array of issues that relate to Christian living, including ethical challenges. I would characterize his own views as balanced and in line with traditional Christian positions. He stresses that the church's practice should conform to the Scriptures. He sees the five bonds as schools created by God to foster a virtuous and a faithful people, so that we are drawn out of a sole focus on self. He has perceptive things to say on each commandment. For example, Christian catechesis often includes obedience to the government under the command to honor parents. However, Meilaender keeps the focus on parents in order to stress that the basic unit is the family, which serves as a defense against an overweening reach of governmental power.

Meilaender brings biblical texts into his reflections, although in places I wanted to see more treatment of the biblical evidence, for example, the promise expressed in the command to honor parents (Ephesians 6:2-3). With respect to the prohibitions against stealing and coveting, a discussion on private property would have been helpful. Meilaender exhibits a wide range of reading and mentions a variety of secondary sources, such as Barth, Bonhoeffer, and C. S. Lewis. He frequently points to Martin Luther's *Small and Large Catechisms*, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and the Roman Catholic *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. As evidenced by his use of these sources, there seems to be basic agreement on the Ten Commandments among traditional Lutherans, Calvinists, and Roman Catholics. However, at a few places he expresses disagreement with Roman Catholic positions, such as their positions on marriage and capital punishment. Although Meilaender does not discuss it, one disagreement between Calvinism and others deals with the prohibition against graven images. The disagreement focuses on whether that statement prohibits a crucifix or pictures of Jesus from a church sanctuary.

I highly recommend the book. The Decalogue deserves meditation by Christians, and Meilaender's reflections succeed in promoting and enabling such meditation. His final words give a fitting conclusion to the volume:

> In that day, in the promised new creation, the tension between the two great commandments will be no more. We will hear again the ten words, but now clearly as promise. You *shall* love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. You *shall* be a bride eager to greet her bridegroom, a child who loves the Father, a creature who honors the life of every fellow human

being, a creature whose Lord is rich enough to meet every need, a lover of God whose first and last word is, "Thy will be done" (p. 125).

Paul R. Raabe
Grand Canyon University

Enns, Peter. *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012. xx+172 pp. $14.99.

Is there a conflict between evolutionary theory and the Christian reading of Genesis 1–11? Peter Enns (Ph.D., Harvard University), Abram S. Clemens Professor of Biblical Studies Eastern University, writes The Evolution of Adam to answer this very question. Enns' premise in the book not that Adam evolved but that Christian thinking about the historical Adam should evolve because of two key ideas: "(1) scientific evidence supporting evolution and (2) literary evidence from the world of the Bible that helps clarify the kind of literature the Bible is–-that is, what it means to read it as it was meant to read" (xiii).

The argument for Enns' perspective of the historical Adam is laid out in two parts. The first part of Enns' book in "Genesis: An Ancient Story of Israelite Self-Definition" (chapters 1–4) address the story of the history of Israel, and the section part "Understanding Paul's Adam" (chapters 5–7) examines Paul's perspective of the historical Adam. Enns' concludes with "nine theses" pp. (137–148). Chapters 1–4 approach the historical Adam's issue through a historical-critical perspective, which treats Genesis and other ancient Near Eastern parallel origin stories as theological myth (pp. 23–37). In essence, Enns and others approaching the Pentateuch as theological myth believe that the narratives in Genesis through Judges "embellished the event to serve another purpose" (p. 62).

Section two (chapters 5–7) argues that Paul's presentation and reading of the historical Adam are based on similar first-century assumptions and beliefs that Jews held about the Genesis narrative (p. 95). This means that Paul held conventions about creation that reflected his cultural context and not the present readers' context (i.e., scientific revolutions). The Last section is a brief chapter, including nine theses that cover the entire work's argumentation. The nine theses are summarized as follows:

1. No literalism in Genesis.
2. Scientific and biblical models about human origins are incompatible.
3. Genesis reflects an ancient Near Eastern story.
4. Two creation stories in Genesis.
5. The story of Adam is about the failure to fear God.

6. Paul uses Adam's narrative as an idiom.
7. God speaks through cultural idiom.
8. Root conflict for Christians is about identity and fear.
9. The real rapprochement between scientific evolution and Christian views of origins requires a complex synthesis.

With the basic argumentation of Enns outlined, what are the strengths and weaknesses of The Evolution of Adam? The work's strength is advocating for a complexity thesis between the sciences and Christian reading of the Genesis text. Evangelicals are guilty in the historical efforts to make science and a literal reading of Genesis agree in the most literalistic way (i.e., Ken Ham, Henry Morris III, Kent Hovind, etc.). Enns is right to note that much effort is expended on reading the Genesis narrative and Paul's recapitulation of Adam through a very strict hermeneutic. For example, the primary question in Genesis 1–11 is not to set out an ontological and metaphysical system that critiques the ancient Near Eastern systems and creation theories. Genesis is a polemic to the surrounding culture, but it is more so about the reasoning behind why humans must die, not merely where do they originate from. This highlight of Enns' work is the extent of its positive features for Christian scholarship.

Enns historical-critical examination and reading of Genesis 1–11 demonstrate the negative attribute of skeptical bible reading. For example, why is science the epistemological arbiter for discussing biblical origin narratives and the theory of evolution? Enns does not answer this question but instead assumes that there is no way to reconcile the two because they speak a "different language" (138). Does this not undermine the ability of historical-critical scholarship to use modern languages and semantic studies to understand ancient cultures and linguistics? Capturing a theological truth from a narrative-driven text does not mean that all literalness is devoid in their present stories.

Another issue that leaves the reader begging for clarification is Enns' understanding of Paul's reading of Genesis and Adam. Enns claims that Paul is merely reading in light of the first-century Jewish worldview. However, Paul is very far from the typical reading of Adam in the Talmud and Rabbinic thought. Adam was never considered in a negative light, as we see in Paul's writing and his recapitulation of the Genesis narrative. Eve is always the source of blame in rabbinic thought. Adam was the first priest and walked with God. Paul is unique in his presentation of Adam as the original sinner. It seems that this fact, which perhaps Enns is either unaware of or ignores, would further challenge his premise that Paul did not believe in a historical or literal account of the man Adam. Paul is merely following the text's logic in the Genesis narrative, "who does humans die?" His answers blame Adam instead of Eve alone. Thus, there is nothing to indicate from Paul's treatment of the Garden narrative that it is merely theological fiction, as Enns suggests in chapter 7.

Enns commits the very exegetical crimes he is putting on trial—forcing the text to argue and say what it does not say. Likewise, evangelicals have been guilty of using the same logic to force scientific evidence to fit biblical narratives (i.e., the flood narrative). The most significant take away from this work is the danger of using one's scientific paradigms to serve as epistemological arbiter. The Bible is a book of faith and works. It is both a work of history and theology revealed through a miraculous and supernatural event––God working through humans.

Joshua K. Smith

Meade, John D. *A Critical Edition of the Hexaplaric Fragments of Job 22-42*. Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2020, pp. 471, $127.96, paperback.

John Meade currently serves as Associate Professor of Old Testament at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, AZ. He is also Co-Director of the Text and Canon Institute at the same institution. Moreover, he is a contributor to the Evangelical Textual Criticism blog and the Hexapla Institute. John Meade is a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he obtained a Ph.D. in OT, under Peter Gentry.

The book under review is the fruit of Meade's dissertation. Meade has established a critical edition of the fragmentary evidence extant for chapters 22 through 42 of the Hexapla of Job. In other words, Meade provides a curated collection of all the readings of Origen's Hexapla as it pertains to the book of Job. This task has led Meade to examine manuscript evidence from Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Armenian sources. As such, this work gives an updated presentation of hexaplaric readings, improving on the work done by its predecessors.

The book is divided into three main chapters. Chapter 1 (pp. 1- 26) does an overview of the textual sources examined. In this part, Meade discusses textual witnesses, how they are grouped and related, previous textual editions, evidence from *catena* manuscripts, and closes with a section dedicated to illustrating how the hexaplaric material is discussed.

Chapter 2 (pp. 27-400) is where Meade presents the best possible hexaplaric readings of Job chs. 22 to 42. Meade utilizes a textual apparatus format. For each lemma in view, then, a series of witnesses for or against the lemma is presented. This format or layout is similar to that of BHS or the *Göttingen* LXX—the witnesses are listed below the main lemma under consideration. However, unlike these two critical editions, the lemma is not part of a continuous flow of text. It stands alone, occasionally with more text in parentheses to provide context. Another feature of this apparatus format is that Meade provides the Hebrew text following the MT tradition and the Old Greek text of the *Göttingen* edition of Job. At other times, where appropriate Meade presents the text of Theodotion (the asterisked text), instead of the Old Greek text.

The last chapter (pp. 401-442) presents all the readings regarded as dubious. These are fragments whose "relationship to the Hexapla" needs further clarification (401). Meade lists them not only for the sake of comprehensiveness but also "that they might become the object of future study" (401).

In order to properly assess the significance of this work, we must keep in mind that it is meant to be and function as a textual apparatus. This fact will affect our reading strategies and will help the reader understand its relevance. It is a reference work first and foremost. Furthermore, Meade has done the hard part of defining the textual relations among the hundreds of MSS containing hexaplaric readings for the book of Job. This work in turn will aid future scholars who might find themselves dealing with textual issues both in Hebrew and in Greek.

Even though the value of the book resides primarily in advancing the study of the history of transmission of Job, there is another aspect of the book which deserves our commendation, and that is its sound methodology. First, not only did Meade have to compile all the manuscript sources available for the Hexapla, he also had to sort through previous scholarship, rectify outdated notions on the relationships among the MSS, and organize it all in a coherent whole. This endeavor can prove to be a dizzying task. As a result, no further work on the history of transmission of Job should be conducted without first consulting Meade's contribution.

Second, the sound methodology displayed in Meade's work is insightful and of great didactic value. For example, Meade shows us how to properly lay out textual witnesses—in this instance the order of the factors does change the product. The Hebrew MT and Old Greek come first, followed by the Greek hexaplaric variant in question and then the various Greek witnesses. Lastly, we encounter the Latin, Syriac and Armenian witnesses. This order is not haphazard but rather reflects the importance and relationship of each primary source text. Meade, however, goes a step further and discusses the many different issues that arise from variant to variant. Let us keep in mind that we are not dealing with textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible or the Old Greek, but rather the Hexapla which adds multiple layers of complexity.

In conclusion, as much as one ought to keep abreast of the current developments in textual criticism theory, this discipline is learned primarily through practice. Though Meade limits the scope of his work to hexaplaric readings in Job, the principles gleaned in this book can be broadly applied to MT and LXX textual criticism. Therefore, any professor who attempts to instruct his or her students in the art of textual criticism would do well to use Meade's work as a showcase of best practices to follow.

Roberto Carrera
Southern Seminary

Belcher, Richard P, Jr. *Finding Favour in the Sight of God: A Theology of Wisdom Literature.* NSBT 46. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. ISBN: 978-0830826476. Paperback. $26.00. 272 pp.

Richard Belcher is Professor of Old Testament and Academic Dean at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC. He has written commentaries on Job and Ecclesiastes, as well as several works exploring the Messiah across the biblical literature. This monograph is a recent addition to the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* series published by InterVarsity Press. The series has over fifty volumes in print, including a few others addressing wisdom.

The monograph begins with a brief exploration of the problem of wisdom literature in the modern discussion. Belcher deftly summarizes the place wisdom has had within biblical theology, including the most recent debates about the wisdom tradition in ancient Israel undertaken by Kynes, Sneed, and Longman. After the introductory discussion, each of the main wisdom texts is explored, with each afforded three chapters—Proverbs (57 pgs), Job (58 pgs), and Ecclesiastes (55 pgs). The monograph concludes with a chapter on the relationship between Jesus and wisdom (23 pgs). While the nature of wisdom in the Song of Songs continues to be contentious (see pg. 10n47), the long Jewish and Christian tradition of reading the book as intimating the love between YHWH/Christ and his people should have warranted some extended treatment, if only to honor the Solomonic association in the canonical text. This would have also fit within the monograph's broader theme of finding favor in the sight of God. In that same vein, noticeably absent is the treatment of wisdom literature within the history of interpretation. None of the main figures in Jewish or Christian history are noted for their significant roles in understanding these books as part of our shared tradition, or even in the contentious debates concerning the association between Christ and wisdom. Surveying the indices, I did not observe any names prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

This absence was especially felt in the treatment of Ecclesiastes. Almost the entire tradition has interpreted Qoheleth's words as a positive contribution to the canon (see Christianson's *Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries* [Wiley, 2007]). Belcher follows a recent trend of distinguishing two voices in the text: the frame editor/voice and the voice of Qoheleth. In his view, the former offers biting criticism of the latter. While I agree that hearing two voices is an improvement over past interpretations, the exegetical basis for a negative assessment of Qoheleth's words is (in my opinion) shaky. Given the ambiguity of the text at several critical junctures, one could hear the two voices congruently. Since one's interpretive decisions here are so important for the overall message of the text, some engagement with the history of interpretation would have been helpful to allow readers a more informed understanding of what is at stake for a theology of wisdom. That said, I came away from the Ecclesiastes

chapters far richer having read them, with a greater appreciation for the structural unity of the book and for a negative assessment of Qoheleth's words.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, I want to emphasize how helpful this volume has been. Nearly every page of my copy has highlights and scribbled notes, and I anticipate returning to it often as part of my wisdom reference material. Concerning his underlying approach, I appreciated Belcher's stance against the typical historical-critical view of wisdom along non-religious or secular terms. He situates wisdom in ancient Israel within the fear of YHWH, allowing the wisdom books to have a more grounded place in their canonical context. More, the association of wisdom with Solomon is not envisioned as a pious fiction; he is seen to have a real, historical role to play in the wisdom traditions of ancient Israel. The reader will feel like they are being led on a tour of discovery into the text and its canonical associations, rather than around them. This is one of the great strengths of the monograph. The chapters on Proverbs are an excellent introduction to wisdom generally, and Belcher skillfully assessed the hermeneutical challenges of this book. I was most impressed, however, with his chapters on Job. I felt like I was learning something new on every page, and he even changed my mind on a few interpretive positions I previously held. Chapter six—on the debate in Job 4–26 about retribution, suffering, and God's justice—is the highlight of the monograph for me.

In conclusion, I would heartily recommend this book for scholars and biblical-theological students alike. Students picking this up should know that Belcher has "done his homework." He is a well-seasoned scholar and has provided a rigorously academic *and* theologically rich discussion—two things you do not always find together. For my faculty colleagues, I was also assessing this book for future use in undergraduate biblical studies. It might be a good addition in that context for an upper-level seminar course, but outside of that it is more appropriate for masters and doctoral students. A course on wisdom literature would be well-served by pairing this with Longman's *Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* (Baker, 2017). In sum, I found this monograph to be a welcome addition to available resources on the wisdom literature and am grateful for the author's contribution.

Andrew C. Witt
Tyndale University, Toronto

Kynes, Will, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible*. New York: Oxford University Pres, 2021, pp. 712, $150, hardback.

Will Kynes is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Samford University. Kynes has authored and edited several books, including his most famous book, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus* (2019) and editing alongside Katharine Dell *Reading Job Intertextually* (2013), *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually* (2014), and *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*

(2018). Following is a summary, a review of the handbook, and a recommendation for the best use of the book.

The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible is a collection of entries on "Wisdom Literature," many from renowned scholars such as Raymond Van Leeuwen, Norman Habel, Mark Sneed, and Tremper Longman III. Each essay contributes to reflections on the concept of wisdom and the issue of wisdom literature as a genre (inside front cover). The handbook is divided into two parts. The first section is about "wisdom as a concept, and the second section addresses "'Wisdom Literature' as a category" (p. 11). The handbook studies a large chronological window. This captures the concept and development of wisdom literature from pre-biblical books to Rabbinic interpretation of wisdom. Similarly, the dictionary provides perspectives for interpreting wisdom books along with multiple culture contexts "beyond Western perspectives" (p. 10).

The volume accomplishes its two-fold goal of informing the reader on wisdom and the Bible, and communicating the scholarly debate concerning the nature of Wisdom Literature. First, the book covers a wide scope of content on Wisdom and the Bible written by the best scholars. The star-studded list of scholars is more significant than that mentioned above. The list of contributors also includes Mark J. Boda, William P. Brown, and more who deserve mention.

Second, the handbook provides the debate about the nature of Wisdom Literature in a balanced manner. The balance between views in the volume is not necessarily opposing forces. Rather, each scholar may share a view upon a spectrum instead of choosing sides. Scholar's views differ on the problem(s) surrounding the Wisdom Literature corpus and its solution. Kynes argues to abandon "post-Enlightenment presuppositions," which introduce anachronistic ideas and restrict thought by viewing wisdom as a corpus in Scripture (p. 9, 9 fn.24). Other scholars share this view in the book. Burnside supports Kynes' view in his entry on "Law and Wisdom Literature" (p. 10). Yet, not every entry proposes a deconstructionist view or projects the same need for a "new" approach to "Wisdom Literature." Witte's contribution "Literary Genres of Old Testament Wisdom" discusses the meaningful function of the classification of texts (p. 353). In addition, Witte presents the concept of genre as a classification, its fundamental components, and a survey of the genre "Wisdom Literature" (pp. 354-357). Although Witte also seeks a "fresh" approach to Wisdom Literature, he seeks a shift in how genre is understood (p. 357).

Two negative critiques to the handbook stand out: (1) At times, an unacademic or personal voice to the essays comes through, and (2) a varying quality of entries. First, some entries were too personal or unprofessional. For instance, an entry plugs a forthcoming commentary (p. 530). A different chapter presents the author's opinion in the introduction, creating a biased reader before presenting the full argument (p. 301). These critiques are minor because presenting future research opportunities and resources and providing clear direction are part of handbook entries. However, these

contributions created the voice of a colloquy in contrast to a formal voice that is traditional for such works.

Second, not all contributions are equally helpful or impactful. For instance, chapter 33 stands in contrast to other entries by using sentiments challenging inspiration and use of quasi-Feminist theology. First, the chapter presents the Song of Songs as an "anthology of secular love poems" (p. 552). Second, the chapter writes of Proverbs' projection of "hidden (and forbidden) desires onto the foreign woman" like "modern Europeans" (p. 559). Also, the entry describes the social milieu of biblical wisdom as one where "women need to be controlled" p. (560). The reader will find little clarity about the inspiration of Song of Songs or data to support the misogynistic views in the Bible. Nevertheless, it aligns with the handbook's overall goal to teach about wisdom and the Bible in light of the current debate over the nature of Wisdom Literature. Outside of chapter 33, the difference in quality may reflect expectations. Seasoned scholars may find some contributions rudimentary, while new scholars may find entries too technical. This may be a strength, or the observed scale may result from an undefined target audience.

The Oxford Handbook of Wisdom and the Bible is a recommended resource for seminary students and scholars seeking to learn basic tenants of Wisdom Literature in light of the current scholarly debate. Seminary students will find this volume able to teach the basic tenets of the concept of wisdom in the OT, such as *wisdom theology*, *wisdom in the ANE*, and *summaries of wisdom in Job, Eccl, and Proverbs*. Students and scholars can use the handbook to learn how leaders in the field of wisdom in the OT are integrating these familiar categories into the discussion on the viability of Wisdom Literature as a corpus. Also, the volume contains several contributors addressing more novel ideas. Therefore, the work will become a resource to reference for decades. In addition, this volume has the ability to bring clarity to the current debate concerning wisdom as a corpus (or not) while presenting solutions. Therefore, scholars will find this volume a helpful resource for constructing a new path forward or re-constructing an understanding of wisdom in the Bible.

Ross Daniel Harmon
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Jobes, Karen H., and Moisés Silva. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015, Pp 432, $28.30, Paperback.

Septuagintal studies has risen in recent years, but a substantial introduction to the discipline was lacking for students and scholars alike. The technical nature of the discipline left many students unfamiliar with how to proceed into the fray. Karen Jobes and Moises Silva initially filled that hole in 2000, but they have updated and expanded to a second edition of their primer to account for changes in the field of the LXX studies. The second edition responds to a lengthy criticism of the first

edition from James Barr whereby the authors supposedly deemed the LXX unhelpful for determining the Hebrew text (xii n.1). The second addition has been updated the bibliography with references from the last fifteen years. Both authors are world renown scholars for their scholarship in Greek lexicography and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Hereafter, the authors will be referred to as J.S.

J. S. begin with answering the readers' initial question, *Why should I study the Septuagint?* in a brief introduction. They suggest that the LXX aids the interpreters understanding of the Old and New Testament. The body of the book divides into three sections to address three different audiences. The first section, *The History of the Septuagint*, is directed towards students with little to no knowledge of Greek or the LXX. They summarize the origin and transmission of the LXX, editions and contents, and the LXX as a translation. The second section, *The Septuagint in Biblical Studies*, assumes a moderate knowledge of Greek. J.S discusses the language of the LXX, the process of establishing the text of the LXX, the use of the LXX in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, the relationship between the LXX and the NT, and the interpretation of the LXX. The third section, *Current State of Septuagint Studies*, reinforces the other chapters through presenting a history of literature. J.S provide a detailed biographical sketch of Septuagint scholars of the previous generation. They discuss current studies in the language and translation, reconstructing the history of the text, and the theological development in the Hellenistic age. They also include four appendixes for further research for the beginner to the advanced student. J.S compiled their book with a pedagogical focus which should encourage professors to implement their resource at the seminary and doctoral level.

