Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Appropriation of Schleiermacher

Cory C. Brock

New College

This dissertation is submitted
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Edinburgh 2017

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of PhD in Systematic Theology, has

      (i)   been composed entirely by myself.

      (ii)   been solely the result of my own work.

      (iii)   not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Abstract

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), perhaps the most remarkable dogmatician and intellectual of the Dutch Reformed (*gereformeerde*) tradition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, committed himself to what he called a 'Reformed' and 'catholic' theological task. For the modern dogmatician, this task is neither repristination nor abandonment of one's confessionalist tradition, but, being driven along by the Scriptural witness, to appropriate 'catholic' dogma to the grammars of modern conceptual frameworks. Such a task led Bavinck to a certain eclecticism in style and source for which he earned in twentieth century scholarship the pejorative label of dualism, applied both to his person and his theological content. Regarding his person, this thesis of the two Bavincks follows a biographical narrative of a student and blossoming theologian divided between the orthodox and modern. Regarding his content, interpreters move to and fro between Bavinck the scholastic and Bavinck the post-Kantian, subjectivist dogmatician.

This study nuances this picture and participates in James Eglinton's recent call for an overturning of said dualisms applied to Bavinck's person and work by outlining the most significant example of Bavinck toiling to complete his 'catholic' dogmatic task: his appropriation of Friedrich Schleiermacher. In distinction from Bavinck's milieu, he did not demonize Schleiermacher, but, while willing to critique Schleiermacher's material dogmatics, regarded Schleiermacher as 'deeply misunderstood'. The two primary locales of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher include (i) the question of the epistemic ground of the unity of being and thinking; (ii) the grammar of subjective and objective religion. In both, Bavinck adopts Schleiermacher's concepts of 'feeling', 'absolute dependence', and 'immediate self-consciousness' to complete his own logic.

Understanding Bavinck's adoption of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework, particularly that of the introduction from Schleiermacher's *Der christliche Glaube*, makes visible just how Bavinck determined to work as a modern theologian post-Kant and within the freeing

confines of his orthodox, Dutch confessionalist heritage. His appropriation of Schleiermacher is the paradigmatic example of his commitment to be orthodox… yet modern.

Lay Summary

Herman Bavinck was born in 1854 and died in 1921. He was an important theologian in the Netherlands during his lifetime and continues to be read widely today. Part of his interests as a Christian theologian, one who studies and writes about the Christian God, was to reflect carefully on how the older forms of theology (the study of God), including both the methods used and the doctrines cultivated relate to the modern forms of theology. By modern, he was interested in the time after the French Revolution especially. One of the ways he examined this relationship and enacted a modern and orthodox sentiment in his own work was by using a predominantly older form of theology that was guided by his own church's confessions (texts that outline basic beliefs about God using the Bible as a primary source) but he constructed theological sentences with modern ideas drawn from the contemporary trajectories in philosophy.

The most important person in the modern theological context that Bavinck studied and from whom he borrowed extensively was a German pastor and theologian named Friedrich Schleiermacher who died in 1834. From Schleiermacher's books, he learned ways to speak about how the human mind relates to the world outside of the mind. And, Bavinck incorporated his beliefs about God and how God reveals himself to the human being into this idea of the relation between the human mind and the world. He also used some of Schleiermacher's ideas to explain the relationship between humanity and religion. For example, why is it that religion is universal in all times and places? Using Schleiermacher's terms, Bavinck explained that every human has a universal taste for the infinite, which arises in their normal life experiences in their heart, or more technically, in what he called the 'feeling of absolute dependence' or, the consciousness of being related to God.

Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher is a good example and the most important one that helps explain how Bavinck strove to let the modern and older theologies speak to one another.

He decided to ground his own theology in an older tradition in which he grew up in called 'Dutch Reformed' which takes its name from the Reformation in the sixteenth century and is specific to the Netherlands, but he did so adapting his language to a modern context that was different than the past, using especially Friedrich Schleiermacher.

For Ethan, Juliette, and Ames

Acknowledgments

has benefited me in all domains of life over the last few years. He helped guide me toward this project and his input has been most influential. And in addition, I owe thanks to Dr. Joshua Ralston, Dr. Zack Purvis, and Gray Sutanto for their critical feedback. I will also always recall my time at New College Edinburgh as the rise of an Anglophone 'Bavinck school' in which I enjoyed the communion of fellow travelers: Gray Sutanto, Rev. Bruce Pass, Gustavo Monteiro, and Rev. Cam Clausing. The faculty of New College Edinburgh are also due thanks for the blessing of a scholarship that aided the production of this work.

Finally, my highest gratitude and love is for those who have served this project when it was nothing but a faint future hope, my family. Long before such hope, through a lifetime of selfless generosity in all forms of care, my parents and sister, Steve, Traci, and Kelsey, were a bedrock community of Christian formation and are ever-present sources of all manner of encouragement, love, and generosity. And above all to my wife Heather is owed the highest honour. To her, I give my love and thanksgiving for being the most selfless of all others I know.

<div align="right">

Cory C. Brock,

Edinburgh, May 2017

</div>

Abbreviations

PoR   Bavinck, Herman. *Philosophy of Revelation*: *The Stone Lectures from 1908-1909*. Translated by Geerhardus Vos, Henry E. Dosker, and Nicolas Steffens. New York: Longman, Greens, and Co., 1909.