J.S have written a clear introduction to a complex discipline and the student and scholar alike will benefit from their work. The authors have compiled a resource that aims for the student to grapple with the larger issues of the LXX. They have arranged the chapters with an upward focus so that the student learns with the book and they target three different familiarities with the LXX. They have struck a middle ground with these sections so that the book grows with the student's familiarity and his understanding of the LXX. The divisions also allow the reader a resource long into his studies into the Septuagint. A slight critique to their approach is that the student who has no familiarity with Greek or the LXX is unable to grapple with the concepts in two-thirds of the book.

J.S navigate complex issues in the Septuagint and present a balanced approach to the subject. They navigate the subject through careful summaries, discussion of terms, examples of principles, and evaluation of evidence. They walk the student through a scholar's approach to the subject, so that they can grapple with complex issues as they read the LXX. A short coming of the edition, the authors discuss translation techniques of the authors, but they fail to instruct the student on discovering these techniques. Readers would benefit from a helpful summary of the ways that translators adapt, modify, or edit a text to their target audience. J.S

highlight the religious climate which the LXX was translated into, but they fail to incorporate a summary of how a translator uses translation techniques to address his context. A famous example is the LXX of Proverbs rearranging the order to highlight Solomonic authorship and remove pagan authorship from the book.

Section two addresses difficult concepts and theories such as the LXX role with textual criticism, DSS, NT and the LXX, and the interpretation of the LXX. This section is the heart of the book. J.S. define their terms and navigate the reader through these challenging concepts. They succeed in reviewing scholarship and addressing each issue so that student will walk away confident of his knowledge of the subject. In contrast, section three ramps up the discussion and reminds the student of the plethora of the unresolved issues within Septuagintal studies. The students' emotions sway throughout the book from confident to overwhelmed. J.S. cannot protect the students from this reality so they present a realistic picture of the field.

This reviewer invites students, pastors, theologians, and scholars alike to the *Invitation to the Septuagint*. J.S has crafted a primer that facilitates an introduction but also a thorough reference to the subject. Scholars such as Jan Jooster, Benjamin G. Wright, Peter J. Gentry, and Gert J. Steyn agree that updated edition will benefit student and scholar alike. This comprehensive primer will not disappoint those who desire to acquaint themselves with the Greek version of the Old Testament.

Nicholas Majors
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Garrett, Duane A. *The Problem of the Old Testament: Hermeneutical, Schematic, and Theological Approaches.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020, pp. 395, $40.00, paperback.

Duane A. Garrett is the John R. Sampey Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and professor of biblical theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written numerous works on the Old Testament, including a commentary on Hosea and Joel (The New American Commentary), a commentary on Song of Songs and Lamentations (Word Biblical Commentary), and *Amos: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*, and *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew.*

Garrett makes his premise clear from the moment his book is picked up by a reader. How can modern readers make sense of the challenges, or the "problem," of the Old Testament? He begins the book by defining the problem, which he does by listing three propositions: the Old Testament is hard to define, hard to read, and hard to reconcile with the New (p. 4). He goes on to demonstrate that the lack of a consistent Old Testament theology or definition of the Old Testament among the early church fathers provides an example of these propositions (p. 45). In part two, Garrett outlines the various hermeneutical, schematic, and conceptual solutions proposed for the development of an Old Testament theology, and he ultimately finds

them inadequate. Garrett's hybrid approach involves multiple methods rather than attempting to use only one solution (p. 158).

Garrett makes use of an Antiochene (that is not allegorical) hermeneutic but supplements it with schematic and conceptual solutions of his own. The following chapters are an application of his solution to the "problem" of the Old Testament within various areas of interpretation, including election and the covenants, law, narrative, and prophecy. He closes the book with a summary of his findings and issues that require further study. He also provides an appendix that serves as a potential preview of a future volume (p. 355).

There are many commendable aspects of this volume. One such aspect is part two of this book, in which Garrett evaluates solutions he has found inadequate to the problem of the Old Testament. Garret clearly and succinctly communicates the arguments of others and fairly represents the scholars he is evaluating. This is prevalent all throughout part two, but particularly in chapter five, in which Garrett describes covenant theology and dispensationalism. Garrett summarizes each system while also mentioning different branches. He balances acknowledging the right level of nuance to each side with acknowledging that his summaries of each side are not exhaustive (pp. 113, 122). Frequently, the author's attempts at summarizing the viewpoint of another either misrepresent his fellow scholar's argument or result in an exceedingly long chronicle that ceases to be a summary. Garrett's writing is a refreshing departure from these tendencies.

Additionally, Garrett's proposed solution to the problem of the Old Testament is well-argued and theologically grounded. As mentioned above, his solution is a hybrid approach that uses a mixture of hermeneutical, schematic, and conceptual perspectives to solve the problem. Though independently, he finds each one of these perspectives in some way inadequate, when viewed together, he argues a solution can be found. Garrett rightly observes the failure of the Antiochene hermeneutic in the time of the Reformation was an inability to demonstrate the applicability of the Old Testament to the Christian church (pp. 100-101). Yet, he selects this hermeneutic over the Alexandrian hermeneutic because he views its allusion as an unacceptable way to interpret Scripture.

Furthermore, Garrett's schematic solution is neither covenant theology nor dispensationalism; he does not believe the Christian church is one people of God or that Israel continues to have a unique relationship with God, entirely independent of Gentiles (pp. 163-164). On the contrary, he correctly asserts Israel continues to be at the center of God's plan of salvation. Yet, Gentiles have now been grafted into Israel and are partakers of the promises of Israel as adopted members of the nation of Israel (p. 172).

Interestingly, Garrett does not believe there is one unifying center to the Old Testament, despite the popularity of the search for such a concept. Many scholars struggle to connect Wisdom Literature to their proposed center. Garrett's solution is

to divide the Old Testament into two parts: Election Literature and Wisdom Literature. In other words, this separates Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs from the remaining books of the Old Testament (p. 171). While at first glance, this seems to be taking the path of least resistance, this distinction allows interpreters to avoid imposing the ideas of a given system on the text and to more honestly interpret the Old Testament (p. 172).

Election Literature is one of the areas Garrett applies these perspectives. Unsurprisingly, Garrett rejects the idea that the covenants are the unifying center of the Old Testament, and he also denies they build off one another. A key point in this argument is his distinction between unilateral (unconditional) and bilateral (conditional) covenants (p. 180). By demonstrating the differences between the types of covenants, he demonstrates each covenant, while related to one another, does not rely on the previous iteration.

Regarding the Law, Garrett argues for four functions of the law (pp. 234-239). Yet, what is more intriguing is his understanding of forgiveness in the Old Testament. He makes a compelling and biblically-based argument that animal sacrifice never was required for the forgiveness of sins. Rather, similar to baptism, animal sacrifices were an outward expression of inward repentance; forgiveness is granted purely on the basis of God's mercy (p. 241-242).

Garrett achieves his goal of providing a solution to the problem of the Old Testament and demonstrates the viability of his solution. There is seemingly no end to volumes on the theology of the Old Testament, but Garrett's volume is a helpful addition to this field. His proposals and perspectives differ enough from previous scholarship to be unique, yet they do not come close to departing from orthodoxy. This volume is best-suited for a seminary student, but anyone would benefit from this book. Even if one does not agree with all of Garrett's conclusions, it will certainly challenge readers to re-evaluate how they read and interpret the Old Testament. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this work was that Garrett did not have the space to address Wisdom Literature or to go more in-depth in his various topics. Yet, throughout the book, he promises future volumes, and hopefully, these volumes will be as great of assets to the field as this volume.

Jordan Troeger
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Hays, Richard, B. *Reading with the Grain of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. 479 pp. $55.00, Hardcover.

Richard Hays is Professor Emeritus of New Testament of Duke Divinity School. He is the author of several books, one of the most notable being his 1989 *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. This book is a set of twenty-one essays generally dealing with the subject of hermeneutics, representing something of the capstone of

Hays's career, a highlight reel of both recent writings and others culled from previous decades. They are very much a collection commemorative of an illustrious presence in the field of New Testament studies, with each representing some of Hays's highest-level writing and strongest argumentation relative to each issue discussed.

The book is divided into four parts, proceeding in stepwise fashion as Hays moves from the groundwork of interpretive method into the person of Jesus himself and how he has been understood by scholars, into Pauline theology, and finally into the broader New Testament as a whole and the theology that characterizes it. The essays, as Hays notes (p. 3), follow six recurrent themes, namely narrative analysis, figural coherence between the Old and New Testaments, the centrality of Jesus's resurrection, eschatological hope, approaching texts with humility and trust, and the importance of reading scripture within and for the community of faith.

Part one begins with a reflection on the task of interpretation, with four essays addressing the unity and diversity of the scriptural narrative. First, he critically reviews the effects of higher criticism on the idea of unity among biblical texts, and illustrates how texts viewed as disjunctive actually "demonstrate a surprising coherence" (p. 22). Second, he explores the possibility of a renaissance in "theological exegesis", that is, reading scripture as a person of faith through the lens of faith. He attests that theological exegesis "is a practice of and for the church" (p. 36), which "attends to the literary wholeness of the individual scriptural witness" (p. 37). Third, he discusses the central role of Jesus's resurrection, noting scholarly engagements with it and explaining how reading in light of the resurrection transforms how a text is understood. Fourth, he elucidates his idea of figural reading, which establishes a connection between two texts in a way that an earlier text signifies not only itself but also a later text, while the later text involves or fulfills the first. This "retrospective… pattern of correspondence" leads to a discernment of an intricate coherence between narratives (p. 74).

In part two, Hays explores the problem of knowing the historical Jesus through three reviews of scholarly approaches and an exceptional essay with his own reconstruction of Jesus. He initially takes on the methodology and conclusions of the "Jesus Seminar", reflecting that "if Jesus said only the sorts of things judged authentic by the Seminar, it is very difficult to see how he could have been mistaken by Jewish and Roman authorities as a messianic pretender who needed to be executed" (p. 97). Hays then evaluates the methodology and contributions of N.T. Wright, both applauding Wright's analytical depth and attention to historical context and also critiquing his methodological "over-systemization" (p. 117) and lack of focus on "narrative identity" (p. 119). He then turns to an assessment of Catholic scholarship, providing a mixed review of Cardinal Ratzinger's treatment of Jesus. Hays applauds Ratzinger's focus on Jesus's divine identity, but critiques him for "downplaying the apocalyptic content of Jesus's message" (p. 126). Lastly, in what is perhaps his strongest essay, Hays proposes his own methodology and guidelines for locating the

Jesus of history, attending to the context, narrative logic, representation of Jesus by each of the available sources individually.

Part three includes seven essays on Paul, the first six on theological issues and the last concerning Paul's relationship to his portrayal in Acts. In his exploration of Paul's Christology and soteriology, Hays draws attention to the role of narrative. He notes that for Paul, Jesus's identity is "disclosed in a seamless narrative running from creation to the cross to the resurrection to the eschaton" (p. 151). Similarly, Hays asserts that Paul's soteriology is "unintelligible apart from a narrative framework" (p. 170). Hays then explores Paul's apocalyptic thought and how this influences his relationship to Judaism, noting that for Paul, Christ "leads him not to a rejection of Israel's sacred history but to a retrospective hermeneutical transformation of Israel's story" (186). Hays's intertextual emphasis also comes out in three essays dealing with Romans, in which he examines Paul's pneumatology, his attitude toward Torah, as well as his overall approach to Judaism and the place of Israel in God's plan. In his final essay, he questions the idea of a dissonance between Paul and the Lukan portrayal of him, examining Old Testament references common to both Acts and the Pauline corpus.

The six essays of part four begin with an exploration of the Christology of Revelation, with Hays arguing that the imagery of the book is best grasped through a reading that treats it as an intertextually rich literary whole. Hays then includes two essays in response to other scholars, with the first seeking to refute the idea that Hebrews proposes a supersessionist theology, and the second critiquing Bultmann's view of Pauline anthropology. This is followed by creative treatments of the different roles of law both in the Old Testament and in modern society, as well as a reading of Romans in tandem with the Nicene Creed, noting confessional elements linking the ecclesiology of both. Hays finishes with an essay on the importance of eschatology for understanding scripture, and how a biblical perspective on eschatology can be distinguished from cultural aberrations and perversions.

Hays concludes with an encouraging call to move from a hermeneutic of suspicion to a "hermeneutic of trust", which he defines as "a way of seeing the whole world through the lens of the kerygma", a posture of reading and exegesis which relies on God in the midst of mystery and yet-unfulfilled hopes (p. 399). One of Hays's greatest strengths is his winsome but rigorous way of analyzing narrative. This is a common theme shining through each essay, whether speaking of the larger theological narrative of the canon or the narrative elements of individual texts. Hays's emphasis on intertextual relationships also greatly accents an otherwise exemplary collection.

From a critical standpoint, a quibble for some readers will be that a number of essays are dated, and thus do not represent the current state of the field. For example, Hays often engages with scholars like Bultmann and Crossan in a manner reflecting a previous generation of scholarship. Such engagements highlight Hays's

own distinguishment of himself from other scholars but limit the book's usefulness to contemporary readers. Even so, the essays were substantive, and testify to the difference that his work has made. This book is certainly recommended for those seeking to listen to the resounding voice of a scholar with a high view of the text, and one who holds a balance between churchman and academic. It will make an excellent addition to the library of one who wants to know how biblical studies came to where it is today, and to what foundation it owes its future trajectory.

William B. Bowes
The University of Edinburgh

Fabricius, Steffi. *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisation and Transferences*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018, pp. 312, €109.00, hardback.

Steffi Fabricius is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Siegen where she also teaches theology. She earned her PhD in Systematic Theology at the Technical University of Dortmund where she has also worked as a research assistant in the English Linguistics department. The book under review is a slightly adapted version of her doctoral dissertation similarly titled *Pauline Hamartiology: Conceptualisations and Translationes. Positioning Cognitive Semantic Theory and Method within Theology.* Fabricius' research interests lie at the intersect of theology and cognitive linguistics and the current work is a formidable example of this kind of interdisciplinary work.

In the very short introductory chapter, the author presents a brief sketch of what she will be arguing throughout the book. Though not an explicit thesis, Fabricius suggests that in Paul's undisputed epistles we see *six* conceptual metaphorical mappings that shape his experience and understanding of ἁμαρτία as an existential powerful state: ἁμαρτία as an action, ἁμαρτία as an event, ἁμαρτία as an object, ἁμαρτία as a state, ἁμαρτία as a power, and ἁμαρτία as a slave master (3). Chapter 2 introduces the state of research on Paul's understanding of ἁμαρτία. After reviewing proposals for personifications of sin stemming out of the concept of sin as action (Röhser, Käsemann, Dibelius), sin as demonic entity (Hagenow, Southall, Gunton), and sin as a power (Umbach, Carter), Fabricius observes that scholars often "emphasise one specific attribute of sin and thereby seem to lose the original multi-layeredness of Pauline thought" (25).

The next two chapters lay down the methodological foundations for Fabricius' approach to Paul's use of ἁμαρτία. Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the classical theory of language and categorization as well as to what the author terms the "cognitive turn" and the tools of cognitive linguistics she will be employing. Chapter 4 then positions cognitive semantics within the discipline of theology. Here, she rejects Aristotelian substance ontology (85) and proposes a relational ontology that is grounded on metaphorical language.

Fabricius refers to chapter 5 as the major analytical chapter of her study, which takes up 131 of the book's 267 pages of core content. The chapter is divided into eight subsections and a conclusion, each building on the previous and ultimately developing the author's main argument. She begins by employing Langacker's cognitive grammar to establish ἁμαρτάνω as the morphological and conceptual base of (ὁ) ἁμαρτωλός and ἁμαρτία. She examines Paul's language to show the Apostle's conception of ἁμαρτία first as an action and ultimately as the mega-metaphor of ἁμαρτία as an existential powerful state via the Event-Structure metaphor (170ff). The chapter ends with a series of subsections looking at how σάρξ, νόμος, θάνατος, and Χριστός fit into her "mega metaphor."

In chapter 6, Fabricius revisits her conclusions from the previous chapter as a reflection of Paul's metaphorical ontological thinking. She extrapolates her conclusions about Paul's conception of ἁμαρτία and suggests that cognitive semantics and embodied realism justify the idea of an entire metaphorical ontology of man in relation to God.

Unfortunately, perhaps one of the first things readers might notice as they progress through the book is the frequency of awkward English constructions, grammatical mistakes, and unclear terminology. Because the book itself is already very technical and much of the jargon assumes a lot from the reader in the areas of philosophy (e.g. the distinction between *reality* and *actuality*, *ontic* and *ontological*) and cognitive linguistics (e.g. *translatio*, *verborum metaphora*, idealized cognitive models, running blends), the occasional hurdles with the English can make the book feel tedious at times.

I bring this up first because readers should know that the benefit of having Fabricius' detailed and relevant exegesis in English (rather than in her native German tongue), more than makes up for the occasional obstacles of her English.

The core of Fabricius' argument, namely, that ἁμαρτία is conceptualized by Paul as an existential powerful state is very well presented and compelling. Fabricius speaks competently about the various ways ἁμαρτία has been understood by theologians and New Testament scholars and places her own research well within the contemporary conversation. One of the most illuminating insights pertains to how Paul's multivalent conception of ἁμαρτία must be understood in light of the metonymically related conceptualization of ἁμαρτία as an action, ἁμαρτία as an event, ἁμαρτία as a state, and ἁμαρτία as a power. Fabricius carefully shows how the conceptual mappings of the Event-Structure metaphor ACTION IS MOTION and EVENTS ARE ACTIONS work together with the metaphors STATES ARE EVENTS, CHANGE IS MOTION, and CAUSES ARE FORCES to hold these various elements together.

The detail and breadth with which she builds her cognitive semantic argument is fascinating and robust. The book would have made a significant enough contribution to the field had she simply presented her case for ἁμαρτία. By then placing σάρξ, νόμος, θάνατος, and Χριστός within the Apostle's conceptual network, Fabricius ends

up providing an incredibly helpful conceptual anthropology. It was not always clear, however, why Fabricius ordered the *hypothetical syllogisms* with ACTIVE ENCLOSING containers the way she did. For example, in Figure 19, she places postbaptismal ontic existence ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν πενύματι *within* the CONTAINER of existence ὑπὸ χάριν rather than the other way around (208). Certainly, an argument could be made either way, but an explanation for her ordering is missing.

More significantly, some of Fabricius' broader anthropological conclusions about the Christian's relationship to sin don't seem to fit very well with the exegetical and cognitive linguistic analysis she presents. She rightly notes that though postbaptismal man is now free to walk κατὰ πνεύματα and not κατὰ σάρκα, he is still ἐν σαρκί. It follows, then, that ἁμαρτία still exerts pressure on the Christian because of his existence ἐν σαρκί. However, Fabricius goes further and says that sin can still exercise dominion on the believer and that though he is no longer ὑφ' ἁμαρτία, he is still nonetheless ἐν ἁμαρτία (215). Moreover, she concludes that "with the Christ event turning man postconversionally into Christians, man as slave is torn between two masters…he is still attached to the old one with the fleshly body" (229). Though the reader might expect her to conclude that the Christ event has utterly freed the Christian to his old master ἁμαρτία, Romans 7:15–23 seems to give Fabricius pause in suggesting that. Though she acknowledges the interpretive debates on Romans 7 in a footnote, one would expect a more robust defense of her interpretation of Romans 7, especially as it seems to undermine some of her fundamental conclusions about Paul's conceptual understanding of being ἐν ἁμαρτία and ἐν Χριστός.

Overall, Fabricius' work is one of the most comprehensive and compelling treatments of Paul's understanding of sin. Her work makes important hermeneutical, hamartiological, and anthropological arguments that need to be considered in the fields of theology and biblical studies. My only fear is that the technical nature of her study, the familiarity with the subject matter she assumes from her readers, and her interdisciplinary approach might prove too daunting for many who would otherwise benefit greatly from it.

Andrés D. Vera
California Baptist University

Hixson, Elijah, and Peter J. Gurry, eds. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, pp. 372, $40, softcover.

The editors of this volume are well-known among textual critics. Elijah Hixson is a research associate in New Testament Text and Language at Tyndale House at Cambridge. Peter J. Gurry is assistant professor of New Testament at Phoenix Seminary. Both have published extensively on text critical issues and contribute to

evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com. The book examines overstated claims, dated information, and distorted statistics by well-meaning apologists.

Chapter One is an introduction by the editors who provide a brief overview of the contents of the book. They resonate with apologists who desire to defend the New Testament text against critics. However, Bible students must not support the text with well-intentioned but ignorant falsehoods. If believers continue to perpetuate errors then they perform a disservice, not a defense. Chapter Two addresses myths about autographs. Certain evangelicals purport that some original autographs lasted for centuries. Timothy Mitchell, however, tempers such claims. Climate, persecution, wars, and natural disasters are a few factors that undercut this myth.