WO   —. *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring: Stone-Lezingen voor het jaar 1908, gehouden te Princeton N.J. door H. Bavinck*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1908.

RD 1   —. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One: Prolegomena*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

RD 2   —. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Two: God and Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

RD 3   —. *Reformed Dogamtics, Volume Three: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

RD 4   —. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Four: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

CF   Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, Vol. 1 and 2. Translated by Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey, and Edwina Lawler. Edited by Catherine Kelsey and Terrence Tice. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016.

KGA   —. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Edited by Hans-Joachim Birkner, Gerhard Ebeling, Hermann Fischer, Heinz Kimmerle, and Kirt-Victor Selge. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980- .

OR   —. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*. Translated by John Oman. New York: Harper and Bros., 1958.

OR (C)   —. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*. Translated by Richard Crouter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

CTJ   *Calvin Theological Journal*

JRT   *Journal of Reformed Theology*

IJST   *International Journal of Systematic Theology*

SJT   *Scottish Journal of Theology*

TBR   *The Bavinck Review*

Contents

Part II: Appropriation: Knowing and Depending

Introduction

'Modern… and yet orthodox', so begins McCormack's study of Barth.[1] This study begins with a parallel statement about its subject Herman Bavinck: 'orthodox … and yet modern'. The latter dictum provides the answer to a question that much of Bavinck scholarship has been asking for the last half-century: what is the relationship of his orthodoxy to what has been called 'the challenges posed… by modernity' in his turn-of-the-century Dutch context?[2]

These terms orthodox and modern are difficult to define. Regarding Bavinck (1854-1921), there are two contexts for expressing their meanings. On the one hand, there is European culture—what of the spiritual kingdom of God in relation to the changing social milieu of post-Revolutionary Europe? This was a principal question for the leaders of the neo-Calvinist movement in the Netherlands, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Bavinck, leading to the public theology for which it is well known. How ought we, they queried, relate the social order after 1789 (French Revolution) and 1848 (European revolutions) with Christ's hands and feet in an evolving *polis*? On the other hand, there is dogmatics. With the epistemological barriers constructed by Kant, the lingering rationalism of the *philosophes*, the historical consciousness of the Romantic spirit, Hegel's sublation (*Aufhebung*) of religious thinking, the reign of historical-critical hermeneutics, and the theology/religious studies division in the academy, so stands dogmatics wondering where it goes from here. Bavinck put it accordingly in 1895:

> But today it is, above all, the philosophical underpinnings of dogmatics that
> are under fire; not some isolated doctrine but the very possibility of dogmatics
> is being questioned. The human ability to know is restricted to the visible
> world, and revelation is considered impossible. In addition, Holy Scripture is

---

[1] Bruce L. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 9.

[2] John Bolt sets modernity in sharp contrast to Reformed orthodoxy: 'Bavinck was a man of deep piety and great learning who faced head-on the challenges posed to Reformed orthodoxy by modernity without forsaking his deep, pietistic roots'. John Bolt, *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2015), 38.

being robbed of its divine authority by historical criticism and even the warrant for and value of religion is being seriously disputed. Consequently… religious life today is dramatically less vigorous than before… there is little genuinely religious life… The childlike and simultaneously heroic statement "I believe" is seldom heard and has given way to the doubts of criticism. People perhaps still believe their confessions, but they no longer confess their faith (Schweizer).[3]

Doubt regarding the possibility of knowing God and the diminishing religious life were the problems of Bavinck's 'today'. The era of the reign of the theology of Dordt, the Belgic confession, and Heidelberg waned in the first half of the nineteenth century in the Netherlands. Bavinck especially lamented the atrophy of confessional theologies after Kant, Napoleon, and Darwin. Considerations of this modern culture and its ideas in the Dutch, neo-Calvinist context continue to provoke articles and monographs.[4]

i. Modern-Orthodox Bi-Polarity?

The structuring question of this study makes explicit the central tension in Bavinck scholarship to date: was Bavinck, in fact, modern, orthodox, or both? This query participates as a species in the genus Tillich calls the 'perennial question' regarding the relation between the 'Christian message and the modern mind': 'can the Christian message be adapted to the

---

[3] Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, IV vols (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1895), I.45. Hereafter, *GD* I-IV; *RD* 1.106.

[4] The rise of the Bavinck readership and secondary scholarship follows the publication of his *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* in English, the *Reformed Dogmatics*. The question of Bavinck's orthodoxy in relation to his modernity was treated implicitly in nuanced forms recently in James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012); Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology and the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Wolter Huttinga, *Participation and Communicability: Herman Bavinck and John Milbank on the Relation Between God and the World* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn Motief, 2014). Related to the discussion of Bavinck and modernity, also see George Harinck, C. van der Kooi, and J. Vree, eds., '*Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende*', *Aantekeningen van H. Bavinck over de zaak-Netelenbos, het Schriftgezag en de situatie van the Gereformeerde Kerken (November 1919)* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994).

modern mind without losing its essential and unique character'?[5] For Bavinck's theology, the question arises first from the most important details of his biography. Herman, son of Rev. Jan Bavinck, a pioneer of the Dutch secessionist movement (*Afscheiding*), moved from his place at the Kampen theological school of the seceder church to gain a more scientific and modern education at the University of Leiden.[6] One version of the narrative that follows is of a student in internal conflict, torn asunder between a pietistic anti-modernity of the secession's confessionalism and the post-Kantian milieu of the theological academy.[7]

The search for the latter, led by the fathers of modernity themselves, from Lessing and Herder to Kant and Schleiermacher, was taken up in revision by their Dutch progeny, van Heusde, Hofstede de Groot, and the Groninger School, and then to Bavinck's teachers, Johannes Scholten and Abraham Keunen at Leiden.[8] Between secession and Leiden, Bavinck underwent, so the narrative goes, what Eglinton satirizes as a 'Jekyll and Hyde bi-polarity, a lifetime of crisis concerning theological and philosophical identity'—the obvious outworking of orthodoxy meeting modernity, *Afscheiding* meeting the legacy of German theological

---

[5] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 7.