Jacob Peterson takes on math myths in Chapter Three. Those who appeal to quantities of manuscripts to support textual accuracy are mistaken. Instead, it is safer to weigh manuscripts. Some apologists sensationally suggest 24,000 Greek manuscripts are available. Instead, a number from 5,100 to 5,300 is more accurate. Chapter Four addresses popular claims on how much better the Greek text of today is compared to the reconstruction of other ancient texts. But James B. Prothro reminds that statistical comparisons are often based on old data and only demonstrate the New Testament has a better textual basis.

Chapters Five and Six take aim at dating myths and compose two of the best chapters. In Chapter Five, Hixson argues against the common perception that the dates for the earliest manuscripts can be narrowed down. An apt illustration is $^{P}52$, a fragment of the Gospel of John that has been dated to AD 125. Hixson surveys dating methods and concludes that a range of fifty to one hundred years is more legitimate. This would make $^{P}52$ closer to AD 200. Gregory Lanier continues the treatment of dating myths in Chapter Six. Specifically, he takes on the assumption that younger manuscripts are less reliable. This is normally an attack against the *Textus Receptus*. Lanier contends, however, that a multitude of Byzantine readings can be traced to the 200s.

Myths about copyists, copies, and transmission are tackled in the next three chapters. In Chapter Seven, Zachary Cole addresses the quality of copyists and misinterpretations from popular apologists. There were both competent and incompetent scribes. Generally speaking, they were trained and capable and give moderns confidence in the accurate transmission of the text. Nevertheless, copyists did make mistakes, and Peter Malik responds to copying myths in Chapter Eight. This chapter assumes knowledge of text criticism and transcriptional probabilities (what scribes were likely to correct). Malik surveys various ways that scribes corrected mistakes. Thus, there are many mistakes, but only a few examples of theologically-motivated changes. Chapter Nine also expects readers to know something about textual criticism. Matthew Solomon addresses the idea that the textual apparatus at the bottom of Greek texts only mention primary manuscripts. The bottom line is

that although there are many variants, and all variants have some value, they are not determined to be part of the initial text.

In Chapter Ten, coeditor Gurry confronts the popular myth that states textual variants have no effect on Christian doctrine. To the contrary, Gurry affirms that some variants "really do touch on important doctrines" (p. 193). There are half a million textual variants, but only a few dozen are theologically significant. However, when textual scholars address them calmly, these variants do not threaten doctrine. Yet Chapter Eleven confirms some variants are theologically driven. Robert Marcello considers how much and how influential "orthodox corruption" actually is. He examines two texts (Codex Bezae and ^{p}72) and two examples (Matt. 24:36; John 1:18). Marcello concludes that some scribes did change the text for theological reasons, but "variants that might appear to be theologically motivated are better explained by other factors" (p. 227). The reliability of the text of the New Testament is not at stake.

A favorite myth is that the New Testament can be reconstructed (except for eleven verses) from the quotations of the church fathers. Chapter Twelve, written by Andrew Blaski, counters that this is simply not true. There are few exact quotes and patristic theology affects their quotes. Nevertheless, the church fathers are valuable and provide a window into early transmission history. In Chapter Thirteen, the myth that early Christians reserved the codex for canonical books is answered by John Meade. The codex was preferred over the scroll but that does not make all of its enclosed books canonical. The better approach is to study the canon lists to understand how the early church interpreted codex contents.

Chapter Fourteen discusses myths about early translations. Jeremiah Coogan raises doubts that there are ten thousand Latin manuscripts. The number is closer to one thousand. Coogan also surveys Syriac and Coptic versions. Although the number of early versions is less than what is popularly taught, they remain valuable in noting the absence or presence of textual variants. Chapter Fifteen fittingly concludes the book with modern translations. Edgar Battad Ebojo does not mention myths. Instead, he discusses how modern versions report their New Testament variant readings. Some versions do not use footnotes with textual variants while others do. Some versions include disputed passages in the text whereas others relegate them to footnotes. The translators themselves and the communities they translate for make these decisions. The bottom line is, "we should not expect modern translations to be the main place for explaining text-critical issues" (p. 323). The book concludes with a 28-page bibliography and name, subject, scripture, ancient writing, and manuscript indexes.

Each chapter of *Myths and Mistakes* offers valuable advice. This book may not address all the text-critical myths but the popular ones are evident and available in this one volume. Overall, the book is well-structured. Each chapter and topic flows nicely into the next. There is some unavoidable overlap. Several authors mention the usual suspects of Mark 1:1; 16:9-20; and John 7:53-8:11. Other textual examples would strengthen the arguments. But with so many authors it is understandable

that they individually settled on similar verses. As the title suggests there is an assumption that readers are knowledgeable of the basic principles of textual criticism. Nevertheless, pastors can easily adapt these chapters and teach their parishioners. Students with biblical introductory classes behind them can navigate these pages with little difficulty.

Chapters Three and Six are particularly helpful in debates with church members mired in King James Version onlyism. The study could easily be enlarged with another chapter on this persistent problem nursed in the local church via the internet. Chapter Fourteen slighted potential discussion on Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, and other early translations. Latin, Coptic, and Syriac received in-depth treatment to the neglect of these languages. The chapter is the longest one but only by a page. Another three pages could have corrected this oversight.

The authors capably address the errors of both popular defenders and critics of the text. I winced several times because of my own repetition of these myths and mistakes. To know that famous and trustworthy evangelicals have also fallen prey to excess makes me feel only slightly less chagrined. The major accomplishment of this book is that the reliability of the New Testament is ably defended without resorting to exaggerations or loaded statistics. The book serves as a trustworthy guide to correct and update common errors. I heartily recommend this book to the church and academy.

Michael Kuykendall
Gateway Seminary

Peppiatt, Lucy. *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women: Fresh Perspectives on Disputed Texts.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, pp.162, $22, paperback.

Lucy Peppiatt is Principal of Westminster Theological Centre, UK. *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women* is her fourth monograph, building on, expanding, and bringing to a wider audience her previous scholarly work on women in 1 Corinthians 11-14. Winner of the 2019 IVP Academic Reader's Choice Award, the book provides an accessible and succinct biblical and theological case for the full equality and inclusion of women in the home, church, and ministry.

Peppiatt notes that her aim in writing is, as the title of the book suggests, that "those who read it . . . will catch a vision of God's gracious will to set women free" (p. xiv). Consistent with that aim, the book offers a positive and constructive presentation of the case for the full inclusion of women. It is wholeheartedly and unashamedly "mutualist" (p. 6) (a term Peppiatt prefers to "egalitarian")—arguing that the "overturning of an entrenched patriarchal order" (p. 2) is not just permitted but is endorsed by scripture. This is not to say that Peppiatt is naïve to the weight of church history, the persistence of hierarchicalist views and practice in the contemporary

church, nor to the role of the bible within such arguments and practices. And yet she remains convinced—mutualism is not driven by culture, but the opposite: "In this book I argue that those of us who see the overturning of male dominance in the Scriptures are rediscovering an ancient message that has been overlaid and distorted by years and years of reading, teaching, preaching, and writing by those who assumed that the patriarchal world they lived in, which they sometimes saw reflected in the Bible, was the one that God had ordained" (p. 5).

This book is broad-ranging, addressing socio-cultural, hermeneutical, exegetical, and theological issues across the whole sweep of the bible. At the same time though, it is remarkably focused and, in places, quite detailed. Peppiatt does not avoid the hard questions or contested texts but tackles them with confidence and rigour.

Chapter One considers the male-centred nature of historic Christianity and its impact on women, including male language for God, the maleness of Jesus, the twelve male disciples, and whether the Trinity tells us anything about how men and women should relate. Peppiatt traces the damaging impact of the privileging of maleness in Christian history, theology, and the history of interpretation, largely through an improper concretising of God's accommodation in revelation. She reminds us simply that "God reveals himself through a man, but he is not, of course, merely a man" (p. 17). Metaphor and anthropomorphism in revelation tell us "something profound, true, and meaningful about God, but . . . does not and cannot tell us *all* that we can know" (p. 17). True to the rationale of the book, Peppiatt then goes on to revive and remind us of the stories of the female and the feminine that lie alongside these privileged narratives. She points to the profound strength and resilience of women across the ages, and to the power of the Christian gospel to cut through Christian culture: "one of the reasons for the deep attraction and appeal of Christianity to women is rooted in a profound instinct that we are not really excluded after all, despite what outward circumstances tell us" (p. 11).

Chapter two draws in more detail some of the stories of women in the scriptures: Mary the mother of Jesus, and women as "disciples, patrons and witnesses." This leads on to a discussion of what it means to be baptised into Christ, and part of the "one new humanity" (Eph 2), drawing out not just the personal but the concrete social and corporate implications of this new reality. Here Peppiatt draws on a range of New Testament texts (Eph 2; Phil; 1 Cor 11; Gal) and commentators, particularly John Barclay's work on Galatians. Regarding the problem of the "particularity" of Jesus, Peppiatt notes that this applies to all people, not just women ("In an important way, in all his particularities, Jesus of Nazareth was unlike the majority of the entire human population that has ever existed," p. 40). But again, Peppiatt presents not just a defense but a positive vision: "Jesus of Nazareth stands for the one the Jews believed had all the honor and privilege before God—the free Jewish male. That women, slaves, and children were set free to identify with a free Jewish male in the temple of God, communicated to them that they too held the place of highest honor in

the closest proximity to God" (p. 40). She emphasises an understanding of salvation in participatory terms, meaning therefore that "there is nothing in Christ that is other to woman, and nothing in woman that is alien to Christ as they are made for union with one another" (p. 42).

Chapter 3 examines the creation stories and how different readings yield radically different results in terms of how we perceive a woman's natural place in creation, the family, and society. A particular strength of this chapter is its demonstration of how different biblical texts (here Gen 2 and 1 Cor 11:2-10) can be unreflectively "mutually interpreting," their exegetical results unravelling once a particular hermeneutical spiral is broken. Peppiatt is unflinching in naming the implications of finding "headship" theology in Genesis 2 (men are closer to God, women relate to God through men (p. 47)), and competently presents the (now quite well known) flaws in this reading, highlighting the implications for our interpretation of NT texts (1 Cor 11:2-16; Eph 5).

Chapter 4 takes up these NT texts and explores the meaning of headship (*kephale)* in more detail. This chapter condenses (and in parts reproduces) Peppiatt's earlier publications on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, and 1 Corinthians 14. Those who were unconvinced by Peppiatt's account of Paul's rhetorical strategy there (that verses 7-9 do not represent Paul's own view but that of his opponents), will likely remain so here. However, the discussion is detailed and well-informed, the argument is well-made, and represents some of the closest and most recent scholarship on this text, even as it remains controversial. Peppiatt's survey of the limitations of traditional interpretations, and discussion of the text's difficulties is insightful and worthwhile. Even if her preferred reading does not convince all readers, the textual difficulties she aims to address remain, as does her basic point that any reading depends on interpretative *choices*.

Chapters 5 & 6 deal with the New Testament theology of marriage. Moving on from the previous discussion about *kephale*, these chapters include discussion of the NT household codes, Phil 2, and the role of the doctrine of the Trinity in a theology of marriage. Peppiatt examines the hierarchicalist view presented by Tim and Kathy Keller in their popular marriage book *The Meaning of Marriage* (chapter 5), before presenting her case for the mutualist view (chapter 6). Here she offers a reading of the household codes that demonstrates the radically redefined role of the Christian husband as self-sacrificial in order to empower others, which she describes as (in the first-century context) "a marriage of equals among unequals" (p. 109).

Chapter 7 examines the role of women in the New Testament church, asking (as Scot McKnight repeatedly asks us to): what did they do? Peppiatt argues that the New Testament describes multiple women who functioned as leaders, as prophets, apostles and teachers. It tackles hermeneutical questions about how to "apply" these texts to today's debates about leadership "offices" such as priest, bishop, etc., before turning to ecclesiology and Paul's body metaphor (1 Cor 12) and the implications

for priesthood as "a mediating and representative role" (p. 138). Peppiatt draws out the way that male bias in translation and interpretation has distorted what has been visible to us in scripture.

The final chapter (Chapter 8) deals with what is perhaps the most common—and often considered the most decisive—objection to women's leadership in the church: 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Peppiatt notes the persistent problems with a "plain reading," and outlines contemporary work (including scholarship on the Artemis cult by Gary Hoag and Sandra Glahn) that might account for its most problematic elements, whilst also providing a reading of Paul here more consistent with his teaching and practice in other texts. But this text is left till last as Peppiatt argues (as she has throughout) that our readings of it are in part "determined by what we bring to the text" (p. 140)—the consistent story that we see the bible telling, and the way texts are "mutually interpreting." In other words, there is no such thing as a "plain reading."

Peppiatt's book covers a lot of ground. It hits all the key texts and theological issues. That it does so in 150 pages makes it at once accessible and widely useful, but simultaneously open to critique from those who will want more depth or detail. But, this is not the aim of the book. It provides a broad sweep and a grand vision, laying out a positive case for the mutualist view. As an attempt to present a consistent picture throughout all of scripture it is necessarily broad.

An important achievement of the book is its insistence on the mutually interpreting nature of scripture on this issue: its reminder of how the parts relate to the whole and the whole to the parts. For those who insist then on coming at this issue through one text, or even one theological category, it will likely not be convincing (though I hope it might be challenging). But, as Peppiatt continually reminds us, these interpretative moves are a choice, and "at the end of the day, each of us must take responsibility for our own reading, interpretation, and application of scripture" (p. 158). At the very least, the book puts the lie to the claim that mutualists (or egalitarians) do not take scripture seriously. Peppiatt reads the bible as scripture and works hard to faithfully and theologically interpret it. She makes use of respected New Testament and theological scholarship (including her own), though the book is clearly intended to be accessible to a non-academic audience.

If I could go back in time, this is the book I would give to my 17-year-old self when I first encountered these questions. 20+ years later and with my own views now securely settled, this book still provides powerful encouragement and hope.

Hannah Craven
University of St. Andrews

Crowe, Brandon D. *The Hope of Israel: The Resurrection of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. 193 pages $29.99, Paperback.

The resurrection of the body was ancient Israel's hope, not the hope of ancient Greece or Rome.

The apostle Paul said he was in chains because of "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20; cf. 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:6-8). The God of Israel fulfilled this hope by first raising Jesus the Messiah from the dead (Acts 26:22-23). Throughout the Acts of the Apostles we see this emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Brandon D. Crowe has written an excellent study of this emphasis. He is associate professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Crowe follows the sound method of first examining the biblical texts, each in a holistic way in its written context, and then drawing from them more general conclusions. The three pillars of the resurrection theme in Acts are the speech by the apostle Peter in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2), the speech by the apostle Paul at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13), and his defense before King Agrippa II in Caesarea (Acts 26). Crowe also looks at additional resurrection statements in Acts by Peter, Paul, James, Stephen, Philip, and others. In the first part of the volume he works through these texts. In the second part he discusses in more general terms the theological significance of the resurrection in Acts.

In terms of the resurrection's significance, Crowe distinguishes between the accomplishment of salvation in history and the benefits of salvation. For Luke, he argues, Christ's resurrection is "a singular turning point in the accomplishment of salvation that ushers in the age of the exalted Messiah" (p. 5). The resurrection, ascension, and exaltation are best seen as "one movement of Jesus's experience of glory" (p. 106). His resurrection marked the beginning of the resurrection age and inaugurated the eschatological age of the Spirit, both promised by Moses and the Prophets. As a result, it signals key redemptive-historical shifts with respect to the temple in Jerusalem as the center of worship and the defining marks of sabbath, dietary laws, and circumcision. With Christ's exaltation begins the worldwide mission.

While Christ's resurrection marks the start of something new regarding the history of salvation, Luke also strongly affirms continuity across the ages from Moses and the Prophets to the public ministry of Jesus before his resurrection recorded in Luke's Gospel and on to his post-resurrection continuing work as recorded in Acts. Examples of continuity evident in Luke-Acts include the forgiveness of sins, justification, and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

Crowe makes a persuasive argument that one of Luke's primary aims is to defend the Old Testament. "Luke understands the resurrection of Jesus to be the fulfillment of and definitive demonstration of the Scriptures' truthfulness" (p. 149). It is impressive how many Old Testament texts are explicitly cited in Acts with respect

to the resurrection, such as Psalms 2, 16, 110, and 118. Crowe convincingly contends that the rebuilding of David's tent promised in Amos 9:11-12 and referenced by James (Acts 15:15-18) refers to the restoration of the Davidic dynasty accomplished by Jesus's resurrection. Crowe also offers a nice summary of additional Old Testament texts and intertestamental texts about the resurrection, which corroborate the claim that the resurrection was Israel's hope: "for one to understand the resurrection one must understand the [Old Testament] Scriptures; likewise, to understand the [Old Testament] Scriptures one must believe in the resurrection" (p. 170).

He considers how Acts relates to the New Testament canon and New Testament theology. Acts connects with both the Gospels and the Epistles, and its emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus theologically unites Acts with the rest of the New Testament. He concludes his study with a brief discussion of ways in which the physical resurrection of Jesus sets forth the distinctiveness of the early Christian message in the ancient world.

Overall I found Crowe's exegesis of the texts to be very strong, holistic, contextual, and well-versed in the secondary literature. While my overall assessment of Crowe's work is very positive indeed, I did find some of his positions unconvincing. Jesus' statement on the bodily resurrection in Luke 20:27-40 is important for the topic of "the hope of Israel." Crowe follows a common interpretation that Jesus was referring to the intermediate state of each patriarch's soul. It seems more likely to me that Jesus was referring to their future bodily resurrection. Although they are bodily dead now, at the resurrection they bodily live to God because their God is not the God of the dead but of the living.[1] Regarding the Transfiguration, the relevant texts in the Synoptics and Second Peter depict the event as more about Christology than proleptic of Jesus' future resurrection as Crowe maintains. At his Transfiguration the majesty of his deity as the Son shone in and through his human nature.

I appreciate Crowe's attempt to relate his findings to systematics, but in a few places it strikes me as trying to put a systematics square peg into a biblical round hole. He speaks in terms of God "rewarding" Jesus with the resurrection (pp. 109-110). The speeches in Acts express things in a different way, as setting forth the contrast between Jerusalem's response to Jesus in rejecting him and the response of their God in raising him up from the dead and highly honoring him. I am also not persuaded by Crowe's Reformed view that sees Jesus's exaltation as occurring in both natures, as obtaining a glory in both natures which Jesus did not previously have (p. 109). Yet these issues are rather secondary to Crowe's focus.

Given all the religious confusion and distracting noise in today's context, American Christians need to embark on the journey of rediscovering biblical

1. For a discussion, see Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1-28:20* (Concordia Commentary series; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2018): 1132-1147.

Christianity. When we read through all 66 biblical books in a serious, holistic, and contextual way, we might be surprised at what we encounter. There might emerge in the process accents and emphases that have been overlooked. Crowe's careful study of the resurrection in The Acts of the Apostles offers such fresh insights. I highly recommend it. By virtue of our connection with the crucified and risen Messiah of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth, we too wait and yearn for "the hope of Israel," our bodily resurrection unto eternal life.

Paul R. Raabe
Grand Canyon University

Crisp, Oliver D., James M. Arcadi, and Jordan Wessling, *The Nature and Promise of Analytic Theology*. Leiden: Brill, 2019. vi + 104 pp. €70.00/$84.00.

Ever since the publication of the edited volume, *Analytic Theology: News Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, which formally launched the analytic theology movement in 2009, questions and confusions remain as to what exactly analytic theology (AT) is. Not only do scholars from various disciplines take issue with the qualifier *analytic* in AT, a number of them doubt that AT can even be called *theology* (e.g., Martin Westerholm, "Analytic Theology and Contemporary Inquiry," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 80, no. 3 [2019]: 230–54). After ten years of various attempts at definition, Oliver Crisp as the co-founder of the movement, together with some of his A-Team, James Arcadi and Jordan Wessling, once again take up the task of restating and clarifying a definition in their *The Nature and Promise of Analytic Theology*. In writing this brief, yet substantive monograph, Crisp et al.'s ultimate aim is not simply to respond to some common misunderstandings to AT; rather they aim to highlight how AT has been operating and developing in the past and how it can contribute further to the task of theological construction today.

This monograph is structured around four sets of arguments that serve as cumulative cases for the legitimacy of AT and its benefits. Chapter 1 begins with further defense and clarification of the formal definition of AT given by Michael Rea in 2009 that has since become standard. In so doing, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling note the continuing significance of Rea's paradigmatic prescriptions (P1–P5) of what minimally counts as the analytic style of AT (p. 5). Darren Sarisky ("Biblical Interpretation and Analytic Reflection," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 6 [2018]: 164–65) provides a helpful summary of Rea's P1–P5:

> Analytic philosophers . . . seek to formulate their reasoning so that their core affirmations, or the skeletal outline of their case, could in principle enter into the structure of an argument that may be set out via formal logic; they prioritize precision of statement, transparency of meaning, and the logical coherence of all the beliefs under examination; they write with an austerity

> of style that eschews non-literal language unless it seems indispensable for making a point; they tend to break down complex concepts as much as possible, with the result that they are resolved into more rudimentary elements that are themselves clear and distinct; finally, they move by way of conceptual analysis toward proposals that can cope as well as possible with potential counterexamples.