[6] Known as the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*, see Eric D. Bristley, *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 12. For an introduction to the *Afscheiding*, Peter Y. De Jong and Nelson Kloosterman, eds., *The Reformation of 1834: Essays in Commemoration of the Act of Secession and Return* (Orange City, IA: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 1984); J.C. Rullmann, *De Afscheiding in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk de XIXe Eeuw* (Kampen: Kok, 1930). George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, 'The Nineteenth Century', in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Bristol, CT: Vandenheock & Ruprecht, 2015), 435-520.

[7] However, the seceder's relationship to the 'modern' is more complex even within Bavinck's household as a child. For examples of the older narrative see Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie: De Openbarings- en Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in Vergelijking met die der Ethische Theologie* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1968), 108-11; John Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013), 39-78. For a critique: Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 27-50; Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 9-18. The secession was especially provoked by King William's centralization of ecclesiastical authority in 1815-16. For a brief history from the *Nadere Reformatie* to the Secession, see Bolt, *A Theological Analysis*, 42-49.

[8] K.H. Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland: Hare Voorbereiding en Eerste Periode* (Groningen: Ervan B. van der Kamp, 1914), §2.26-43.

liberalism at Leiden.[9] The modern/orthodox duality present in the milieu of Bavinck's secessionist church is summarized no clearer than in his friend Henry Dosker's letter to Bavinck after the transfer to Leiden:

> I thank God that you have remained true, amongst all the heathen attacks around you. What are Herman's reasons for studying theology *there* was the question which, perforce, arose in my mind. Leiden, the focal point of modernism. The names of Kuenen, Schölten, etc. are, alas, all too familiar. What can you seek there… Only this, in my opinion, a thorough knowledge of the plan of attack, the weapons and the enemy's strength. God help you, Herman, to remain true to your choice to persevere and to choose the clear truth of faith of our historical Christianity above all the flickering light rays of an enemy science. And yet, you risk a lot. We are both susceptible to the influence of apparently logical arguments. We are growing, tender plants that are bent in the storm and easily keep a misshapen form; you will, I think, have to withdraw within the narrow walls of your own opinions; you will have to be on the defensive and as a result have to adopt a somewhat terse opinion of the truth, while you can grow and develop only by attack. These are just a few points that I would like to see cleared up in your next letter. What are your reasons for studying in Leiden? What do you expect?[10]

Harinck comments that this letter was 'a typical secessionist reaction' to Bavinck's choice.[11] Building upon such reactions, an older narrative of dualism follows providing a sharp juxtaposition between the concepts modern and orthodox. The representative institutions, Leiden (modern) and Kampen (orthodoxy), and their accompanying ideas existed in an entirely converse relation. For Dosker, the relation is metaphorically expressed as a war. For Bavinck, however, modernity and orthodoxy were not each other's opposite. The relation was more nuanced exhibiting difference and development. The meaning of the concepts therefore, for this study, are derived first from Bavinck's own voice with attention to his Dutch context. Those in the secessionist environment did at times read their history according to this sharp modern/orthodox binary and while Bavinck used the binary to describe his historical-

---

[9] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 28.

[10] H.E. Dosker to H. Bavinck, December 23, 1876, H. Bavinck Archive, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum*, *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/12. Translated by G. Harinck, '"Something that Must Remain, If the Truth Is to Be Sweet and Precious to Us": The Reformed Spirituality of Herman Bavinck'. *CTJ* 38, no. 2 (2003): 248–62, 251.

[11] Harinck, 'Something that Must Remain', 251.

theological moment, he did so with striking nuance. He was as Harinck characterizes him, 'a remarkable appearance, loved by his students, respected for his professional qualities by the church, but distrusted because he openly criticized the narrow-minded and sectarian sentiment within his circle'.[12] Bavinck gave one of his earliest and most refined expressions of 'the times' in his 1888 article on catholicity:

> How the times have changed! … [In the middle ages], the church *was* the center of life in the same way that the church building was the center of city and town… However, the emancipatory forces that existed alongside the Reformation have since then grown in power and influence and have, after a brief struggle, gained the upper hand over virtually all of Christendom. A new world-view has arisen that does, to be sure, grant freedom of religion to all that is itself unconnected with Christianity and the church and seeks to eliminate the latter from public life… for the most part, our contemporary culture takes place without reference to Christianity and church. Our situation is thus quite different—a new order prevails…[13]

Bavinck's classification of cultural modernity testifies to the development of the public square, to the privatization of religion, and to the freedoms of pluralism. And, likewise, there is a related theological modernity for which he holds modest antipathy especially regarding its dispute with the trustworthiness of Scripture. He remains, nevertheless, keenly aware of his own situation as participant in the 'modern world-view'. He presented both a cultural and theological taxonomy of this new order accordingly:

> Among those [new] realities we must consider are the modern idea of the state with its complete neutrality… the new world of finance and business, industrialization, and factory life. All these have greatly complicated social relationships. The field of science, too, brings its challenges including… the faith in the absoluteness of causality that governs all inquiry; the emancipation of childrearing and education, of schools and universities; the so-called independent science that denies the knowability or existence of God, contests the trustworthiness of Scripture at every point, turns upside down the geo- and

---

[12] George Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth: Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA', in *The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage; Proceedings of the 11th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies*, eds. Larry J. Wagenaar and Robert P. Swierenga (Holland, MI: The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, 1998), 151-160, 154.

[13] Herman Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', trans. John Bolt, *CTJ* 27 (1992): 220-51, 244. Emphasis added.

anthropocentric view of the universe, applies the law of evolution to everything, and from that one starting point reconstructs psychology, anthropology, ethics, politics, and every other discipline, while allowing theology at best a small discreet place next to the terrain of science… *In addition, we ourselves, perhaps more than we imagine, are influenced by this modern world-view.* Our view of things is quite different from that of previous generations.[14]

Awakened to the early development of hermeneutical theories, as passively formed subjects, the context did more work on his readers than they supposed, Bavinck argues. The Jekyll and Hyde bi-polarity caricature mentioned above, while overstated, does have its ground in a real tension between an antipathy for much of the modern taxonomy of ideas and his embrace of aspects of the modern situation. He described his 'new orientation' as the adoption of an ethic that cherishes the security of the temporal in order 'to make this life as tolerable and as comfortable as possible'. He affirms its attempts to 'alleviate misery, to reduce crime, to lower the mortality rate, to enhance health, to oppose public disorder, and to limit panhandling'.[15] More importantly and ironically, the changes within this modern order he argued, provide better the opportunity for the recognition of the catholicity of Christianity. When the Christian religion gains an earthly focus only then can its spiritual movement of proclamation toward the 'the organic reformation of the whole cosmos, of nature, and country' become a more visible power—one that says God loves the world.[16]

Four years after his article on catholicity, he expressed this tension again in an address following his first *reis naar Amerika* (trip to America). While traveling, he awoke to the reality, that 'Calvinism isn't the only truth'![17] As Harinck suggests, this was a startling phrase for his fellow Kampen faculty: 'if anything was clear and holy to them it was that the Reformed

---

[14] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 244-5. Emphasis added.
[15] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 245.
[16] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 246.
[17] Herman Bavinck, 'The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations', *Proceedings of the Fifth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System* (London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1892), 48-55, 50.

doctrine was the truth, which implied that all other doctrines were wrong'.[18] Herein lies the dichotomy present in his context: orthodoxy (Calvinism) stands entirely against its converse, modernity so-called. In 1892, Bavinck argued both that Calvinism is 'the only consistent theological view of the world and humanity', and that it also promotes extremisms 'guilty of exaggeration' insofar as 'it has often disowned and killed the natural [and] sometimes nourished a hardness of sentiment, a coldness of heart, and a severity of judgment, which cannot impress favorably. The free, the genial, the spontaneous in the moral life, have often been oppressed and killed by it'.[19]

While attuned to the complexity of his location within the modern context, Bavinck maintained an uncertain attitude of secession from many of its ideologies. Two years after announcing the necessity of epistemic modesty in locating the truth in a singular movement like Calvinism, he re-affirmed the confessionalist Reformed tradition as that expression of theology which conforms more than any other to 'thinking God's thoughts after Him'. In 'The Future of Calvinism' he both characterized other modern theologies capitulation to philosophy as a 'down-grade movement' and pronounced: 'the revival of Calvinism is of double importance. Its significance would not be so great if Holland had not experienced the influence of all those modern theological tendencies'.[20] These modern tendencies, he argued, desire a '[modification] of the old Calvinism in accordance with the so-called demands of the times'.[21] He subtly identified 'modern tendencies' as variations of mediation theologies, first coming from Germany and then developing in the Netherlands, both after Schleiermacher:

> All dogmas [today] must submit to modification—the doctrine of Scripture, of the Trinity, of election, the divinity of Christ, His satisfaction, the Church, eschatology; they are all to be thrown into the crucible, in order that the impure dross may be purged away, and the pure religious and ethical elements

---

[18] Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth', 156.
[19] Cited in Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth', 156. Interestingly, Harinck adds in fn. 22: 'In his comprehensive reproduction of Bavinck's speech he, [Hepp], left out these remarks'. See V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1921), 215-18.
[20] Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* V (1894): 1-24, 18.
[21] Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', 16.

retained… the whole of theology is to be transformed into a religious, ethical, "Christological" direction.[22]

He also maintained such expression regarding the complex relationship between the modern and orthodox into his late career. The 1911 essay titled *Modernisme en Orthodoxie* unveiled Bavinck's perspectival consistency. Here, although stamping the validity of the binary in the title, he argued that the two modes of classification are neither static nor related in a total converse manner. Orthodoxy, 'holding high the Christian confession', he wrote, cannot 'be against the modern in every way. Just as modern theology, in general, thinks and lives out of the Christian tradition much more than they themselves suppose, so orthodoxy does also— unless it entirely shut itself off from the environment—in greater or lesser degree under the influence of the spiritual currents of this century'.[23] Bavinck, therein, considered the terms 'orthodox' and 'modern' ill-suited as generalizations of current societal trends and 'orthodoxy', referring to confessional adherence, only useful when combined with a freedom of thought and expression.