While agreeing with Rea that AT minimally is defined as an approach to theology that uses the ambitions and style that are distinctive of analytic philosophy, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling propose that AT should also be understood as an intellectual culture. According to them the sociological qualifier, 'intellectual culture,' "helps explain why the nature of analytic theology is difficult to communicate to those who have not experienced firsthand the goals and ways of reasoning that permeate analytic approaches to doctrine" (p. 3). Such a qualifier not only requires an analytic theologian to be "bilingual" in the sense that one has to be able to speak fluently in the languages of analytic philosophy and theology (p. 12–13), but it elucidates partly why many non-analytic thinkers keep misunderstanding what analytic theologians are doing. Lastly, they suggest that AT additionally can be thought of as a "research program" with some common theological commitments that include "[1] some form of theological realism; [2] some claim about the truth-aptness, and truth-aimed nature of analytic theology; and [3] some claim about the importance of providing theological arguments for substantive doctrinal claims that reflect the sort of intellectual virtues and sensibilities prized by analytic theologians" (p. 15). These commitments, though certainly not shared by *all* analytic theologians, do highlight the *theological* nature more substantively rather than just the analytic style of AT.

In chapter 2, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling examine a fourteenth century method of doing theology that serves as a methodological antecedent for AT. In that medieval period, several theologians, including Durandus of St.-Pourçain, Peter Aureoli, Godfrey of Fontains, Gregory of Rimini, and Peter of Candia, operate with what was called as "declarative theology" (p. 20). Durandus, for example, defines declarative theology as "a lasting quality of the soul by means of which the faith and those things handed down in Sacred Scripture are defended and clarified by using principles that we know better" (p. 21). Moreover, following Aureoli, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling mention four functions of declarative theology that can benefit believers, for they might "(a) not understand the terms utilized in the articles, (b) come across defeaters to their belief in the articles, (c) lack examples or analogies, and (d) fail to have probable arguments to support their belief" (p. 25). Just like declarative theology, which uses philosophical reasoning to "imagine in a better and clearer way the things he believes," AT is therefore "unique among methodologies on offer in contemporary Christian theology" (p. 33).

Chapter 3 follows the general thesis of chapter 2 in securing AT as a genuine species of systematic theology. Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling select three contemporary

theologians from various traditions, viz., John Webster, Brian Gerrish, and Gordon Kaufman, to demonstrate that, despite their differences as to what constitutes systematic theology, one can abstract from their work what Crisp and company call the "shared task" or the "conceptual threshold" for systematic theology (p. 38). Against critics who worry that AT is only philosophy or philosophy of religion in theology's clothing, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling show that AT, at its best, has indeed been committed to the shared task of "explicating the conceptual content of the Christian tradition . . . using particular religious texts that are part of the Christian tradition, including sacred scripture, as well as human reason, reflection, and praxis (particularly religious practices), as sources for theological judgments" (p. 38). Moreover, AT cannot easily be dismissed as ersatz theology for deploying a distinct (analytic) philosophical method in addition to the shared task, "since all theologians use philosophical ideas, and very often align themselves with one or more philosophical tradition (Aristotelian, Platonic, existential, continental, hermeneutical, and so on)" (p. 42).

Admittedly, there might be *some* analytic theologians who would not follow closely the shared task closely, either by going too far in attempting to explain away all genuine mysteries of the Christian faith, or by relying too much on what Robert Jenson called "secularized theology" (p. 50). However, one should not overstate the case that *all* AT practitioners operate in a uniform manner. As argued in chapter 1, Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling remind the theological community that AT as an intellectual culture is not "a *bounded group* where a perimeter is policed so that one is either 'out' or 'in.' Rather, it is something more like what might be termed *a centered group*, where we can see a cluster of members that are right at the heart of the movement, and others less central, or more peripheral, with others still further out with some connection, but without being entirely identified with the movement" (pp. 52–53). In short, not all analytic theologians are created equal, so it demands a case-by-case analysis before one judges AT as insufficiently theological.

The final chapter ends with the summary points from the previous arguments and further highlights the promise of AT as a "generative research program" (p. 57). The writers give examples of AT's penchant of providing "theological models" in explicating core doctrines such as the Trinity and the incarnation, including recent developments in less popular ones like apophaticism, liturgy, the Eucharist, and more. Lastly, they note the ultimate appeal of AT: as an intellectual culture, it can indeed be "truly a global and ecumenical enterprise" (p. 67), even an interreligious one, though more work in areas of contextual or comparative AT are admittedly still in their infancy (p. 66). Notwithstanding, looking at how AT has been developing so far, I agree with Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling that "it is perhaps not too bold to say that analytic theology represents one of the most significant developments in recent theological history" (p. 67).

In my estimation, therefore, this monograph succeeds in further clarifying what AT is and is not, and thus modestly promoting AT as an intellectual culture with a distinct, fruitful research program. By way of minor improvements, the authors could have included more thorough discussions (1) on the current state of the analytic/continental divide in philosophy, including how the two camps can work together to achieve the same theological goals, and (2) how AT can help theologians not only to "think God's thoughts after him," but also "to trace their unity" (i.e. the coherence between different *loci* in systematic theology) precisely because "God's thoughts cannot be opposed to one another and thus necessarily from an organic unity" (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008], 1:44). Perhaps (2) also can serve as a link between the typically narrow foci of analytic philosophy and continental philosophy that tend to be "system-builders," thus showing how both camps can and should cooperate in doing theology. With these two augmentations, I believe that this present work would further benefit many analytic and non-analytic thinkers alike in understanding AT, if not already.

Wilson Jeremiah
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Swain, Scott. *The Trinity: An Introduction (Short Studies in Systematic Theology)*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020, pp. 154, $15.99, paperback.

Scott R. Swain serves as president and James Woodrow Hassell Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. In addition to the book being reviewed, he has written *The God of the Gospel* and edited *Retrieving Eternal Generation*. Swain is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America.

In *The Trinity: An Introduction*, Swain seeks to introduce the doctrine of the Trinity. As part of Crossway's series Short Studies in Systematic Theology, the goal of the present volume is to give readers a brief but accurate overview and introduction into the area of the Trinity. While it is a challenging assignment, Swain handles the doctrine of the Trinity with precision.

While not explicitly divided into sections, *The Trinity: An Introduction* functionally has three areas. In chapters 1-3, Swain helps readers gain their footing in thinking about issues of the Trinity. Chapters 1 and 2 cover fundamental matters of grammar and text types that discuss the Trinity. Swain focuses on the need to understand God as one existing in three persons, and these first two chapters focus on that unity of personhood. While focusing on the unity of the personhood of the Trinity, terms are carefully defined, and readers are pointed to specific Biblical texts that show the basic structure and contours of Trinitarian thinking. Chapter three is a helpful description and brief analysis of the doctrine of Divine Simplicity concerning

the Godhead. Simplicity is a difficult doctrine to comprehend, but Swain does an excellent job of helping readers grasp simplicity.

Chapters 4-6 could be described as section two, where Swain addresses issues related to each person of the Trinity. He carefully walks through issues related to all three persons of the Godhead while saturating each person's work with Scripture. Chapter four focuses on God the Father. By concentrating on grammar issues dealing with God the Father, it is possible to see the unique role that the Father plays in the personhood of the Trinity while not confusing the unity and other roles that the Son and Spirit operate. Readers will find Swain's work in chapter five on the Son particularly helpful. Noting the recent discussion and debate on Eternal Functional Subordinationism (EFS), Swain concisely explains the error as he sees it with EFS. While proponents of EFS will disagree with the presented argument, Swain's description of EFS is fair and charitable. The final chapter in this section covers the Spirit's work and the office that the Spirit occupies. Swain is careful to show readers how the Spirit operates while avoiding the issues in holding to EFS.

The final section of the book takes the reader back to the issue of the Godhead once more as chapters 7 and 8 covers the subject of God's work. In chapter seven, Swain reminds readers, "the works of God are not a matter of three friends getting together, each getting together, each doing his part, to accomplish a common goal. Nor are the works of God the exhibition of an indistinct force. The worlds of God are the works of the thrice-holy Trinity" (p. 108). Chapter 7 also returns to the issue of EFS one more time as the missions of God are explained and how those missions should not be seen as subordinationism. Instead, divine missions exhibit both the inseparable nature of God's external works and the Trinitarian shape of God's external works (p. 119). The final chapter of the work focuses on the end of God's work. Swain attempts to pull all of the material together and show how the Trinity helps the church and pastor's as they seek to minister. Swain quickly reminds readers that God's supreme end in His works is a supreme act of charity because nothing enriches God and nothing adds to His glory (p. 127). Readers are helped as they see that the triune God is on full display through preaching and the sacraments provided that He is exalted.

Swain's work on the Trinity is a valuable gift to students and the church alike. The aim of the series and Swain's ability readers seeking to dive deeper into the study of the Trinity will be well served. Not only is the work helpful for students, but lay leaders and church members will also find *The Trinity: An Introduction* an accessible entry point into studying the Trinity. As pastors and theologians need refresher material on Trinitarian issues, Swain's work should be recommended not only for its brevity but for its accessibility.

Swain is also helpful for those looking for concise, careful, and useful rebuttals to the issue of EFS. With only a few pages dedicated in multiple places in the book,

readers can find helpful answers to the debate surrounding the Trinity without feeling overwhelmed.

Readers will need to be aware that just because the volume is short does not mean a lack of technical terminology and work. While not surprising given the nature of the Trinity, but readers will need to be aware nonetheless. Also, while the series is intended to be brief, readers may feel like they are not getting the complete discussion on all topics discussed. It is important to remember that the aim of the volume and the series is to be brief but accurate. Swain helps the reader who wants to dive deeper as his footnotes are helpful extensions of the book's arguments and provide descriptions of useful volumes that will carry the reader deeper into a discussion on the Trinity.

Finally, Swain is to be commended for his work in saturating the book with Scripture. He does an excellent job of walking the reader through brief portions of Scripture on the Trinity and pointing to texts to support his argument further. The textual nature of the book will serve the reader well as they study the Trinity.

David Botts
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018, 279pp, ٢٥£, hardback.

A former Archbishop of Canterbury and recently retired as Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Rowan Williams has long been an influential leader in both church and academy. *Christ the Heart of Creation* builds upon a lecture series given at Cambridge in 2016, although Williams's work on Christology—especially on patristic and mediaeval interpretations of Christ—stretches back to the earliest years of his academic career in the 1970s (p. ix). Few others could have produced a book as erudite yet elastic. The reader will quickly recognise *Christ the Heart of Creation* as the product of nearly five decades' dedicated scholarly research and ecumenical work, a daring and difficult attempt to trace a specific Christological and metaphysical golden thread running through theological writers diverse as Maximus and Aquinas, Calvin and Bonhoeffer.

So, what exactly does Williams want us to know? An early answer comes from the (quietly Johannine) title, that Jesus Christ is the living core of all things under God. The *who* of Christ can tell us much about the *how* of the cosmos. Williams's task is thus: to draw out the mutuality between the doctrines of Christology and creation and consider what implications this has for how we think about our relationship with God. Williams begins with the underappreciated Anglican theologian and philosopher Austin Farrer—who in 1948 gave an important lecture series on the imagination, later published as *The Glass of Vision*—as a reliable guide to point us through some deep metaphysical thickets without losing sight of the person of Christ. It is Farrer who indicates the way Williams must take through his questioning of the 'finite/

infinite distinction' (p. 6) as it relates to divine and human *agency*. How is it that God may act sovereignly in his creation *through* free human agents? For Williams, the critical point to observe is the (asymmetrical) causal continuity between infinite and finite agents. 'Infinite agency' cannot be 'excluded' by any finite act in the same way that an act of Peter is thus not an act of Paul, lest the infinite be made a mere 'thing' alongside another such 'thing' (p. 4). Williams is after an understanding of finite and infinite agency that preserves both the integrity of createdness *and* God's creative, sustaining, and redemptive power. Here a revelatory act is less an interruption of the finite than 'a particular configuration of finite agency such that it communicates more than its own immanent content' (p. 5). In very broad terms, Williams's claim is that historical Christological doctrine helps Christians realise that natural and supernatural are not two distinct spheres held in opposition.

The book is comprised of two parts. The first covers the development of classical Christology, from Augustine to Aquinas, without forgetting the major Byzantines along the way. Williams conducts a tour of the Church's earliest centuries that is measured, profound, and a little bit dizzying. Thomas in particular is singled out as the great synthesiser of preceding tradition. Like Farrer, Thomas assiduously wants to avoid disjoining natural from supernatural, and Williams stakes much of his argument on the Angelic Doctor's grand vision of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, second person of the Trinity, as a single *esse* (pp. 12-26). The book's second part shifts its focus to consider the contributions of the magisterial reformers and their descendants. Williams makes clear that Luther's somewhat idiosyncratic vision of Christ is surpassed by the more careful work of Calvin (Williams suggesting—not unlike Julie Canlis—that Calvin is not out of step with the patristic inheritance [p. 166]), before working up to the complex Christologies of biblically and doctrinally astute twentieth-century figures like Barth and Bonhoeffer and, in the conclusion, Erich Przywara. There is no excess in a book this slender, and every theologian is included for good reason; Williams's ressourcement of the classic theological claim that the finite *is* only by the infinite is solidly rooted in the Church's common witness that Christ is man *and* God. Ultimately all of these thinkers help Williams affirm the holiest 'paradox' of Christological tradition: 'only the creator can fully exhibit what it means to be a creature' (p. 239).

Particularly encouraging is Williams's prolonged and very positive interaction with Bonhoeffer's Christology. While deservedly well-known for his courageous ethical and political witness in Nazi Germany, Bonhoeffer was also a superlative academic theologian and it is a delight to see Williams's bring the German pastor into constructive dialogue with confreres both contemporary and historical. Williams puts Bonhoeffer very close to Farrer and Aquinas in his articulating a Christocentric finite-infinite relationship, refusing, like them, 'to see the integrity of the finite somehow disrupted or diminished by the infinite' (p. 194). Throughout his analysis, Williams rightly emphasizes Bonhoeffer's uncompromising Chalcedonianism, that

is, how Christ is for Bonhoeffer the unique embodiment and possibility of the 'non-competitive relation of Creator and creature' (p. 216). The choice for Bonhoeffer as his modern example of the theological position Williams had earlier referred to as 'mutual illumination that connects Christology with the doctrine of creation' (p. xiii) is inspired, for it helps cast a much broader ecclesial light on Bonhoeffer's early "sociology of the Church" (from *Sanctorum Communio*, his dissertation) and how this thoroughly incarnational approach had developed by the time of his execution in 1945.

Somewhat less inspiring is the book's relative lack of discussion on theologies of creation as such, which, while somewhat beside the point Williams is trying to make, are today increasingly important. Given that Williams is an active supporter of greater ecological responsibility, some reflection on the specifically ecological implications of his Christological theses would have been a relevant and welcome expansion and would no doubt have helped to advance ongoing conversations within this popular sub-discipline. Furthermore, Williams is not famous as a biblical scholar, and his introductory discussion of the New Testament will be all-too-brief for some.

In sum, *Christ the Heart of Creation* is a characteristic achievement of scholarship that, in its subtly ecumenical outlook, takes Paul's insistence on the one-ness of the Church as Christ's body (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 20) with the utmost seriousness. *Caveat lector*: this is an advanced, densely argued book, quite different from the author's more popular-level books (although no less impactful). The reader should pay attention to Williams's balancing of biblical reference with careful theological and philosophical reflection; although far from being a Thomist work *per se*, Aquinas is more than just another historical source for Williams, and acknowledging this will better position the reader to appreciate some of the moves made by Williams. His efforts will be of most help to graduate students and ministers looking to expand upon an existing knowledge of creedal Christology and/or historical theology. In reference to his contemporaries, Williams's rhetoric is probably more accessible than, say, that of David Bentley Hart or John Milbank, but his concern for an intelligent Christianity that can still preach to the world beyond the sanctuary is no less rigorous or relevant than anything found in these similarly philosophical theologians. Like Bonhoeffer before him, Williams wants to explicate *who* Jesus Christ is for us *today*, a task he carries out with commensurate knowledge and skill.

Alex Michael Trew
University of Aberdeen

Farris, Joshua R. *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020, 336, $29.99, softcover.

Joshua R. Farris (PhD, University of Bristol) is Executive Director of Alpine Christian School and former assistant professor of theology at Houston Baptist University. Farris has edited and written numerous works on anthropology, making him ideally suited to pen an introduction to theological anthropology.

While questions of anthropology continue to dominate contemporary discussions within and without the church, the academic resources providing both introductions and specialized focus lag. This makes Farris's *Introduction to Theological Anthropology* a welcome source. Farris covers all the major areas in theological anthropology, expanding beyond what is typically found in overtly theological material or overtly philosophical material. He writes as a sort of bridge between theology and philosophy, engaging the questions, topics, and ideas from both disciplines in a single volume. There are chapters on human identity and ontology (e.g. materialism vs. substance dualism vs. hylemorphism, etc.), human origins, the *imago dei*, free will, original sin, Christological anthropology, culture (e.g. race, disability, and work), gender and sexuality, the afterlife, and the *telos* of humanity. Each chapter attempts to provide a high-level summary, explaining the various views and offering several costs and benefits to each. Farris does not always take sides in these debates. His overall goal with the volume is to "advance an overarching vision of humanity that is consistent with ancient and biblically driven views of the human and that, at the same time, is commensurate with and informed by contemporary reflections from the sciences" (p. xviii). Methodologically, he works from Scripture as the norm that norms all other norms but maintains other theological authorities such as creedal statements, conciliar statements, confessional statements, great theologians, reason, and experience (p. 5). The fundamental premise he presupposes throughout the work is that humans *are* souls (xvii).

Now, I think there are several aspects of this volume worthy of specific commendation. First, Farris covers a huge array of topics, providing a comprehensive *introduction* to numerous topics and debates. Whether the reader agrees with his conclusions or not, they will benefit from being exposed to the wide range of ideas. This is the book's greatest benefit and what makes it so useful for undergraduate level classrooms. It will allow students to be exposed to all the major topics and debates in anthropology in one single volume. Second, given his philosophical acumen, he makes a very helpful distinction in chapter 1 between "personal" and "narrative" identity (p. 45). Typically, volumes use "identity" language and mean "narrative" but never explain this. By offering this clear distinction and explaining each, he provides readers with a beneficial resource for navigating these discussions. Third, his distinctions on the versions of the soul (pure soul, kind soul, hybrid soul) is helpful (pp.

64-65). Fourth, his summary of the *imago dei* and the various views is tremendous. Moreover, his conclusion that while the *imago dei* may not be identical to a substance view (the view that identifies the image with certain properties or capacities), that any view ultimately requires *at least* the substance view is perceptive (89).

While more could be said regarding various strengths of the volume, there are also potential weaknesses. And given the need for *critical* book reviews that are more than mere summaries, I will engage five specific examples in order of ascending importance. As a disclaimer: I have numerous misgivings with his defense of substance dualism, though this is partially my own bias. Therefore, I attempt to limit my critiques at this point to the areas that I find lacking in substantial argumentation rather than mere disagreement.

First, I found it frustrating that Farris does not always clearly say which view he advances. Given that he takes such a controversial opinion as substance dualism from the beginning, I would expect him to continue to be clear as to which positions are preferrable throughout. But he doesn't do this. For example, when discussing the old earth view of creation and how humans are related to Adam, he doesn't take a position and doesn't help the reader determine which might best fit Scripture and tradition (p. 60). While an introduction doesn't necessarily need to have the author plant his flag in every area, given that he has already done so in potentially more controversial areas is curious to me. Now, it is possible that he simply doesn't have a strong opinion on some of these and therefore wants to avoid making a decision, which is fair. However, more importantly, many times when he fails to defend a position, he *doesn't guide the reader* in thinking about which may be preferrable. With this said, it would be too hasty to conclude that he *never* guides the reader or that he *never* makes a firm conclusion. He does this on many, if not most, occasions. However, the times that he doesn't are a missed opportunity.

Second, when discussing personal identity, he repeatedly claims that the soul can account for it while materialism cannot since the body changes every day (pp. 32, 37, 42, 44). But the claim that bodies continually replace themselves has scientifically been proven *false*. There *are* parts of bodies that never change throughout our lives. While some of our parts change, not all of them do. Moreover, there are reasons to reject the claim that mere change in parts is sufficient for change in the whole. Therefore, the argument against versions of materialism from the persistence of identity ought to focus elsewhere than naïve mereological replacement views.

Third, his definition of Reformed theology is overly broad and misleading. He claims Reformed theology is "the tradition that renovated the church by steering it away from the doctrinal excesses found in the Roman Catholic Church…." (p. 5). Elsewhere in a footnote he says that Reformed theology "is a reference to a sociological and ecclesiological tradition that is broader than Calvinistic soteriology" (p. 11). While it is true that Reformed theology necessarily must be these things, it is more than them. And while there are internal debates regarding many historic "Reformed"

doctrines, they have boundaries that are tighter than Farris allows. Thus, the way he uses 'Reformed' is an improper use of the term and one that is likely unrecognizable to most of his readers. A better term for what Farris means is 'Protestant.' 'Reformed' is usually historically reserved for those streams of Protestantism that confess the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Thirty-Nine Articles, etc. Admittedly, his problematic usage of Reformed is not universal throughout the book and he regularly seeks to buttress his writing from traditional Reformed sources.

Fourth, he mentions early in the book that there are two necessary conditions for a church to be catholic. His second necessary condition includes "some understanding of [baptismal] regeneration" (p. 7). However, this is decidedly *non-catholic* given the overwhelming contemporary Protestant opinion that rejects baptismal regeneration. While his emphasis is on the necessity of a sacramental order of the church, which is absolutely commendable and needed, I do not think this mention of baptismal regeneration was necessary for the argument of the book. It would have been better to remove this unless he was willing to spend a sufficient amount of space defining and defending it.

My fifth and final critique is similar to my first. There is a serious unevenness with *some* of his critiques of various positions. To be clear, most of the chapters evidence fairness in argumentation. However, there are others that are seriously lacking. While Farris has full rights to ignore potential solutions to views he rejects, he gives such scant attention to the alternatives of views he rejects it is rather disappointing. For example, in his chapter on freedom, he provides a section devoted to a critique of compatibilism. However, libertarianism receives no such treatment. It is assumed as true because it is "the commonsense view" (p. 123). While I have no problem with defending positions in an introduction (as noted in my first critique, I prefer it!), I find it unhelpful to not provide a list of true costs and benefits for every view—including one's chosen views.

So, how should the biblical-theological student interact with this book? As mentioned, it would make a great main text for undergraduate students to introduce them to the wide range of issues in theological anthropology. His treatment covers far more ground than other works such as Marc Cortez's *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, making it an ideal resource. Therefore, those considering what textbook they should use for classroom type settings should give serious consideration to it. For those unfamiliar with the terrain of anthropology and many of the philosophical disputes yet interested in beginning to understand them, Farris speaks in an understandable way that would allow anyone to understand the issues. Ultimately, while I have criticisms of the book, I think it provides a readable reliable guide to the topics and is especially useful for classrooms.

Jordan L. Steffaniak
Wake Forest, NC

Sollereder, Bethany N. *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering: Theodicy without a Fall*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2019, pp. 202, $48.95, paperback.

Bethany Sollereder (PhD, Exeter) is a systematic theologian and postdoctoral fellow in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford. She writes on theodicy, animals, interpretations of Genesis, and science and religion.

Sollereder's outstanding book asks how "a good and loving God [can] create through an evolutionary process involving such suffering, death, extinction, and violence" (p. 4). It is not a defense of Christian theism in light of the violence of evolutionary history, but an exploration of ways to understand the God-world relation in light of what is so baffling about evolution. Taking a line from Christopher Southgate, she explains her project "arise[s] out of protest and end[s] in mystery" (p. 4).

Blending an account of love borrowed from Aquinas and an Open Theist take on divine action, Sollereder tells a creative, complex, and at turns, mystifying story. She argues the disvalue of evolutionary suffering is a necessary byproduct of God's generous gift of being to creatures and refusal to 'micromanage' (p. 183) the trajectory of any individual or species' growth and development. Furthermore, no disvalue is beyond the possibility of redemption because of God's infinite, creative love. She critiques approaches to the problem where the supposed benefit brought about through suffering neither affirms the value of animals' lives nor benefits the actual individuals that suffer (p. 50). She likewise rejects theological models that propose too revisionary an account of divine attributes (p.67).

In chapter 2, Sollereder contests traditional interpretations of the Bible where natural evils, or as she prefers, disvalues, are explained by appeal to the fall of humans and/or angels. Arguing that the natural world *itself* was never corrupted, she argues that the Genesis 3 curse on how humans relate to the earth was lifted with the advent of the Noahide covenant (p. 36). Hebrew Bible scholars will find her arguments here of interest.

In chapter 3 she offers an overview of recent suggestions for theodicies and appropriates Southgate's "only way" argument, which says "an evolutionary process is the only way to create life without constant intervention" (p. 52), where that life boasts the kind of diversity and freedom we see in the world. This affirms the value of that diversity and freedom, and likewise holds that law-like causal relations free from divine intervention make the world navigable for both humans and animals—a benefit both can enjoy. As Sollereder notes, the goodness of nomic regularity for each individual is not always proportionate to how much any individual suffers, so there has to be more to the story (p. 55). Sollereder takes line that a compound of multiple approaches is required for addressing evolutionary suffering (p. 79-80).

In chapter 4, Sollereder begins with Eleonore Stump's version of Thomas Aquinas' definition of love: a conjunction of desires for union with the beloved and for the good of the beloved (p. 94). She argues this definition requires that divine love is

particular to each individual and essentially noncoercive. From there she examines how a world made in love would contain creatures given significant freedom, and how the freedom afforded creation might help us understand the coexistence of an infinitely loving God and evolutionary suffering.

In chapter 5 she turns to a version of Open Theism where God limits God's own knowledge in order to make room for significant creaturely freedom. According to Sollereder, God is temporal, watching evolution unfold as time elapses. God does not know the path evolution will take or the choices any individuals will make. God does not even know what God will do in the future (p. 112). But since the limits on God's knowledge are self-imposed, it is not beyond the scope of God's power to find creative ways to bring about redemption in the end, even if that ending will be a surprise to God. Furthermore, in stepping out of Classical Theism, she is able to claim that God is able to co-suffer with creation (p. 112).

Her emphasis on non-intervention as entailment of divine love and her embrace of Open Theism position Sollereder to argue that God is not on the dock for all the natural tragedies in evolutionary history. There is value in what she calls 'selving,' a process of self-realization through the exercise of one's powers and particular characteristics. The powers an animal exercises in selving are ones that can create goods for it and for its kind but can also create disvalues. She summarizes the significance of selving,

> a creation made in love would necessarily involve allowing creatures to "selve" with significant freedom. Creatures would selve without micromanagement into lions and lettuce, dinosaurs and diphtheria. Life was not drawn inexorably along fortuitous lines of descent but was allowed to develop according to each creature's own needs and agency, sustained by the unflinching generosity of God to all life" (p. 183).

To deny creatures the opportunity to selve would be a failure of love.

Lastly, Sollereder speculates about redemptive possibilities for creatures, both in this life and the next. The clearest form of immanent redemption Sollereder considers is ecological (p. 158). The death of an individual creature can restore energy to the soil, which can nourish plants, which can sustain an ecosystem, and so forth. Possibilities for immanent redemption, whatever they amount to, stress the value of each life that is lived so that the goodness of those lives does not just materialize in the eschaton.

Since Sollereder seeks a narrative where the value of each life is affirmed *and* where the outweighing goods connected with suffering are ones that benefit the animals themselves, she must appeal to the afterlife. She argues for the possibility that every living thing will be resurrected and enjoy life with God in heaven. There the suffering contained within each creature's life will be a source of glory for that creature (p. 168). The role that creatures played in the bigger narrative of God's

work—culminating in the Christ event—will be part of a whole that brings good out of their past suffering. Here she makes good on her promissory note that the project ends in mystery.

How might the ecological and eschatological levels of redemption fit together? She says that "the meaning of a good life is a gift given by God in an act of eschatological creativity" (p. 169) Sollereder's explanation bottoms out in metaphor, hinting at how that the different levels of redemption are connected. She utilizes an image employed by Stump: a fractal where the organizing principle of each part recurs at each ascending level of complexity of a structural whole. The story of an individual's redemption is nested within a larger story of the ecological whole, which is in turn nested within and even bigger story—each bearing similarities in narrative structure.

Sollereder is sympathetic to Trent Dougherty's defense for animal suffering, where resurrected animals level up in heaven and acquire the cognitive capacities necessary to see their suffering as defeated (p. 168). Dougherty's suggestion is promising, but I fear Sollereder's emphasis on the essentially non-coercive nature of divine love and the value of selving might undercut any such move. If it is inconsistent with divine love for God to nudge the mechanisms of evolution to soften its violent tendencies, surely any means of causing animals to level up in heaven would be even more inconsistent. If selving is not just a necessary consequence of permitting nomic regularity, but an entailment of divine love, it's not clear how radical transformations of any sort would be possible.

I see further worries about the role that selving plays in her account. Despite saying that God's love is particular to each individual, in claiming the permission for selving is universally required by divine love, Sollereder seems to apply the same conditions for love between persons to love between persons and non-persons. In Stump's explanation of Aquinas' view, God would be failing to love an individual if God were to coercively influence that individual's free will. That is because the union desired in love requires the union of two wills—God's and the beloved's—not a unilateral imposition. But would it be unloving to use coercion against a creature who does not have free will? The question is actually pretty thorny and turns on our understanding of animals' agential capacities.

On the one hand, Sollereder is right that [many] animals have significant agency—they are not mere creatures of instinct. On the other hand, I would argue that whatever kind of agency animals have is different not just in degree from human agency, but different in kind—at least for the vast majority of non-human species. Animals cannot take higher-order evaluative stances toward their own desires and motivations. While they can choose to act or refrain from acting in particular ways, it is far from obvious that these choices are the product of any kind of deliberation.

These differences matter for two reasons. First, I suspect that the value of having the ability to satisfy one's own desires and exercise agency depends on the *strength*

of one's agency. If a creature lacks self-awareness, cannot conceive of its own good as such, or appreciate its own exercise of freedom, just how valuable can selving be, at least *for that animal?* While it might be aesthetically valuable or conducive to nomic regularity for creatures to develop by the exercise of their own powers, how is that kind of freedom a good that animals can experience subjectively? And if it's not a subjective good for animals, what kind of good for them can it be?

Furthermore, when it comes to human relations, we tend to think that paternalism can be appropriate, and maybe obligatory, toward individuals with limited agency. Arguably, the level of independence one ought to give someone they love depends on the degree to which they are able to exercise freedom. The freedom I extend my teenager in love would be terribly unloving if extended toward his much younger sibling.

Something similar strikes me as the right way to think about paternalism towards animals, too. The good shepherd builds a fence around his sheep and guides them with his staff. The loving dog-owner forces his animal to go veterinarian, even against the dog's protest. Maybe these examples are slanted toward domesticated animals, but a similar point stands when it comes to wild animals, too. If an endangered animal's habitat were irreparably encroached by human occupation, it would be best to relocate the animal, against its wishes, if such relocation would give it a better chance at flourishing and its species a better chance at survival. I hesitate to use the term because it's so heavily freighted, but this might be part of what it means for humans to have dominion over creation. And if humans can exercise such providence over animals, directing them toward their own particular ends, surely a loving creator could so too.

Sollereder does not place all her bets on the value of selving, so the foregoing is not a deal breaker for her approach. But there is something very clever in her claim that selving is a consequence of divine love. Many theodicies and defenses for evolutionary suffering appeal to the value of non-interventional mechanisms for bringing about diversity in creation. But where in most other accounts that is a global good unconnected to the good of individuals who suffer, Sollereder is able to point to how God's non-intervention is actually evidence of God's love for those that suffer. While I think she might be on to something here, I think the details will turn on empirical facts about the strength of animal's agency and normative facts about how great a good that agency is for them as individuals.

A further tension comes from Sollereder's use of a Thomistic account of love and Open Theism. She argues in short order that the Thomistic account of love necessitates an Open Theist conception of the God-world relation because of the centrality of freedom in willing the good for the other. Aquinas, of course, didn't see things that way. He and Stump both hold that God loves all things God has made, that God does not contravene the will of free creatures, and at the same time, God is impassible, *a se*, and outside of time. There are plenty of puzzles for Classical theism

about how God can then be responsive to the world, for sure, and interesting ways in which Aquinas, Stump, and many others respond. Classical Theism does not get any airtime in the book, and it would be interesting to see what elements of her model might be available for use by the more classically inclined, especially given the pride of place the author gives to Aquinas/Stump, and Sollereder's concern to avoid too great a revision of divine attributes.

In the end, I find many of the moving parts in Sollereder's model attractive and the breadth of issues she brings together impressive. She engages with the sciences with care and creativity, and her guiding intuitions about the value of animals' lives are refreshingly humane. This is the most comprehensive treatment of the problem of evolutionary suffering on offer, and her presentation of the state of play in theological literature is tremendously helpful. In short, anyone interested in the problem of evolutionary suffering would do well to pay careful attention to this exciting book.

Faith Glavey Pawl
University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Leidenhag, Joanna. *Minding Creation: Theological Panpsychism and the Doctrine of Creation*. London: T&T Clark, 2021. 224 pages. $120.00.

Minding Creation is the first full-length treatment of panpsychism for contemporary theological construction. Similar treatments from different perspectives have been published and come to mind that provide similar fruitful discussions. Just consider two recent representative examples: J. T. Turner *On the Resurrection of the Dead* and my *The Soul of Theological Anthropology.* All three provide interesting constructive theological treatments of a particular doctrine by drawing from a particular position within the philosophy of mind. Turner advances a theological construction using a version of hylomorphism and I advance a constructive, and in some ways exploratory, defense of Cartesianism. These represent some of the more recent analytic theological literature that moves beyond philosophy of religion to contemporary constructive theology.

Leidenhag approaches the doctrine of God's relationship to creation through a consideration of panpsychism. Panpsychism is the view that mentality is fundamental to the natural world such that it permeates the whole world. She is clear that panpsychism, which serves as a broad category for a host of nuanced positions about the mind, is compatible with distinct comprehensive ontological theories instead of entailing just one (e.g., process theism, panentheism, pantheism, and other totalizing systems). It is even consistent with versions of Perfect Being Theology and classical theism (see especially pp. 105-37). Her case begins with a state of the art on what she sees as the popular bridge position between science and theology, namely emergentism, which is a kind of *via media* for physicalism and substance dualism. After a survey of the literature, Leidenhag raises concerns with emergentism. Some

versions of emergentism are too weak either to do justice to the nature of minds (e.g., they often amount to a reduction) or results in some rather exotic, and unpalatable, theological ideas (pp. 13-45). This sets up her pivot to a consideration of panpsychism.

According to Leidenhag, we have good reasons for accepting panpsychism, and she sees little to no cost in accepting it (see chapter 2). Taking her cues from the patriarchs of panpsychism (e.g., Nagel, Chalmers, and Strawson), panpsychism's greatest appeal is that it provides a simple explanation of a set of desiderata central to philosophy of mind and theology. First, it provides a monism of mind and matter without buying into the bifurcation of the world found in substance dualism. Second, it takes seriously the mind as a feature of the world (i.e., mental realism) that is unexplainable on materialism. Third, it avoids reductionistic explanations. Fourth, it avoids predicating magical emergent properties to matter, which amount to a version of creation ex-nihilo—an obvious problem for many theists. But, there is an interesting development. Where the patriarchs operate out of a secular framework as birthed from dissatisfaction with the merits of materialism, Leidenhag seeks to kindle the connection between panpsychism and theism (p. 81)—something she believes is quite natural, which she takes as an advantage over substance dualism. Accordingly, panpsychism has two advantages over dualism. First, panpsychism does not require the "radically different origin stories" (pp. 172-3) between the soul and the body. Second, panpsychism supplies a simpler, harmonious explanation of the soul's origins without God's constant and ongoing creation of souls at every moment that embryos come into existence.

Next, Leidenhag considers one historical proponent of panpsychism in Christian theology: Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. She provides a fascinating discussion based on the principle of sufficient reason. The discussion certainly raises another question worth exploring—namely, what is the difference between panpsychism and idealism? For Leibniz's ontological views have been taken to be a version of idealism, yet panpsychism is often considered a distinct ontology. The views are cousins if not siblings. Fascinating itself, there's more to chew.

The last two chapters are the most constructive. Considering three proposals for divine action, Leidenhag shows how panpsychism can accommodate and deepen differing accounts from interventionist non-compatibilism, process theism, and the doctrine of double agency. Finally, Leidenhag draws out several implications for eco-theology in a way that permits a ground for a sacramental theology because God is able to be present to creation in a way that is impermissible on dualistic and interventionist pictures of the God-world relationship, or so it is commonly argued. In other words, to her lights, what panpsychism gets us is both Divine transcendence and immanence because mentality promotes ontological space for Divine action to permeate the whole world (p. 173).

As with all three works listed above, each places one doctrine under the microscope. The other works focus on the doctrine of personal eschatology and

theological anthropology while Leidenhag's focus is creation more broadly. But what is clear from each systematic analysis is how much all three doctrines so permeate the other that the implications tend to blend under microscopic detection. For this reason, Leidenhag is right to delineate theological anthropology as one natural place to continue panpsychism research. Her work secures several points for fertile reflection (p. 172).

With all that has been said of a positive nature, and there is much more to say beyond the confines of this short review, there are some philosophical and theological concerns. The first is philosophical, and to be fair, Leidenhag calls attention to it early on. It is called the combination problem to panpsychism, which is the problem of lower level consciousness's, or dispositional proprieties, comprising and giving rise to a higher-order consciousness of a singular agent. Similar to the problem from physicalism, how it is that several singular bits could combine to comprise a one individual consciousness is utterly mysterious and likely incoherent. She is aware of this problem and grants that it is a substantive problem to which she offers a couple possible solutions from the literature. What is not clear is whether she places enough weight on this problem. As I see it, unless she were to affirm a form of absolute idealism of which panpsychism were a species, she cannot account for the consciousness of individual subjects. It appears that a version of Creationist Cartesian dualism or idealism, in which subjects of conscious experience are primitive particulars, is necessary to account for consciousness as we know it. That's a more serious consideration, but a less serious one is theological in nature.

Second, it is not clear that panpsychism provides any advantage over idealism, e.g., Berkeley's subject idealism, unless she considers the mind-independent reality of the material something worth preserving, but that is a value that would need some justifying. I have already noted a couple of similarities between the views above, but, it seems to me that all the desiderata mentioned through *Minding Creation* could be satisfied by Berkeley's idealism. Berkeley's idealism, as I understand it, affirms the following propositions: 1. All physical objects are phenomenal products of the Divine mind. 2. Humans are immaterial subjects of consciousness. 3. God communicates physical properties to created minds (i.e., human minds). Berkeley's idealism permits a unified picture of the world where God is both transcendent and immanent. It avoids the bifurcated picture that is posited by radical dualisms. It avoids interventionism because there is no absolute independence between material substances and minds. It avoids incompatibilism. Divine action is compatible with the natural world precisely because the whole world is comprised of phenomenal perceptions, which are Divine communications. Finally, it permits a sacramental understanding of the natural world. God just is present to the world and all events in it.

Leidenhag's *Minding Creation* would serve graduate students and scholars interested in the analytic theology of creation and theological anthropology. It might also serve as a supplementary text in a course on the doctrine of creation because she

covers several up-to-date theories on Divine action. It would be true to say that this is the best treatment of panpsychism in a theological context, yet that is because it is the only book-length defense of the view in a theological context. It is unique in that way, which makes it groundbreaking.

Joshua R. Farris
Professor of Theology of Science, Missional University
Lecturer in Ethics, Auburn University at Montgomery

Migliazzo, Arlin C. *Mother of Modern Evangelicalism: The Life & Legacy of Henrietta Mears*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. Pp. xviii + 338. $29.99, paperback.

A "human dynamo" for the Lord is how the *Christian Century* described her in 1950 (p. 253). Recounting the most successful church in the Southwest of the time, First Presbyterian of Hollywood, the *Century*'s reporter spent about as much time detailing the senior pastor, as it did enchanted by a 60 year-old, bespectacled, matronly-appearing single woman who headed its renowned Christian education program and had the L.A. youth hooked on Christianity: Henrietta Mears. In this first scholarly biography of Mears (1890-1963), we get to see clearly why. Through a rich and vivid chronicle of Mears's life, Migliazzo, Emeritus Professor of History at Whitworth University in Washington State, offers us deep insight into her personality and an enriched understanding of her multifaceted public ministry. The book deftly and sensitively portrays this remarkable--and previously underappreciated--"architect" (p. 263) at the heart of American Evangelicalism's transformative mid-century moment. If sobriquets are any index of influence, Migliazzo shows us how, from the 1920s to the 1950s, Mears was, quite simply, Evangelical America's "Teacher."

The book's journey begins with a thoughtful survey of Mears's upbringing: from her birth in Fargo, SD, to her family's travels across the upper midwest, to her formation at fundamentalist headquarters First Baptist in Minneapolis, MN, pastored by the legendary William Bell Riley. Especially influenced in her spiritual life by her mother, Mears found her "solace and stability" in the bedrock Christian message and her church community (p. 29). Her intellectual talents carried to the University of Minnesota, where she majored in chemistry and defined a lifelong positive and creative "relationship between Christian faith and the world's wisdom" (p. 35). Inspired by the evangelistic radio of Paul Rader and the Keswick deeper Christian life spirituality, Mears still strove to conform her life to the maxim, "If He is not Lord *of* all, He is not Lord *at* all" (p. 264). Discovering her true calling as an educator, she launched a career as a public school teacher. A pedagogical innovator and popular mentor, she saw holistic learning as the "dynamic development of the conduct and character of the pupil" (p. 37) and demonstrated special talent for coalescing vibrant communal cultures and motivating notable generosity (p. 49). As

she grew in renown for administrative acumen, pedagogical ingenuity, and cultural savvy, Mears was recruited to become Director of Christian Education at the massive First Presbyterian in California, where she moved in 1928.