There are three points in this article pertinent for the entire study. First, note Bavinck's simple definition of orthodoxy in this address: 'holding high the Christian confession', a term further qualified by adherence to a particular Christian tradition. Second, modern and orthodox theology did not exist, he argued, in a mere relation of contradiction. Modern theology is, in part, a genealogical derivative of orthodox theology and orthodox theology cannot pretend

---

[22] Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', 17-18. These three adjectives, religious, ethical, and Christological, are in this instance pejoratives used in a similar way here as in *RD* 1.497ff on dogmatic methods. They are referents to ways of re-structuring dogmatic foundations in religious experience, in an 'ethical' existentialism, and in an imprudent Christocentrism. These trends he associates to Schleiermacher originally. Contemporary scholarship generalizes the method as 'experiential expressivism'.

[23] Bavinck, *Modernisme en Orthodoxie: Rede Gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 oktober 1911* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1911), 15. Original: 'Trouwens, niemand, die meeleeft met zijn tijd, kan in elk opzicht tegen al het moderne gekant zijn. Zooals de moderne theologie over het algemeen nog veel sterker uit de Christelijke traditie denkt en leeft dan zij zelve vermoedt, zoo staat ook de orthodoxie, tenzij zij zich geheel van hare omgeving afsluit, in zwakker of sterker mate onder den invloed van de geestes stroomingen dezer eeuw.'

that it stands untouched by the modern context and its ideas. Third, orthodox theology must not suppose itself to be an end in itself, lest it become a dead orthodoxy: 'even as the anti-revolutionary and political spheres…', he writes, 'were open to the Christian-historical principles of Groen van Prinsterer and always opposed conservatism, so too can and must those who profess the Reformed religion, as long as they remain true to their origins, never give the impression that for them orthodoxy *per se* is the highest truth'.[24] For this reason and for the fact of its relative dependence on a specific tradition, the term 'orthodoxy' fails to adequately describe Bavinck's concept of true faith. So, he writes:

> In the Reformation saving faith took on a completely different character from the beginning. It was a matter more of the heart than of the head, more heart than the mind, a trust in God's grace in Christ and an assurance of salvation. The name "orthodox" completely undervalues this element and gives the impression that agreement with the confession is the only thing that counts; and that is not so and must not be so. 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.[25]

There are multiple other expressions of this complexity in Bavinck's Dutch context. Puchinger, commenting on Bavinck's dogmatics, highlights such contextual tension by recasting the binary in terms of dogmatic irenicism and isolation: 'There is irony in the course of history but it is undeniable [that] the most ecumenical work of protestant dogmatics was composed in Kampen, where theology was professed in the most isolationistic way'![26] Puchinger's insight reflects Bavinck's expression of his own modern-Calvinist dogmatic ethic: 'modern Calvinists', he wrote, '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… They strive to make progress, *to escape from the deadly embrace of dead*

---

[24] Bavinck, *Modernisme en Orthodoxie*, 14-15.

[25] Bavinck, 'Modernism and Orthodoxy', translated by Bruce Pass, *TBR* 7 (2016), 63-114, 82.

[26] G. Puchinger, 'Bavinck en de volkhistorie', *Ontmoetingen met theologen* (Terra: Zutphen, 1980), 113. Cited in G. Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth', 154.

conservatism, and to take their place, as before, at the head of every movement'.[27] Harinck, commenting on the pluralistic social context, further concludes that Bavinck's 'openness to cultural relativism reveals [him] as a modern man'.[28] Flipse also notes, 'the late Bavinck…had shown more openness to modern culture'.[29] But, in addition to his openness to cultural pluralism, within his title 'modern Calvinist' is an awareness that a particular, guarded openness extends beyond the domain of the mere cultural into theological construction.

Bavinck's later and mature expression of the modern/orthodox relation counteracts the sharp antithesis between Bavinck's orthodoxy and the 'challenges of modernity' proposed in the Jekyll-Hyde narrative. In addition to assuming a sharp converse relation, the older narrative dons a thesis of a 'modernity in general' to which orthodoxy must stand opposed. Bavinck, however, understood that the modern intellectual spirit of the late nineteenth century was manifold. As Harinck comments 'Bavinck refused to leave [either orthodoxy or modernity] out in the cold and searched throughout his life for a certain synthesis between modernity and religion'.[30] Bavinck's 1911 essay, as he had done three times before, offered a genealogy of the diversity of theologies before and after Kant, stating that one ought not suppose there is one 'modern'. The older narrative, in contrast, provides a picture of a sweeping generalized singularity—an event or disposition that transfers the age of old into the age of the new.