From here, Migliazzo's biography turns thematic, cataloguing the striking success, multiple elements, and dense networks of influence radiating out from that role. Initially, she vivified the Sunday School, which boomed in zeal and attendance (pp. 280-82). From there, she developed a compelling Christian educational program for all ages, but especially college students. Her program amalgamated a confident exposition of the Bible; a highly relational approach to ministry; an exacting work ethic for Christian leadership and training; elaborate programming; and a "winsome" engagement with the intellectual and cultural questions of the day (pp. 86, 8). Overflowing from stunning success in the local congregation, Mears pioneered wider ministries: Gospel Light Publications distributed Christian educational curricula and resources to a voracious readership around the world (pp. 122-28). Forest Home Retreat Center served as an epicenter for faith-based conferences. All the while, she penned books on spirituality and captivated vast audiences with lectures on how to reach young people with the gospel message. Her classic orientation to the grand scope of the scriptures, *What the Bible is All About* (1953), sold an estimated 2 million copies by the 1960s in multiple printings.

The crucial argument of Migliazzo's book is that Mears should be considered at the center of the "evangelical reconfiguration" (p. 10) of mid-century, due to her role in forging extensive coalitions and her ethos in merging an ardently orthodox Christianity with an ecumenical cultural openness. If we see this era's Evangelicalism as characterized by its delicate balance of a traditional Christian message, call to personal transformation, and its renewed missional impulse to cross boundaries and address new contexts, then surely this major claim is correct. Even when relatively more diffuse, Mears's wider circle of influence was an astonishing omnibus of crucial, influential Evangelical figures and institutions, demonstrating the seductive pull of elite power in this phase of Evangelical outreach. Mears formatively influenced those from Billy Graham to Campus Crusade for Christ's Bill Bright to Young Life's Jim Rayburn to The Navigators' Dawson Trotman to "Mears's boys" around the country who became pastors, parachurch ministry leaders, and U. S. Capitol Chaplains. Adding to Migliazzo's explicit list, she would even be responsible for hiring one of the pastors who helped launch the Jesus People movement.

The book brims with vivid detail and lavish primary textual sources, drawing from an impressive array of archival sources and print publications. Migliazzo has an astute eye for the earthy, granular, and gritty realism of social history: this is a book delightfully chock-full of spitwads, class pennants, chemistry lab explosions, and Bible flannelgraphs. At the same time, he shows an admirable humility in the limitations and parameters of historical epistemology, and what can and can't be honestly extracted from primary source material. This all leads to a book highly

attentive to the idiosyncrasies of its figure and careful about fitting her into any hasty generalizations or tidy narratives. That said, the book can be read as making substantial contributions to two of the more recent, prominent trends in Evangelical historiography: the gender and business paradigms, respectively, even while it challenges the reductionist temptations of both that can flatten Evangelical religious culture to one dimension.

The book overflows from a cascade of impressive studies on Evangelical women: first with the pioneering work of Nancy Hardesty, then into Margaret Bendroth's *Fundamentalism and Gender*, Marie Griffith's *God's Daughters*; Julie Ingersoll's *Evangelical Christian Women*, Emily Johnson's *This is Our Message*, and Kate Bowler's *The Preacher's Wife*. And it is situated within a splendid roll call of biographies that enlarge and enrich the genre, for example, Edith Blumhofer on Aimee Semple MacPherson, Jennifer Miskov on Carried Judd Montgomery, Catherine Brekus on Sarah Osborn, and Amy Collier Artman on Kathryn Kuhlman. These all detail strong Evangelical women who pushed the boundaries of spiritual power, influence, and leadership, even while precariously navigating and deftly negotiating traditional gender roles, restrictions, and expectations. As Migliazzo concludes, "For a theologically conservative female to exert such power seems to fly in the face of conventional wisdom regarding the role of women in the twentieth-century church" (p. 272).

Mears herself exercised immense amounts of power and influence in Evangelical networks, even while adhering to a complementarian, conservative theology about men's preaching and ordination and while restricting the presidency of her college ministry to men. Migliazzo's book can be read beneficially in tandem with another of this year's key Evangelical histories: Kristin Kobes du Mez's excruciatingly necessary *Jesus and John Wayne*. While du Mez's analysis is essential, it will also be important going forward to note that an exclusive focus on aggressive and destructive masculinity does not exhaust the Evangelical gender story or give a full account of the historical record.

So, Migliazzo's book exhibits a plethora of merits. There could be some quibbles, nevertheless. Seemingly confining the critical edges to a single chapter of "paradoxes and limitations" towards the end (pp. 221-51) had the downside of giving large swaths of the early parts of the book an impression of potential imbalance. That material could have been beneficially interspersed throughout the narrative. In the chapter, Migliazzo does detail Mears's human edges of character, habit, and circumstance. But some of these appear meager assessments by that point in the text. The account of race, in particular, is strikingly underwhelming. While, yes, Migliazzo does briefly detail Mears's problematic views on the subject (pp. 243-47), overall this was analytically anemic. More contextualization could have situated this in the crucial role that racial dynamics have played in Evangelicalism's relationship to American culture.

At a number of points, Migliazzo tries to sympathize with Mears's oversights on social issues as pragmatic and lauds her refusal to "politicize the gospel" (p. 264). There is both an aspect of hermeneutical holism to that approach and an encouraging contrast to the emergence of the Religious Right's combatively political gospel. At the same time, there is an interpretive neglect here of the politics of becoming political and the politics involved in political avoidance. Lastly, Migliazzo might have given more attention to Mears's singleness. There is a flash of commentary on it (p. 41), but given the primacy of marriage and family values in Evangelical circles, the importance of the single vocation has often been diminished. Mears exemplifies a vibrant single life dedicated to Christian life and ministry, while many singles have struggled with an awkward status and enigmatic roles given them by the church.

On the whole, still, this is a superb and captivating biography of a crucial figure in the history of American Evangelicalism. It will be essential reading for all students of American church history and religious culture, as well as anyone interested in what a vibrant and influential Christian ministry looked like in the mid-century context.

Daryn Henry
Postdoctoral Research Associate at the University of Virginia

Pettegree, Andrew. *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation.* New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2016, pp. 400, $18, paperback.

Andrew Pettegree is Professor of Modern History at the University of St. Andrews and Founder of the university's esteemed Reformation Studies Institute. His recent monograph, *Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation,* was warmly welcomed by Reformation scholars and, given its release by a popular rather than academic press, interested lay people across the world in anticipation of the Reformation's 500th anniversary.

As its long subtitle suggests, this book tells two complementary stories—Luther's personal journey and Wittenberg's journey from relative insignificance to international fame in only a few short decades. These two stories are woven together by the printing press. According to Pettegree, without Luther's pen Wittenberg would have continued to exist in obscurity during the sixteenth century. Yet without Wittenberg's assets, Luther's voice would have been lost in the academic debates of his time. Pettegree examines how a localized theological spat became a public event by focusing on Luther's talents as a vernacular writer. To that end, Pettegree analyzes the economic and theological factors which drove the Luther phenomenon. These strong forces resulted in a nation-wide Lutheran movement, an instant boost to the local urban economy, and a refined printing industry over a few short decades.

Chapters 5 and 6 show how at the core of this success story lies the quality of the new product – Luther's theology published for the laity in the German vernacular and decorated with signature, appropriate artwork created by local artist Lucas Cranach. Pettegree reiterates that the product's content was as important as its packaging. Luther's theology was worthy of beautiful woodcutting techniques; together, they comprised "Brand Luther," an unmistakable image that generated great interest and profit. This is not to say that the Reformation was simply an economic success story of bestselling books with eye-catching covers. Rather, the sales reflected laity's desire for fresh theology and practice, in which they could directly participate, based on the universality of the priesthood.

Chapter 7 shows how Luther was always mindful of the cost of production and the final price of his books. His pamphlets were published in a convenient, pocket-sized format, which was easy to produce and cheap to sell. Luther was also sensible about the cost of larger works, such as the vernacular Bible. For instance, when translating the Old Testament into vernacular German, Luther decided to publish it in three chunks, so that his audience could afford to purchase it progressively over a longer period of time. The final product took much longer than intended—twelve years—but in the end the delay proved to be very profitable to the printing industry. Pettegree avers that the translation of the Bible was at the heart of the Wittenberg Reformation, not only for economic purposes, but mostly for theological purposes and for the gospel to be read and preached in German.

Luther acquired a new audience outside the Latin-based academy, as he translated serious theology into a most elegant German, his popularity helping him withstand Catholic counter-attacks. Moreover, Cranach understood the power of Luther's own name, which, over time, emerged from cluttered title pages and received its own center line. It is important to note that until the sixteenth century, original authorship was disregarded, because printers focused upon reproducing classic texts such as writings by Seneca or Aristotle. With the rise of the Reformation, Luther's identity became a selling point in itself, and thus his name became one of the most powerful logos of the movement.

Pettegree spends much deserved time on Cranach's artistry. The packaging of Luther's product was an important aspect of promotion, for it visually communicated the content and the author of the published works. Drawing upon his knowledge of art history, Pettegree draws our attention to the stylistic conventions Cranach worked with to promote Luther's books. For instance, popular paintings of the era were often done in landscape format but books, by default, were in portrait format. In addition, the standard illustration for a title page left a large, empty block in the center for the title, author, and city of publishing. This formatting created obvious obstacles for sixteenth-century artists, yet Cranach rose to the challenge and created a distinctive look for "Brand Luther," one that was bold, clear, and widely recognizable.

As Pettegree shows, it is notable that the majority of Wittenberg's publishing houses came to support the evangelical cause after 1517, given that their previous client was the pope. Indulgences, in fact, had been a lucrative product, given their convenient one-sided, single-sheet format. At first, Luther's attack on indulgences threatened the printing industry but, shortly afterwards, the printers realized Brand Luther's potential. For instance, the printing of the 95 theses into the vernacular had carried them outside academia into German public life. This disputation called for many responses for and against the Lutheran movement, and so the printers remained in business. Thus, theology became a public matter. Through his writings, Luther called the German people to realize their role as a "priesthood" by engaging with deep theological issues, and the people responded in large numbers. According to Pettegree, these sales testified to the Reformation's success in Wittenberg. The people's own interest in theology, the increase in demand for Luther works, and his own survival against the Catholic threat all contributed to the long term success of Brand Luther.

By employing an economic-theological framework, Pettegree successfully shows how both Luther and Wittenberg rose from their obscure beginnings to international fame. This book is an excellent example of giving new life to the old narrative of the Reformation as an economic phenomenon. One topic perhaps deserving more analysis is Luther's contribution to musical print culture. Pettegree touches on this subject briefly in his last chapter, yet there could be more attention to Luther's emphasis on music education and the success of his hymnals as powerful elements in the success of the Reformation. Regardless, Pettegree's monograph should prove to be one of the more memorable entries in the spate of scholarship commemorating the Reformation quincentenary. His language is very accessible, and he interacts with secondary literature only in his endnotes, thus making for a very smooth, informative, and enjoyable narrative. The same way Luther's message stirred the hearts of laymen and scholars across the German lands, so will Pettegree's monograph stir a renewed love for the Reformation story in the hearts of all his readers.

Raluca Bojor
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Pedersen, Daniel James. *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher on God and Natural Science*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017, pp.xli+187, $114.99, hardback.

The focus of this work is the "eternal covenant" between the Christian faith and natural science that is commended in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher. As the introduction rehearses, two interpretations of this proposal have dominated the literature: a "separationist model", in which there is a rigid demarcation of the disciplines, and an "accommodation model", in which the Christian faith always has

to accommodate advances in natural science. But Pedersen considers both models flawed: not only do they fail to account for the terms "eternal" and "covenant"; they also fail to consider that the "eternal covenant" is not so much a methodological proposal as a carefully argued conclusion, undergirded by "a host of claims and commitments supported by argumentation" (p. 12). To demonstrate this latter position is the principal task which this book sets itself, and its proving ground is Schleiermacher's major work in Christian dogmatics, *Christian Faith*.

The ultimate starting-point for all Schleiermacher's claims and commitments in *Christian Faith* is, famously, the feeling of absolute dependence. Crucially, however, Pedersen observes that these claims and commitments can be held on alternative grounds, meaning that Schleiermacher can adopt and invoke arguments from other sources which share these same premises, even where they do not share Schleiermacher's starting-point. And on this basis, Pedersen highlights that Schleiermacher's presuppositions were far from his alone, but were in truth shared by some of the finest philosophers and scientists of the day.

The case begins in the second chapter, which illuminates the scientific commitments explicitly on display in *Christian Faith*, with particular reference to Schleiermacher's views concerning the duration, extent, and evolution of the cosmos, and of the evolution of life. In each case, Pedersen underlines the ways in which his arguments parallel the most innovative scientific and philosophical theories of his day, as advanced by figures such as William Herschel, Pierre-Simon Laplace, and Erasmus Darwin. At the same time, Pedersen also demonstrates that the cosmological debates of the time "made heavy use of non-empirical beliefs, many of which were explicitly theological in nature" (p. 31). Natural science and Christian theology were thus organically related and mutually accountable at the time, and no clear demarcation or hierarchy between the disciplines was available or intelligible.

The central chapters of this book all serve to evidence two points: first, that at various points in *Christian Faith* Schleiermacher deploys metaphysical principles in support of his theological argumentation; and second, that these principles were common both to the philosophers *and* to the natural scientists who were writing around the same time. The third chapter unfolds the shared commitment of Schleiermacher and Leibniz to the perfection of nature, in so far as the divine power as informed by the divine wisdom necessarily creates a world that does not require further divine intervention, as the divinely created means perfectly serve the divinely purposed ends. Both figures thus reject absolute miracles; as Pedersen writes, "the less God *discretely* acts in history, the greater the corresponding perfection of God's creation" (p. 49). Instead, both figures affirm the continuity and integrity of the natural order as distinct from (yet dependent upon) God, an affirmation grounded in a particular construal of God as perfectly wise and good. Schleiermacher's construal of the natural order is further explored in the fourth chapter. Again, his account of the nature

system, far from being a methodological assumption, is the conclusion of careful argumentation that shares numerous features with the works of Leibniz and Spinoza.

The fifth chapter recounts Schleiermacher's rejection of Leibniz's account of hypothetical necessity in favour of Spinoza's view that the world is as it is of absolute necessity. This move further bolsters his case for the rejection of miracles, but more crucially posits that divine freedom and divine necessity are not mutually contradictory. The sixth chapter finally shows how Schleiermacher insists with Leibniz and against Spinoza in the validity of final causes. Unifying Leibnizian teleology with Spinozan necessity allows Schleiermacher to posit that the world has the love of God as the world's necessary end and the wisdom of God as the world's necessary order. This renders the world as—in Pedersen's words—"the artwork of God, the perfect work of the perfect artist, and so the absolute revelation of God" (p. 129). And this in turn means that to investigate the world, as natural science does, is to investigate the means and order of God, and thus to investigate the essence of God itself.

The result, as Pedersen recounts in his conclusion, is that "Theology and natural science *need* each other to offer the complete account that the unity of the world demands" (p. 154). They remain distinct disciplines, with their own proximate aims, procedural methods, and normative standards, but they are distinct only in relative and not absolute terms. Either one, indeed any discipline, in isolation is "*necessarily* incomplete" (p. 179).

Pedersen's work succeeds on multiple levels. Stylistically, despite its traversing of some deeply complex subject matter, the writing is precise and lucid. The structure is rather unintuitive, and requires patience, but is seen at the end to have been heuristically helpful. Materially, the work succeeds in its stated desire to demonstrate that Schleiermacher's recommendation of an eternal covenant is not a methodological proposal but an argued conclusion, grounded in the view that the world is a self-revelation of the divine being.

But the work also makes several other contributions: it demonstrates Schleiermacher to be more attentive and more indebted to the latest scientific theories of his day than has previously been observed; it evidences the natural scientists of the day to be more attentive and more indebted to theological principles than has often been appreciated; and it shows Schleiermacher to be more influenced by Leibniz, less enthralled to Kant, and more aligned with highly orthodox theological positions than has generally been recognised.

There are points at which the reader might wish for more, or plausibly demur. In respect of the former, though Pedersen sketches out plausible ways in which Schleiermacher's position might defend itself from critiques drawing on the absurdity of human sin (pp. 142–150) or the indeterminacy of quantum physics (pp. 178–179), there would be room for lengthier reflections. In respect of the latter, the absolute resistance to theological paradox evident throughout might encounter some

resistance, particularly in more dialectically inclined circles, while the account of the incarnation as "explicable by the system of nature" (p. 90) might cause some interpreters of Schleiermacher to hesitate and ultimately dissent.

In terms of the ongoing conversation between religion and science, Pedersen indicates the perhaps unexpected way in which the work of Schleiermacher poses a number of tantalising challenges even today. Schleiermacher posits the idea that the divine freedom and the divine necessity, far from being antithetical, are in truth identical. He offers a view of divine action upon the world that relies upon a very traditional account of the divine being yet resists divine intervention and divine miracles. And he articulates the contention that the scientific investigation of the 'how' of the world cannot be divorced from the theological investigation of the 'that' and 'why' of the world, on the grounds that both are in truth investigating aspects of one and the same divine essence. As this very fine book insightfully suggests, there is much here for both scientists and theologians to continue to ponder.

Paul T. Nimmo
University of Aberdeen

Wilcoxen, Matthew A. *Divine Humility: God Morally Perfect Being*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2019, pp. 227, $39.95, hardback.

Matthew A. Wilcoxen is an Associate Rector at Church of the Resurrection in Washington DC. He earned his PhD in Systematic Theology from Charles Sturt University, Australia.

In *Divine Humility*, Matthew A. Wilcoxen asks why humility has not always firmly been considered one of God's eternal attributes in the Christian tradition. Honouring their theological achievements, this book visits the work of St. Augustine, Karl Barth and Katherine Sonderegger and puts them to work answering some of the tradition's oldest and newest questions.

Chapter 1 introduces the task at hand through the question of how (or if) the metaphysical attributes of the divine being can relate to his divine subjective moral attributes. It begins with a concise critique of Heidegger's Onto-theology and his influence in certain strains of contemporary theology. Wilcoxen highlights existentialism's dependence on the very enlightenment principles it tried to rebel against while preparing for itself a "conflict of traditions" (p. 10), which additionally estranged it in part from its "rival tradition of inquiry, Christian Theology" (p. 11). Instead, Wilcoxen takes an analytic approach to be more conducive for returning to a contemplation of God in which the moral and metaphysical are not philosophically split apart from the outset.

Chapter 2 presses toward an analytic definition of humility. With the help of analytic philosopher James Kellenberger, Wilcoxen rethinks common assumptions about the meaning of humility; for example, that one must have a low opinion of oneself

or that it is the "absence of self-assertion" (p. 46). By rejecting these assumptions, Wilcoxen is able to do at least two important things. Firstly, he reframes the contrast between pride and humility towards a pride and shame continuum, both of which depend on self-concern. With this, he frees humility from being defined negatively: solely as pride's opposite. This move will allow him to do ontological work later by defining humility as "a different way of one being oriented toward the self altogether" (p. 48). After a fruitful discussion with the fathers of the Christian tradition on these new terms, this positive definition of humility anticipates St. Augustine's doctrine of God. One cannot help but sense a rushed definition of virtue at the beginning of this chapter, which is discussed later through the dialogue with tradition, but not further defined. This leaves an explanatory gap between "virtues" as they are understood in ethical terms and the divine attributes and one wonders how or if they bear upon each other conceptually.

Chapter 3 is an example of Wilcoxen's aptitude for clear exposition of classical and biblical material. He introduces the "generative tension" (p. 82) in Augustine's understanding of God *in se* (immanent trinity) and *pro nobis* (economic trinity) by asking how humility can be conceived within the nature of God. Problematising this further, Augustine must ask the question of how God shares his life with contingent creatures whilst remaining God. Tracing the doctrine of incarnation through Augustine's exegesis of John 5:19-30 and Philippians 2:6-7, Wilcoxen challenges certain readings of scripture that posit God as "essentially cruciform or vulnerable" (p. 96) *in se* or *forma dei* because this risks making the nature of God the Son (*forma dei*), dependent to some extent on Christ's *human* nature (*forma servi*). Instead of blending the two without caution, Wilcoxen perceives how communication and participation mark Augustine's approach: He resolves "that the divine nature communicates to the human nature of Christ at the level of moral character but not immutable being" (p. 99). Wilcoxen perceptively explains that in Augustinian thought, humility (rather ambiguously) *is the tension* that allows God-to-remain-God and humanity-to-remain-humanity while bringing the two into fellowship.