Modernity and orthodoxy were not, however, each other's opposite and they cannot be defined as *de facto* enemies in any holistic manner.[31] The nuanced modern/orthodox relation

---

[27] Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', 13. Emphasis added.
[28] G. Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth', 154.
[29] A. Flipse, 'The Origins of Creationism in the Netherlands: The Evolution Debate among Twentieth-Century Neo-Calvinists', *Church History* 81:1 (March 2012), 104-47, 118.
[30] G. Harinck, 'Something That Must Remain, If the Truth Is to Be Sweet and Precious to Us', 249.
[31] The relationship between modernity and pre-modernity is not consistently converse but both developmental and antagonistic. For Dutch Reformed 'orthodoxy', 'heresy' is the clearest designation of its theological converse but, considering the political and cultural modes in

was a child of both the complex consanguinity from pre-modern to modern contexts and the multifarious nature of the modernity birthed.[32] This is to say, modernism so-called neither arose instantly nor expressed itself in any singular form. When considering the 'challenges posed…by modernity', such a narrative fails to account for the actual diversity of its instantiations.

For this reason, as Gay suggests, modernity is much 'easier to exemplify than define'.[33] One must take an approach in recognizing modernity, he supposes, that gives credence to the simple ability to identify vast innovation; the ambiance of novelty is the spirit of modernity. Modernity so construed is not as much a temporal as qualitative category that manifests itself in various modes connected by a shared newness. When one pans across the movements of the pre- and post-Enlightenment arts from da Vinci to Rembrandt, Caspar David Friedrich to Salvador Dali, or tunes in to the grandeur of Mozart and the innovation of Wagner, the characteristics of modernity appear diverse and at the same time share a similar quality of novelty.[34] Such movement exists, also, in a complex relation of development to the past rather than in the mode of sharp antithesis or clear in-breaking.

The reduction of the manifold of modernities to a concept of 'modernism in general', beyond locating a shared ambiance of novelty, is a difficult task and, furthermore, while remaining a convenient '*ism*' precludes correspondence to any actual given.[35] Mapping modernism in all its

which heresy has become manifest in history, the relationship is more complex than simple polarization allows when used as a historical referent.

[32] For a summary of the multifarious nature of modernism, see Matthew Lauzon, 'Modernity', in *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, ed. Jerry Bentley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73-74. Also, Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2002).

[33] Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy* (New York: Random House, 2007), 1.

[34] Gay offers a host of other transitions and adds: 'all [these examples] offer trustworthy testimony to what we are attempting to identify … each carries its own credentials. *That*, we say, *is Modernism.*' *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*, 2.

[35] Hence, modernity as a concept is a necessary generalization used for a system of qualitative evaluation. The concept, while typically containing historical parameters, is more a referent to

ebb and flow, for this reason, remains a project so sweeping that it demands an encyclopedia rather than a monograph. The only characteristic all modernists agree on in fact is, Gay thinks, that 'the untried is markedly superior to the familiar, the rare to the ordinary, the experimental to the routine'.[36] Modernity is the 'lure of heresy' in the face of convention. This lure was dangled in the face of Bavinck, so the narrative would have us believe; sometimes he took hold of it, and sometimes he did not. It is, Bolt suggests accordingly, 'not unfair to characterize Bavinck as a man between two worlds', between the spirit of old and new, orthodox and modern.[37]

This study, therefore, can only enact a modest engagement with a particular aspect of modernity. It is impossible to consider the question proposed, 'is Bavinck modern, orthodox, or both', as it pertains to his relation to the manifold of modernities. It is possible to qualify, nevertheless, the most important aspects of modernity for Bavinck studies. Prior scholarship has established Bavinck's status as a 'modern man' as it relates to his public life and his complex rapport with the movements of the political liberalism of his day.[38] Bavinck's theologico-philosophical method, however, shaped at least in part by an ethic of escape from the 'deadly embrace of dead conservatism', has been little explored as it pertains to his relation to modern theologies. One may, therefore, narrow modern generalities by constraining interest first to theological modernity. To study Bavinck is to study a theologian foremost. If theological modernisms change theological reasoning as well as the logic of (Christian) ethics, then of interest here is whether Bavinck wholly opposed such changes in his own theological reasoning. Or, did he adopt these new ways of theological reasoning into his own dogmatic,

an ethos. As McCormack notes, 'not everything that has happened in the last two hundred years is modern'. Bruce McCormack, 'Introduction', in *Mapping Modern Theology*, eds. Kelly Kapic and Bruce McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 2.

[36] Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*, 3.

[37] Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.13.

[38] See both G. Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth' and esp. Harinck, 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion: A Case Study of Herman Bavinck's Engagement with Modern Culture', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011), 60-77.

philosophical, and ethical writings? This question assumes a notion of the whence of such a change.

ii. The Authority of Philosophy in Theological Modernities

Bavinck's given definition of orthodoxy, holding high the church's confession, within his context is defined by the Three Forms of Unity. Orthodoxy includes a confessional assent combined with a pietistic ethic, a lifestyle of hard work and Sabbath rest. Yet, beyond confessionalism, orthodoxy in the context of the Dutch secession means the exegesis of the Scriptures with application to the Christian life—the imitation of Christ. It gives authoritative credence to the Reformation's liberated conscience under the logic of *sola Scriptura*. If theological modernity includes a movement toward new styles of thought and alternative methodological patterns of doctrinal formation[39] then this study is an examination of, for Bavinck, the extent to which he implemented instantiations of these new forms and patterns into his own contextualized Reformed orthodoxy.

Modern theology as a generalized expression, for Bavinck, classifies theologies that accommodate traditional grammars of theological propositions in some degree to the mediation of historical-critical studies and the discoveries of the natural sciences. But, above all, these idiosyncratic expressions of a new methodology were largely developed in response to the pressures of philosophy, and especially Kantian epistemology. In modernity, he writes, 'theology lost its undisputed control and became dependent on philosophy'.[40] It is, therefore, important to pay attention to how new philosophical patterns emerged within theological modernity. Per his historiography, Descartes is the hinge:

---

[39] This is one aspect of defining theological modernity in McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 9-12.
[40] Herman Bavinck, 'The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl', trans. John Bolt, *TBR* 3 (2012): 123-63, 123.

There has been a significant change in the relationship between theology and philosophy since Descartes and also thanks to him. Prior to this time, theology was the mistress with unlimited authority; she fashioned for herself a philosophy or appropriated an existing one such as that of Aristotle as she had need of it and could use it without doing harm. In more recent times, however, the roles were reversed. Theology lost its undisputed control and became dependent on philosophy. Consequently, it experienced the influence of Descartes and Wolff, of Kant and Fichte, and of Hegel and Schelling. It has now come so far that it is impossible to know and understand theological positions without serious examination of the philosophical positions to which they have attached themselves. One could almost say that the study of philosophy is as essential for understanding the principles of contemporary theology as that of the theology itself.[41]

Bavinck's estimation of the characteristic of modern theologies is that various philosophical principles have replaced theological foundations for theology. Theology can remain no longer a self-contained enterprise possessing its own *principia*. The former theological-philosophical relation has been replaced by the philosophical-theological, expressing itself in various forms. The acceptance of the 'philosophy of Immanuel Kant…[has] step by step, [caused] the subjective practical notion of theology' to find general acceptance, he argues.[42] The epistemic separation between thinking and knowing in Kant's first *Critique* and the derivative illusion of casting the concept 'God' in terms of 'knowledge' has promoted a subsequent trajectory that emphasizes the subjective and practical uses of theological reasoning in place of the objective and theoretical.[43] There are two primary results of this adoption of an absolutised epistemic modesty in the discipline of theology, Bavinck suggests.

The first includes the placement of apologetics 'at the head of theological disciplines' to derive for theology a foundation from outside its own resources.[44] The second is that most nineteenth century theology embraced the 'turn to the subject'—a general theological method

---

[41] Bavinck, 'The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl', 123.
[42] *RD* 1.135.
[43] For Kant's critique of rational theology see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), A580/B608. Hereafter, *CPR*.
[44] See *RD* 1.55-56.

after Kant, which is antithetical to the other significant response to rationalism in the nineteenth century, biblicism.[45]

> As a result of the great reversal that occurred in recent decades in philosophy, there has come into vogue yet another method in addition to the traditionalistic and biblical method. This method does not start out from the doctrine of the church or from the teaching of Scripture *but from the believing subject, from the Christian consciousness.* Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel were in agreement in no longer regarding religious truth as objectively given in Scripture or confession, and all three believed that it could be found in and derived from the religious subject. While their ideas about the origin and essence of religion diverged widely, each of them still took a different road to arrive at the knowledge of God and divine things.[46]

While admittedly diverse among its members, Bavinck categorizes the primary impact of philosophy in relation to theology as the production of a movement he calls 'consciousness-theology',[47] which holds, he thinks, powerful influence in his century. He traces its origins to its chief philosopher, Kant, to a subsequent neo-Kantian revival, and to its chief theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and his progeny, the mediation theologians (*Vermittlungstheologen*). Rightly, consciousness theologians understand the point of theology: *Nicht Lehre, sondern Leben* (not doctrine, but life). Yet, he argues, together they have adopted such epistemic reservation about the true object of theology, God, that they have turned into themselves and mistaken the unified center of self (heart, consciousness) as both an object and source for theology—more than a *principium* in general but an objective *principium*, a self reflecting on itself as Christian consciousness. Because it is a *Christian* consciousness, it, alongside the generalized Christian consciousness of the mediating community, becomes a source for defining the material content of the Christian confession.[48] It is Schleiermacher, therefore, that he

---

[45] He also offers other characteristics throughout his corpus. These include reducing the space in published theologies for material dogmatics and the reciprocal expansion of the formal (*prolegomena*), the triumph of reason over revelation, the priority of rationalist natural theology, pronouncements pointing toward the impossibility of revelation, and theological methods that establish the non-necessity of Scriptural authority. See *RD* 1.106ff.

[46] *RD* 1.66.

[47] See *RD* 1.70, 91, 421.

[48] 'If we take this assertion seriously, it implies the idea that though God reveals himself nowhere else, he still makes himself known in the hearts, minds, consciousness, or feelings of

recognizes as the central, most important theologian of modernity. And, in reply, Bavink argues that this general method of consciousness offers more of a religious psychology and cultural ethnography than the knowledge of God.