More than Barth's radically Christological outlook, it is Barth's stubborn theological conviction that humility is an attribute of God *in se* that captures Wilcoxen's attention in Chapter 4. Regrettably, Barth is only able to secure this by defining divine humility as the utmost obedience of the Son to the Father. It is left unclear whether the submissiveness or the obedience is the mark of humility here leaving much to speculation. Furthermore, without clearly distinguishing between Christ's obedience in his human nature from obedience in his divine nature, Barth strays dangerously close to positing that Jesus had only one will. Wilcoxen observes that Barth 'mirrored' the historical life of Jesus into the divine life with such a Christocentric fervency that his accordance with conciliar tradition was put in jeopardy. Drawing helpfully from Maximus the Confessor to correct Barth's insights, Wilcoxen wisely warns that Barth's approach does not allow us to work from the

prior doctrine of divine simplicity (God *a se*) towards an understanding of the work of Christ-for-us (*ad extra*). This ironically leaves the latter rather un-submissive to the former. Thus, his equation of humility and obedience betrays his obstinate conviction that God must be somehow humble in his own inner life, a position for which Wilcoxen gives him credit even if Barth fails to earn it theologically. Here, Wilcoxen is a model, to theologians and students, of how to read charitably without becoming slack in criticism. Students may also learn here how to think within the context of tradition, trusting in the resources of an older community.

Wilcoxen's fifth chapter takes a final shot at locating humility in the divine being relying on Sonderegger's biblical impulse to meditate on God's unicity and omnipresence. She is thus able to argue that humility is an attribute of the morally perfect being, by assuming from the outset that 'God's moral character' *is* his 'perfect being' contrary to Barth and Augustine who deemed it necessary to observe a kind a tension between the two. Sonderegger treats the unicity of God as metaphysical and thus that God's being *is* his relation to creation. This relation is a real, dynamic and objective presence disclosed in his hiddenness. God's holy humility is then approached through a contemplation of his omnipotence reframed in terms of the concept of 'energy'. Here, Sonderegger gets behind the logical hurdles which arise in traditional modes of reasoning about whether God's relation to creation is one of primarily will or cause exclusively. Her innovative method (*via eminentae*) surpasses Barth's because she reasons from God's internal life *a se* towards his life *ad extra* casting a view back to God as the radiant and eternal source. Sonderegger proves hugely helpful to Wilcoxen's fascinating project though it is still an open question whether there are existing contributions in the history of the Church which may retain the traditional language of will, cause and substance and yet accomplish what Sonderegger has without the language of energy.

In this book, one can sense Wilcoxen's conviction that the task of systematic theology is best fulfilled under the guidance of the scriptures, interpreted within the Christian tradition and community of faith. Rather reservedly, this work also implies a tangible proximity between systematic theology and ethics. It is therefore no surprise that his presentation examples attention to God's own involvement in the history of the church. Wilcoxen also secures a firm place for the generative value of mystery within systematic theology to inspire awe in the one who contemplates God.

Philip Miti
Universität Heidelberg

Macaskill, Grant. *Autism and the Church: Bible, Theology, and Community*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2019, pp. 236, $34.95, hardback.

Grant Macaskill is Kirby Laing Chair of New Testament Exegesis since 2015. Prior to this, he had taught as Senior Lecturer in New Testament at the University of St Andrews. His research engages with the New Testament as a coherent body of theological literature emerging from the diverse contexts of late Second Temple Judaism. His publications have included extensive treatments of theological issues in the New Testament, notably "Union with Christ".

In many ecclesial settings, it goes unnoticed that the church's autistic members are a gift. In his book, Grant Macaskill has written in a tone of faithful hope about *Autism and the Church* within an awareness of the sorrow that can accompany being overlooked in such contexts. This book is an example of a biblical theology which dispenses neither of the participatory nature of the church in its reading practices nor the social and scientific research required to write informatively about autism. Macaskill submits the rigour of theological scholarship to its pastoral significance making serious reflection accessible to a larger range of readers than simply those inside the university.

The first chapter presents a brief historical survey of research into autism which ends by guiding the reader to take the experiential element of autism as seriously as the scientific information offered. This sensitivity is a feature which sets the tone for chapter 2. Given that the Bible does not mention autism, Macaskill outlines some proposed conditions for reading scripture responsibly, "in relation to the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. 44). Unmasking some common misuses of the Bible, he argues that a responsible reading of scripture is achieved within the communion of the church under the rule of faith. In light of her salvation story, she must humbly read the whole bible in prayer with the Holy Spirit who illumines. Macaskill presents these conditions as six principles, none of which function as values with which to trump other 'Christian' or societal values. Rather, he trusts the sufficiency of the scriptures to undo our instinctive value-tendencies as Christ is revealed to us in the text. Thus, with clear emphasis on the doctrine of the incarnation one observes that participation in Christ and providence are chiefly operative in Macaskill's biblical ethics.

This is witnessed in the argument of chapter 3 in which Macaskill calls out the sinful ways in which we tend to ascribe social worth to those who are cool, hip and charismatic: in other words, 'normal'. Situating his discussion of this issue around the grace of the cross and the resurrection of Christ our attention is turned towards the triumph of the Holy Spirit over our sinful rejection of grace. Macaskill underlines that we must recognise the autistic members of the body as gifts and he concurrently warns against accepting such members (or any members) because of what social capital they can bring to the group. Recognising that churches are social and sensory

spaces, chapter 4 offers practical suggestions for churches to accommodate the sensory needs of people with autism. As the church learns how to be a body which suffers and rejoices together in worship, Macaskill cautions that mistakes must not lead us to despair.

Chapter 5 examines some of the typical weaknesses among some people with autism. In view of the failures of the whole church body, he argues for a "theology of weakness" through exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3-4 and passages from Hebrews 1, 3, 9 & 10. His major theological move here is to re-examine the word 'flesh' as used by Paul in the New Testament which can refer either to the sinful nature or physical frailty. He reassures that in *both* uses of the word, the scriptures underline that "our flesh is weak" (p. 143) and that this weakness is the medium through which God's strength is manifested. Reading weakness as the hermeneutic brackets surrounding the sinful nature and physical frailty, Macaskill recaptures this common biblical motif. Thus, the New Testament texts prompt Macaskill to accentuate the providence of suffering and the redemptive repurposing of even the sinful nature for the good of the Christian. Though he does not use this word, this aspect of the discussion about autism might offer fresh insight into the doctrine of sanctification, uncoupling the doctrine from the idea of "becoming better versions of ourselves" (p. 157). Macaskill, rather discusses the challenges of personal formation and virtue, highlighting that change is typically more difficult for those with autism but not impossible. To invite further reflection, it might be worth investigating the relationship between his "theology of weakness" and Luther's *theologia crucis*.

The final chapter exegetically grounds how weakness can be read redemptively, by emphasising the efficacy of the Holy Spirit to co-assist us. Macaskill's exegesis of Romans 8:26-27 also briefly navigates larger questions about the role of cognition/cognitive disability in autism in the context of church practices. Reflecting on verbal ability, prayer and sexuality, Macaskill's main encouragement here is to re-affirm our participation-in and union-with Christ. For example, certain traditions who may not baptise individuals until a verbal profession of faith is made, are encouraged to re-examine the work that the Holy Spirit might achieve in individuals non-cognitively but still within the context of the body. This raises several interesting questions about where Paul and the early church fathers located cognitive capability with in the traditional anthropological language of 'body and soul and spirit'. One could ask whether Paul's theology of weakness makes room for a pneumatology of intellectual disability focussing on what the Holy Spirit is able to do.

Macaskill's book invites such questions, leaving ample room for discussion. In this book, students are offered a gentle—no less cutting-edge—introduction to disability theology and New Testament hermeneutics. In addition, I suspect that this book could offer church study groups the opportunity to engage afresh with scripture on a level which takes both scripture and church experience seriously. Aside from neurodevelopmental conditions, this work might also serve a role in equipping the

church to listen carefully to others who are overlooked, socially disadvantaged or struggling with mental ill health. Thus, requiring no prior knowledge in Autism Studies or New Testament Scholarship this book is capable of effectively addressing congregations, pastors, students and their teachers alike.

Philip Miti
Universität Heidelberg

Marrs, Rick W. *Making Christian Counseling More Christ Centered.* Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2019, pp.260, $19.95, softcover.

"Believe more." "Pray more." "Do more." Law-centered counseling can accidentally burden the counselee with more guilt, shame, and depression. Christ-centered counseling, on the other hand, mitigates tribulation and motivates sanctification by centering the counselee in the forgiveness, love, and grace of Jesus Christ. By presenting a primer in the Christ-centered theology of Martin Luther and suggesting soul-care strategies that flow from that theology, Rick Marrs, Christian counselor, licensed psychologist, and professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, aims to make Christian counseling more Christ-centered.

Luther's Christ-centered theology comes packed in orthodox paradox. In Marrs's manual, three of Luther's paradoxes are especially unpacked and employed to help make Christian counseling more Christ-centered: (1) the bane and blessing of *Anfechtung*, (2) the distinction of Law and Gospel, and (3) the saint and sinner-hood of the Christian.

First, Marrs shines a needed light on *Anfechtung*, the lost locus of Luther. Whether we like it or not, human beings are creatures afflicted with *Anfechtung*, Luther's favorite German word for temptation, trial and tribulation, guilt and shame, suffering and sorrow. Against a theology of glory or prosperity gospel, the devil, the world, and our sinful nature are constantly assaulting not only non-Christians but also Christians in both body and soul, consuming us in fear for both our lives and salvation (p. 26). *Anfechtung* is a bane. And yet *Anfechtung* is a blessing. *Anfechtung* not only drives human creatures to look for answers, meaning, and purpose (p. 27), but God also uses *Anfechtung* to drive us to Christ's cross of forgiveness, life, and salvation (p. 58). One of the strategies Marrs recommends for counseling someone well-struggling with *Anfechtung* is well-chosen bibliotherapy. Marrs's favorite is *Luther's Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, edited by Theodore Tappert (1960). Luther himself, "arguably Christianity's most famous depressive," suffered life-long with melancholia, and Marrs reports about some counselees: "They found Luther's descriptions of his own suffering, weaknesses, and struggles were similar to theirs, and they found his spiritual insights of the depressive struggle very edifying. They sometimes reported that Luther's letters were more helpful than talking to their

counselor" (p. 117). *Anfechtung*, with which all of us are infected, can paradoxically be both bane and blessing.

Second, Marrs remarks that many Christians are confused about Law and Gospel. The Gospel, we misjudge, is a given, "something we needed to know only when we first became Christian" (p. 65). Once the Gospel has converted us, now the Law is lord of us: "Yes, you've accepted Jesus as your Savior, but is He now Lord of your life?" (p. 76). Now that the Gospel has done its job, now it's your job to keep the Law to be good enough for God. Dominated by the Law, Christian life runs the hamster wheel of legalism and rides the roller coaster of perfectionism, weighted and frustrated with never being good enough for God (p. 77). Yes, Luther concedes, the primary purpose of the Law is to show us our sins, but the primary purpose of the Gospel, Luther decrees, is to show us our Savior, not just at the beginning of Christian life but every day of Christian life. Not just at altar calls and Good Friday sermons, *Anfechtung*-infected Christians require "constant exposure to God's healing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. 46). Marrs asks Christian counselors to ask themselves, "What verses do I most commonly use with my counselees? Are they verses that directly (or subtly) point them to themselves, their own abilities, their own faith, their own inner strength?" (p. 128). One of the strategies Marrs recommends for counseling someone confused about Law and Gospel is to point him or her to explicit Gospel in the Bible and to even insert the person's name into the verse: Ephesians 2:8–9: "For by grace (Steve has) been saved through faith. And this is not (Steve's) own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of (Steve's) works, so that (Steve) may (not) boast" (p. 129). The Gospel does not nullify the Law; instead, fully forgiven in the name of Him who fulfilled the Law in our place, the Gospel fulfills the Law. Yes, Christians should keep the Law, but keeping the Law to be good enough for God is keeping the Law with the wrong motivation. Christ not only fulfills the Law for Christians but also gives Christians the gumption to keep the Law with the right motivation: Ephesians 2:10: "For (Steve is) God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that (Steve) should walk in them" (p. 130). The Law does not fulfill the Gospel; the Gospel fulfills the Law.

Third, the saint and sinner-hood of the Christian piggybacks on the distinction of Law and Gospel. Christians wish they were always and only motivated by the Gospel, but Luther reminds us that we are with St. Paul "Romans 7 Sinners with a Romans 8 God," simultaneously holy saints but nevertheless still sinners—"*simul iustus et peccator*," as Luther liked to say in Latin (p. 85). Marrs finds that "too many pastors teach their people, either implicitly or explicitly, that they can become perfect in this world, free from all outward sin. … This false teaching leads many Christians into a dark level of guilt because they realize their own inability to achieve that perfection" (p. 89). But Luther counsels, "We will never rid ourselves of our sinfulness until death (or Christ's return); nevertheless, God the Father does not look upon our sinfulness because we have been united with Christ in His cross, death,

and resurrection" (p. 48). One of the strategies Marrs recommends for counseling someone worried with the *Anfechtung* that they do not have enough faith or are not good enough for God is the "Gospel Empty Chair Technique" (p. 122). The counselor/soul-care giver points the counselee to an empty chair: "Do you think that chair is strong enough to hold you up?" After a little conversation the counselor directs, "Now, I'd like you to get up and sit in that chair." After sitting in the chair, the counselor asks, "Which was more important, the strength of your faith in the chair or the strength of the chair itself?" Then the counselor asks, "Which is more important, the strength of your faith in Jesus Christ or the strength of Jesus Christ Himself?" Christ-centered counseling centers the saint-and-sinner counselee not in her fragility or futility but in the stability and security of Jesus Christ.

More than just the three above, in this humble primer and manual Marrs imparts many more insights into Luther's theology and strategies for its soul-care application. Not only will Lutheran seminarians, pastors, and counselors benefit but also non-Lutheran seminarians, pastors, and counselors who are looking to make Christ's grace more explicit in their counseling sessions. Even non-Christian counselors may learn more about the faith of their Christian counselees and ask, "I thought the Christian faith was more about Jesus forgiving you," or "I thought that Christians believed God loves them more than God expects them to be perfect" (p. 3). The only imperfection I find with the text is that it sometimes reads, like Luther, a little haphazardly, rather than systematically. This miniscule imperfection nowhere near overshadows the perfection of Marrs's mighty subject, Jesus Christ and the application of His forgiveness, love, and grace. Pick up a copy and get ready to make your Christian counseling and, God-willing, your counselees more Christ-centered.

David Coe
Concordia University, Nebraska

Hardwick, Lamar. *Disability and The Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021, pp. 199, $12.99, paperback.

Lamar Hardwick, known as "the autism pastor," is a strong advocate for people with disabilities. Hardwick is the lead pastor of at Tri-Cities Church in East Point, GA and the author of *Epic Church* and *I Am Strong: The Life and Journey of an Autistic Pastor*. Lamar has not always had his current reputation as "the autism pastor." For many years, Lamar struggled with interpersonal relationships and social anxiety. At the age of thirty-six, doctors diagnosed Hardwick with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

In *Disability and the Church*, Hardwick includes eight chapters devoted to creating an inviting atmosphere for people struggling with a disability. According to Hardwick, the disabled community is the largest minority in the world (p. 12).

For Hardwick, many churches are failing at their responsibility to be an inclusive Christian institution. Hardwick explores various avenues through which the church should implement diversity and disability strategies in the body of Christ. If the church wants to make a kingdom impact, Christians must recapture God's intent of inclusion and access into God's kingdom (p. 18).

In the opening chapter, Hardwick confronts the set of circumstances that keeps the church from ministering to the disabled community. Due to sin, the church struggles with diversity. Pastors and congregation members must realize that making disciples means creating a culture of diversity (p. 39). Another hindrance regarding diversity is the issue of outward appearance. Hardwick makes a strong indictment that some churches do not value the disabled because of pride (58). Hardwick uses Jesus' teaching of the wedding banquet (Luke 14:8) to challenge contemporary culture to rethink symbols of power and prestige. The church acts in a prideful manner when it places more value on the able-bodied rather than on those with disabilities.

If churches want to have strong and vibrant ministries regarding the disabled community, the leadership of the church must teach and foster a culture of including people with disabilities. Therefore, the church must change their theology and structure regarding disabilities. Pastors and congregation members must discuss issues relating to the disabled community, and change church policies, processes, and programs that might restrict fruitful church membership (p. 99).

After mentioning the hindrances to diversity and inclusivity, Hardwick spends three chapters devoted to changing the church culture and its relationship to the disabled. First, churches must create a learning culture that focuses on the experience of people with disabilities. Hardwick asserts that preaching is the primary tool for building a learning culture (p. 112). Second, churches must build a linking culture that provides a root system for families with special needs and disabilities. Small groups, community groups, and a personal invitation to church are great ways to establish a viable rooting system that attracts families to the local church (136-137). Finally, churches must build a leadership culture that supports disabled persons. According to Hardwick, creating a leadership culture that supports disabled person in leadership begins with examining and removing the barriers to leadership in the church (p. 150).

In the final two chapters, Hardwick calls for churches to synchronize with heaven. In other words, churches must cast a compelling vision of church life which includes persons with disabilities and special needs (p. 164). If churches want to have meaningful kingdom impact, pastors and church members must affirm the disabled by giving them leadership opportunities and responsibilities that matter (p. 176). For Hardwick, the church must learn how to do ministry *with* persons with disabilities rather than doing ministry *for* persons with disabilities (pp. 189-190).

In chapter five, Hardwick makes a strong assertion that the Apostle Paul had a disability according to Galatians 4:12-13 (pp. 110-111). As a student of biblical and

theological studies, this reviewer had a hard time understanding Hardwick's broad use of labeling certain biblical persons with a disability. For instance. This reviewer believes that Hardwick's assessment makes too quick of a theological leap from Paul's personal situation to a disability. The Bible does not provide the exact nature of Paul's illness. While a certain illness or malady may have hindered Paul from traveling at the time, the illness did not totally hinder the Apostle from all travel or future ministry.

For churches that struggle with diversity and inclusion, there are three reasons why pastors and congregation members should read Hardwick's book. First, Hardwick provides his readers with encouragement and motivation to change the existing church culture. While there are parts of the book that focus on negative aspects of church life and ministry, Hardwick devotes much of his writing to positive words of encouragement and motivation. Churches often struggle with change and implementing new ministry strategies, but this volume provides readers with the theological resources to motivate change within the church. Ultimately, the church should include persons with disabilities because God's kingdom includes persons with disabilities.

Second, pastors and teachers within the church can find practical resources for implementing a church culture that includes persons with disabilities. The first practical tool for changing the church culture is a vibrant preaching ministry. This reviewer believes that Hardwick is right when he states that preaching is the primary tool for building a culture that includes the disabled community. The first step in changing the church culture involves teaching the church about what God requires regarding the church's relationship and responsibility to persons with disabilities.

The second practical tool for changing the church culture concerns the structure of the church's discipleship ministry. Churches should implement small groups or community groups that include the disabled community. Small groups and community groups could act as a safe environment which provides comfort and care for persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Also, small groups and community groups provide a safe environment for the disabled community to voice their concerns regarding ministry opportunities within the local church.

Third, pastors and church members should read Hardwick's book because of its unique characteristic. First, Hardwick's book is unique because there are not a lot of books regarding persons with disabilities. Second, Hardwick's book is unique because he struggles with a disability. Therefore, pastors and lay leaders can get a better understanding of the disabled community because Hardwick's book focuses on the church and his experience as a pastor with autism.

Hardwick's book is right on cue regarding the current topics of inclusion and diversity. Pastors, lay leaders, and church members should read *Disability and the Church* if interested in developing a ministry of inclusion regarding persons with disabilities. *Disability and the Church* is a relatively easy book to read for the active

pastor or lay leader. Therefore, it is possible to make Hardwick's book a primer regarding the church's ministry to persons with disabilities. Once the church has fully embraced the inclusion of the disabled community, pastors and lay leaders can finally do meaningful ministry with persons with disabilities rather than doing ministry for persons with disabilities.

Dr. Matt Martin
First Baptist Church Natchez, MS

MacBride, Tim. *To Aliens and Exiles: Preaching the New Testament as Minority-Group Rhetoric in a Post-Christendom World.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020. pp. 254, $51, hardcover.

Tim MacBride (ThD, Australian College of Theology) serves as Head of the Faculty of Bible and Theology at Morling College in Sydney, Australia. At Morling, MacBride teaches New Testament and Homiletics. Prior to joining the faculty, MacBride pastored a church in Sydney's south suburbs for twelve years. *To Aliens and Exiles* is MacBride's third book on preaching New Testament rhetoric. MacBride's two previous books on preaching include his doctoral thesis, *Preaching the New Testament as Rhetoric* (Wipf & Stock, 2014), and *Catching the Wave: Preaching the New Testament as Rhetoric* (InterVaristy Press, 2016), in which he simplified his doctoral thesis for a non-academic audience. MacBride has also written several articles on preaching and a book on patronage in John's Gospel.

In *To Aliens and Exiles,* MacBride offers Christians a lens to understand how to articulate the faith from a minority group position. Such a minority position was the context in which the New Testament was written. Indeed, MacBride posits, Christians have always been a minority. How to instruct the Church to interact with the majority culture is the question of the hour. In the book's introduction, MacBride highlights three possible trajectories for answering this question: (1) minimize the distance between the Church and the world, (2) take a defensive, us vs. them stance, or (3) become "attractively different" (p. xiii). An "attractively different" community neither conforms to the majority culture nor isolates itself from it. Instead, it retains distinctive doctrinal and ethical boundaries that are simultaneously transparent (allowing outsiders to see what is truly happening) and permeable (encouraging outsiders to join the minority community).

The book is divided into five parts. Part 1 develops the theory behind using NT minority group rhetoric in preaching. With the embrace of social media, Western culture in the Twenty-First Century feels remarkably like the honor and shame cultures of the Mediterranean in the First Century. A person's "court of reputation" has become collectivist in nature, as Facebook "likes" (and their counterparts on other social media platforms) have become the new social currency. For Christians taking minority doctrinal and social stances, chances for public shaming are on the

rise. MacBride, writing from post-Christian Australia, has seen multiple cases of this firsthand. For readers in the US, then, who are just beginning to feel such effects of going against majority opinion, it is as if MacBride is writing from the future (except for the multiple veiled and outright attacks against US President Trump).

Parts 2 through 4 look at NT books specifically. Part 2 considers the General Epistles. According to MacBride, 1 Peter is "the most prototypical example of minority group rhetoric in NT" since it addresses myriad interactions between the minority and majority groups (p. 45). Part 3 analyzes Paul's epistles, noting how Paul's subverted language was common in the Roman Empire, adding a Christian interpretation. For example, in his discussion of Philippians, MacBride notes how Paul urged believers to be good citizens of the empire, yet ultimately encouraged them to remember that their citizenship was in heaven. Part 4 discusses the Gospels and Acts. One fascinating point MacBride's rhetorical analysis reveals is that, whereas Matthew and John appear especially concerned with the fledgling Christian movements minority status, the two-part Luke-Acts emphasizes the group's permeability among elite and lowly sinners.

The book concludes in Part 5 by considering how one minority group, African Americans, have preached the NT text. Based on conversations with three African American evangelicals – two professors and a pastor – MacBride notes how African American preaching uses its history as a minority to both identify with biblical characters and "experience the text" (p. 220).

To Aliens and Exiles possesses several strengths, although two are especially helpful. First, as noted above, MacBride's overall idea that Western culture is pushing confessional Christians into a minority position where they will be shamed into conformity is correct. MacBride is clearly familiar with the honor and shame literature, so his is a helpful voice in knowing how such a value system operates. Second, MacBride's analysis of the NT books in each chapter is thorough and engaging. As a preaching professor familiar with crafting memorable rhetoric, each chapter begins with an anecdote for the reader to recall the big idea.

One weakness is MacBride's decision not to include any of the Pastoral Epistles. A single footnote describes why this is so, claiming that those letters deal mainly with "in-house" matters and not with Christians' relations to the outside world (p. 120). Such reasoning is odd since the book's primary audience is preachers and pastors. Further, if it is the case that minority rhetoric helps members identify doctrinal and ethical boundaries, MacBride could further his argument by including Paul's instructions for Timothy and Titus' preaching content. Certainly, MacBride did not have space to include an analysis of all 27 NT books. Nevertheless, a book on preaching that does not address the Pastoral Epistles seems unfinished.

This critique aside, MacBride has done the Church a great service through this book. Since all Christians at some level engage culture, all Christians will find assistance in these pages. Those Christians called to stand before fellow believers

and preach God's words should consider MacBride's warnings and encouragements. As the global Church moves into a further marginalized, dishonored position, the words of the NT will become strikingly relevant.

Cameron D. Armstrong
International Mission Board
Bucharest, Romania

Greenaway, Jonathan. *Theology, Horror and Fiction: A Reading of the Gothic Nineteenth Century.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2021, 198pp, £80, Hardback.

Dr Jonathan Greenaway is currently a Researcher in Theology and Horror at the University of Chester. He is working on a Templeton Religion Trust-funded project to explore the theological importance of all forms of horror media. His background in literary studies, and Gothic fiction in particular, appropriately underpins the conceptual framework for this book, which arises from his doctoral studies at the Manchester Centre for Gothic Studies.

The book is made up of five substantive chapters plus an introduction to 'Gothic and Theology' (as opposed to 'Religion') and a brief conclusion. Greenaway's aim is to reposition critical understandings of the role of theology in Nineteenth Century Gothic writing, which in his view have been neglected in recent literary studies. He suggests that Gothic fiction may be read as engaging with theological positions in a variety of ways which are generative of new ideas in the fields of both theology and Gothic studies. Greenaway argues that taking an approach of 'theological hospitality' towards these texts opens up a productive dialogue, contributing to an understanding of their contexts as well as informing theological issues of significance today.

In Chapter 1, Greenaway considers the relationship between Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He suggests that Shelley's focus on the key themes of evil and salvation, when considered theologically through the intertextual lens of *Paradise Lost*, indicates the novel offers a critique of the notion of the creative impulse of the Romantic genius. The novel offers new ways to think about the 'Other' in the self-understandings of Victor and his creature. It is because Victor refuses to accept his responsibility as creator that his creature becomes monstrous, alienated from the community which would fulfil his subjective needs. The Romantic search for transcendence in the sublime is shown to be creative but dangerous when distanced from the grounding offered by a theology of creation.

In Chapter 2, the significance of the Calvinist theology at the heart of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* is reassessed, in light of recent critical studies which focus on the psychological rather than the theological in the novel. It is suggested that a Calvinist understanding of divine revelation, focused on a fixed view of the Word, is shown to provoke terror when

confronted with the instabilities and dangers expressed in such Gothic literature. For Greenaway, ignoring the theological dimension of the text's shifting presentation of Robert Wringhim's experience is to lose a profoundly significant aspect of the novel.

Chapter 3 considers the novels *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, with a focus on the theological perspectives offered in each, unorthodox though they may be. In the first of these novels, the fallen nature of material existence is presented and within that, radical alternatives to a Christian 'heaven' and 'hell' are explored. Greenaway suggests that Hareton and the young Cathy ultimately offer a hope for the future which is theologically aware of the fragility of the boundaries between the profane and the sacred, and the past and the present. In the second novel, the generic Gothic image of the trapped woman is presented in the narrative of Jane Eyre's life. When read for its theological meaning, a variety of theological positions are challenged and found wanting (such as that of the Rev Brocklehurst), but the resolution is one in which liberation through sacramental marriage is possible for Jane. Crucially, Greenaway suggests that the concerns of these novels go beyond the purely material or psychological, and that their engagement with theological ideas speaks to the modern as much as to the original reader.

The Victorian Gothic ghost story is the focus of chapter 4, the shortest in the book. Greenaway offers readings from a sample of stories from across the period, and argues that a space for theological reflection is opened up when the presence of ghosts in a narrative creates supernatural uncertainty.

Finally, in chapter 5, three key texts from the *fin de siècle* period are considered: Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Stoker's *Dracula*. Greenaway interrogates the value of reading degeneracy in evolutionary terms as the underlying philosophical category in these texts, as a response to growing secularism in society. In each case, Greenaway presents theological language and ideas as having valence and significance, even if only, as in Wilde's text, to be shown to be unfulfilling and inadequate. For Stevenson, tentative hope is offered in the Pauline understanding of the human condition which Jekyll rejects, with fatal consequences. For Stoker, the eclectic drawing together of dispirit theological ideas suggests that materialism alone is not sufficient to overcome evil. However, here the possibility that religion may be complicit in violence is also stressed in a way which speaks to readers today as well as at the time.

Greenaway's book is impressive in its scope and engagement with the literary texts it interrogates. Throughout, the work of significant contemporary theologians, such as David Brown and Rowan Williams, is brought into productive dialogue with the texts and with literary critics. This is a truly interdisciplinary thesis, and offers a powerful counter-voice to those readings of literature which deny or ignore theology as a hermeneutical approach or category of meaning. Often, this is born out of ignorance about theological perspectives such as Calvinism, or Augustinian

theology, but here Greenaway proves himself to be well-qualified to discuss and apply these theological frameworks.

In some of the chapters, there is strong dependence on the work of others, such as that of Alison Milbank in the chapter on Hogg's *Confessions*. The claim that theological concerns have been side-lined is perhaps less well-established here than in other chapters. A psychological approach is certainly present in much recent work on Hogg, but the centrality of Calvinist theology remains a strong area of academic interest. The decision to focus on the works of Calvin, rather than on later developments in Calvinism, is understandable in light of the pressure of the limits of the chapter, but it does lead to a slightly skewed view of the unwavering significance of the uninterpreted divine Word in the Reformed Church. A Reformed belief in the presence of the Word of God in the act of preaching, for example, or of the role of the Holy Spirit in the understanding and application of Scripture, is rather underplayed here in order to highlight the fear-inducing role of the unmediated Word. The fierce debates around antinomianism in the Church of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century reveal both the contingency and the importance of biblical interpretation itself in Reformed theology, which the novel might also be read as exploring (as many critics have).

One of the book's strengths is its engagement with David Brown's work on natural theology and the arts. Brown's emphasis on the interdependence between the two, which envisages art as revealing something of God for the age, to which the church responds and adapts, is powerful and positive. Gothic literature in particular is shown to have much to offer the church in this sense, through its challenges to established beliefs as well as to the way it leaves open the possibility of the supernatural. If Greenaway had more often offered examples of this process at work, in the church and in individuals, the thesis would have been even more convincing. His drawing back from identifying 'church' in this debate with any specific denomination might be viewed as a missing link in an otherwise theologically confident argument.

The book makes a strong contribution to literary and theological studies of the Nineteenth Century, and to the study of Gothic across the period. Its emphasis on the pervasive influence of the language and perspectives of theology is an important corrective to some recent readings of these texts. Some readers from outside the field of theology and biblical studies might find its strongly apologetic tone somewhat overplayed and unconvincing. However, it offers a detailed introduction to Gothic literature for those whose knowledge is limited, through its readings of key texts in the field such as *Frankenstein*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Wuthering Heights*. It also introduces theology students to scholars working in the interdisciplinary field of literature and religion/theology, such as Alison Milbank, Malcolm Guite, Paul Fiddes and Terry Eagleton, while offering those more familiar and specialised in the field a sustained and developed argument to consider. The bibliography does not include all

of the texts referred to in the body of the text, which is somewhat disappointing and to be noted, particularly if a reference within the text is of further interest.

Overall, Greenaway's monograph is a model of interdisciplinary scholarship which will enlighten those working in a variety of fields. But its particular strength lies in its application of theological categories to the literary criticism of Gothic texts which may open up new areas of interest for theologians of the Nineteenth Century.

Alison Jack
School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh

Heinrichs, Steve, ed. *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization*. Orbis, 2019. pp. 303, $25, paperback.

Steve Heinrichs, editor and contributor of *Unsettling the Word,* is the Director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for the Mennonite Church of Canada. He is an ardent activist for Indigenous peoples and passionate about what he sees as the church's call to solidarity and reconciliation with this oppressed community. As evidence of such passion, Heinrich was a faith leader who was arrested and served seven days in prison for being with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Along with them, he was protesting the expansion of Kinder Morgan's Trans-Mountain pipeline in Burnaby, B.C.

His book, *Unsettling the Word,* is a timely and conscience-stirring work that seeks to liberate scripture from the traditional lens of settler colonial societies. The book is not an orthodox monograph, but a compilation of 68 independent interpretive stories and poems by a diverse group of scholars, poets, artists, and activists who desire to free scripture from those who have utilized the Bible as a "weapon to dispossess Indigenous and racialized peoples of their lands, culture, and spiritualties" (p. iii). It wrestles with scripture, both "re-imagining and re-interpreting the ancient text for the sake of reparative futures" (p. iii). Each chapter begins with approximately one to three verses beginning with the Genesis creation story and moving through to the Book of Revelation. The selected verses are then followed by a two to three-page story, either non-fictional or fictional or a poem that "boldly re-imagines the old stories," seeks to "expose the violence of specific texts," provides "radical commentary with pointed calls to action," or does "nothing, but pray the text back to us, to the land, and to God" (p. xv). The topics discussed include, but are not limited to, the plight of the immigrant, the injustices of Indigenous peoples, the abuse of creation, and the empowerment of the "weak." Many of the interpretations are impactful, but too numerous to mention in the parameters of this review. Therefore, only three impressionable interpretations will be mentioned.

The first is Vivian Ketchum's interpretation of Ruth 1:15-16 titled, "What about Orpah?" This interpretation captures the plight of the immigrant child who knows nothing else than the land she was raised. It is reminiscent of the many children we

call "Dreamers" in the United States, who though were born in a foreign land, are in every practical sense, "American." Ketchum's poignant words demonstrate this reality, "Why should I return to a land that's a stranger to me? I've lost the language of my people. Lost the customs. Lost the traditions."

A second contribution is titled "The Foolish of Petropolis" by Heinrichs. He compares the Tower of Babel to the Alberta oil sands in a provocation to the ones who are constructing pipelines and cities that are damaging, and even completely destroying, parts of the natural world in the name of advancement and natural resources. Strong language is employed (pp. 12-15) which is arguably inappropriate for a faith-based book such as this. However, the use of such language seeks to demonstrate the frustration and indignation of the author against the injustices that both Indigenous lands and lifeforms have endured at the hands of the dominant colonizing culture.

And lastly, "Economies of Enough" by Carmen Lansdowne reinterprets Exodus 16:4 highlighting North America's overconsumption, greed, and distrust in our creator, provider, and sustainer. Lansdowne notes that these behaviors that plague Canada, much like the United States, are inconsistent with the "lessons taught to the Israelites through God's gracious, daily provision of manna and quail and Indigenous traditional ways" (p. 28).

The strength of this work lies in its ability to provoke thought, convict the conscience, and challenge old held beliefs and interpretations of scripture. There was a stirring of the conscience that occurred with many of the stories and poems in the text, leaving the reader indignant, remorseful, frustrated and/or melancholic from interpretation to interpretation. There is a call to action embedded within each story and poem. But are there instances where the contributor went too far? Does this volume include passages that misrepresent the text, stretching it to fit their agenda? Despite the many strengths of the book, there was a sense that some of the interpretations stretched the confines of solid scholarship, crossing the border into impassioned pleas and bold political statements. This is evident in Mitzi J. Smith's contribution titled, "Resisting the Great Co-Mission" and "Beyond the Strong Man" by Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval, where brazen language and political statements respectively are used to support their interpretations of scripture. Is this type of reading justifiable? Considering that the goal of the book, which is to offer "gritty, experimental reflections that can be used in pulpit and street to surprise, stir, and startle us into seeing the prophetic word new and strange," these examples aided in accomplishing this aim (p. xiv).

Heinrich's two main sources of inspiration, James Cone and W.E.B. Du Bois, who co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People that he shares in his Preface, demonstrate the influence and importance of Liberation Theology in the creation of this project. Liberation Theology employs action-reflection (praxis-oriented) methodologies in response to particular forms of

oppression. Indeed, *Unsettling the Word* is successful in employing praxis-oriented methods as a response to the oppression of Indigenous communities who have been treated as subservient to the dominant culture. Therefore, a student desiring to understand Liberation Theology would benefit from this compilation of interpretive stories and poems.

The nature in which the book is structured lends itself to short studies both in an academic or church setting. In addition, though the text wrestles with difficult issues, it is not exceptionally erudite, making it more accessible to a broader audience. Therefore, *Unsettling the Word* would appeal and be beneficial to individuals ranging from serious students of theology, to activists for Indigenous peoples and other oppressed communities, to lay people in the church desiring to expand their purview of biblical interpretation.

Celeste E. Gonzalez-Moreno
Stark College and Seminary

Rosendahl, Sheri Faye. *Not Your White Jesus: Following a Radical, Refugee Messiah*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2019. pp. 204, $16.00, paperback.

What would it look like to rediscover the power behind the "red letters" in the gospels during an era of rampant racism, hatred, and division? In Rosendahl's *Not Your White Jesus: Following a Radical, Refugee Messiah*, she encourages us to step out of our institutional thinking about the church and challenges the image and ideals of the Americanized, blond-haired, and blue-eyed Jesus. She puts forth the invitation to become followers of a radical, Palestinian, brown-skinned Jew—Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Rosendahl's work is a bold critique on the Christian church in the United States, arguing that American cultural and nationalistic identity has deeply influenced and warped Christianity that it is currently unrecognizable to the way of life that the Jesus of the gospels taught and lived (pp. 16-17). She addresses the election of Donald Trump, writing with candor to a Christian audience that, as she believes, has forgotten Jesus' original message (pp. 100-101). Divided into two parts, part one focuses on the profile of the radical, refugee Messiah, while part two examines current issues such as war, racism, nationalism, consumerism, violence, and misogyny. She examines these aspects by focusing on the teachings of Jesus, which she describes as the red letters of scripture.

In part one, Rosendahl focuses on the identity of Jesus Christ and contends that he is primarily a radical refugee Messiah. This exploration also includes a personal memoir of her encounter with the risen Christ. By focusing on this identity of Jesus, it is contrasted to what she describes as the "White American Jesus" that is later explained throughout the book. She narrates her shock when she realizes that the American Jesus she learned of in her youth did not, in fact, prefer American citizens

over other people. Nor did this Jesus champion America's greatness in relation to the rest of the world. Instead, she realizes how deeply "whitewashed" the Americanized Jesus had become, a beacon of conservative ideology controlled by a powerful group of men (p. 5). This Americanized Jesus, Rosendahl contends, cares little about health care for the vulnerable, but applauds tax breaks for big business and millions allocated to the nation's war machine. As she argues, it suggests that this portrayal of Jesus crusades for "life," but routinely deports father and mothers back to their countries, thus ripping families apart, which is antithetical to life.

Thus, Rosendahl puts forth a major reason why the historical Jesus is crucial for understanding Christianity's original teachings, naming the fact that Jesus was both a Jew and a Palestinian (p. 19). She provides a quick and well-researched overview of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pointing to the American church with its "weird Christian Zionist ideals" as the funders of an essentially apartheid state in the Middle East today (pp. 20-21). Rosendahl challenges readers to ask what the world would look like if Christian churches actually lived out the teachings of Jesus. She believes that this would create a society that is generous toward the poor, allocates budgetary funds toward humanitarian causes, and pulls the most vulnerable out of poverty (p. 7).

Rosendahl finds the solution, and implicitly a rejection of the American Jesus, in the "red letters"—the words attributed directly to Jesus. She introduces the reader to the Jesus of the gospels. A Jesus, as she summarizes, is a Middle Eastern Jewish man who was born of an unwed teenage mother, fled from an oppressive king, amazed scholars and educated folk of his day, lived a radically minimalistic lifestyle, and kept company with the marginalized of society while displaying a lifestyle of love in action (p. 6). Rosendahl ends part one of her book by exhorting readers to be willing to see the hurt and pain around us and in this way. If we would do so, she believes that this would lead to an ethical response of compassion. She argues that love is not passive but speaks boldly as we advocate for those in need.

The second part of the book tackles the issues of racism, nationalism, refugees, violence, consumerism, misogyny and the marginalized. As she outlines the major issues within American Christianity, Rosendahl frequently points the reader back to Jesus in order to display the disturbing ways that American Christianity has rallied behind causes that often contradict his teachings. For example, she mentions the United States' current exclusivist foreign policy as a complete indictment on the Christian faith; as the U.S. shuts out, bans, and deports, Jesus Christ inclusively welcomes, accepts, and validates the foreigner. Rosendahl also cites the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said, "In the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" (p. 96). She asserts that the red-letter Jesus of the gospels would have not stayed silent on the sidelines, but would have fearlessly joined the fight against oppression with his brother and sisters of color, because the way of Jesus is always the way of bold and risky love. Thus, Rosendahl concludes

her book by encouraging readers to re-examine deeply our stances on current social issues in light of the red letters of the gospel, especially if we are going to take the gospel seriously. She proposes that the world will only change once Christians take up the cause of love initiated by the Middle Eastern, Jewish refugee Messiah, who is also known as Jesus Christ.

Throughout her book, Rosendahl's occasional sarcasm and humor allows readers to feel included in a dialogue. As she recounts personal experience coupled with research and facts about real world events and current issues, she invites readers to think about all the different positions the American Christian church has taken, which often, as she proposes, stand in direct contradiction to what Jesus exemplified in his life. She continuously points the readers to the radical Messiah of the gospels, asking us to think differently about our faith and the way we live it out, both individually and collectively. Due to Rosendahl's candor, this book is easily accessible to those not as familiar with the faith or those who may be discouraged by terrible displays of Christianity around them. It also may attract disillusioned Christians, seeking for a different understanding of Christianity. This book will also challenge and shock those who may identify with the Christianity that she distinguishes as an American version of the faith. This book is not for the faint of heart. Thus, *Not Your White Jesus* is a bold critique of American Christianity that compels Christians of all denominational backgrounds to honestly reexamine the ways the church often fails to live up to the teachings of Jesus in the red letters of the Gospels.

Victoria Perez Rivera
University of Southern California

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Book Reviews