> Anyone who only wished to describe the religious experiences of the inner self objectively, in a historical report, would perhaps give us an important religious psychology but not dogmatics. Dogmatics presupposes that there is a source of religious knowledge and that from it we can derive this knowledge, not by a neutral intellect, but by a personal faith. So, despite themselves, the proponents of consciousness theology also prove that for dogmatics to be a body of truth it must have its own source, object, and authority and also that in order to recognize and use them one must have personal faith.[49]

To understand in any measure the 'essential principles of contemporary theology' contained in consciousness theologies or otherwise, he writes, one must understand modern movements in philosophy and, particularly, the turn to the subject—a requirement due to the modern interchange between queen and handmaiden. This is to say, philosophical concepts within the bounds of theological discourse that are derivative of particularly Kantian influence and focused on the grammars of self, subject, ego, or consciousness, are a quintessential mark of much of what Bavinck classifies as modern theologies. And he expressed the fact of his own expansive philosophical study of the turn to the subject clearly throughout his entire corpus. As Veenhof put it: 'Bavinck has always concentrated on philosophy throughout his whole life, with an intensity that is striking even for a systematic theologian with dogmatics as a principal subject'.[50] And 'practically, the borders [between philosophy and theology] are somewhat fluid [for Bavinck]'.[51] Veenhof's double-verdict depends upon Bavinck's prior judgments. First, one cannot understand modern theologies without deep acquaintance with philosophical

---

human beings. In that case the inner self of human beings possesses a specific quality and needs to be considered as the object and source of the discipline of dogmatics since God reveals himself there'. *RD* 1.92.

[49] *RD* 1.92.

[50] Jan Veenhof, 'De God van de filosofen en de God van de bijbel*', in Ontmoetingen Met Herman Bavinck, eds. George Harinck and Gerrit Neven* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006), 219-234, 219. 'Bavinck heft zich immers gedurende heel zijn leven in de filosofie verdiept, met een intensiteit die zelfs bij een systematisch theoloog met dogmatiek als hoofdvak opvallend is'.

[51] Also: 'feitelijk zijn de grenzen bij hem enigszins vloeiend'. Veenhof*, '*De God van de filosofen en de God van de bijbel', 219.

developments. Second, philosophical concepts regardless of the system from which they come are indeed porous enough to serve the purposes of theological reasoning:

> Theology is not in need of a specific philosophy. It is not *per se* hostile to any philosophical system and does not, *a priori* and without criticism, give priority to the philosophy of Plato or of Kant, or vice versa. But it brings along its own criteria, tests all philosophy by them, and takes over what it deems true and useful. What it needs is philosophy in general. In other words, it arrives at scientific theology only by thinking. The only internal principle of knowledge, therefore, is not faith as such, but believing thought, Christian rationality. Faith is self-conscious and sure. It rests in revelation. It includes cognition, but that cognition is completely practical in nature, a knowing (γιγνωσκειν) in the sense of Holy Scripture.[52]

Consideration of Bavinck's relation to modern theology and the trajectory of philosophical foundations so-perceived directs one towards the broadest of claims regarding just how Bavinck related modern theologies to his own self-categorized Reformed orthodox theological construction. The answer is that in acknowledgement of the fact that the essential principles of contemporary theology cannot be understood without knowledge of philosophical movements, the fact of subjectivity became a locus in his work. It was in facing the 'challenges posed by modernity', that his own constructive efforts reflected the subject matter of those challenges: the turn to the subject. In doing so, he obeyed his own dictum that theology is not in need of any single philosophy. While Bavinck was certainly a student of Aristotle, this study explores his adoption of a grammar drawn from a post-Kantian milieu and specifically that of the consciousness theologies. In turn, Bavinck's study of the modern philosophical-theological grammars led him to a peculiar relation to Schleiermacher, above all other modern theologians, precisely due to his estimation of Schleiermacher as the catalyst and father of the consciousness theological trajectory.

iii. The Question and Answer

---

[52] *RD* 1.609.

The question regarding the relation between Bavinck's seceder theological tradition and his modernity when considering the multifarious nature of theological 'modernity' demands an explanation beyond the scope of this study. To answer adequately would be to explore Bavinck's relation to numerous theological modernities in relation ranging from Kant to Feuerbach, Dorner to Hermann. Considering Bavinck's vast corpus, this list could designate several hundred names. For this reason, the present study narrows to *the* modern theology that was most important for Bavinck, a claim to be defended throughout the remainder of the study, the so-called father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Bavinck's reduction of the fundamental trend of theological modernity as a 'turn to the subject' that bred 'consciousness-theology' points directly to Schleiermacher as the primary theological interlocutor.

As McCormack described Barth 'modern and yet orthodox' he did so by setting Barth in conversation with the father of modern theology, supposing a revision of the Barth/Schleiermacher relation per the possibility of a more significant family resemblance ('Barth might be justly located within the Schleiemacherian tradition') and perhaps, inciting an argument of methodological appropriations.[53] And, in a similar way, McCormack's project with Barth anticipates this project in style although not so in content. The first sentence of this chapter provided the answer to the question 'is Bavinck modern, orthodox, or both'? He is 'orthodox yet modern'—a reversal of McCormack's estimation of Karl Barth.

It is in Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's grammar of consciousness, this study suggests, that he is first proved 'orthodox… yet modern'. In accordance with the investigation of Bavinck's relationship to Schleiermacher and the general conclusions to be drawn from it, a more specific thesis is required: *Bavinck is orthodox yet modern insofar as he subsumes the philosophical-theological questions and concepts of theological modernity under the conditions of his orthodox, confessional*

---

[53] McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 37.

tradition.[54] This is to say, for Bavinck, the affirmation of his confessional tradition in consanguinity with the general confessional hermeneutic of his Reformed scholastic predecessors is a priority. Yet, his Reformed orthodox identity does not preclude the adoption of a particularly modern philosophical grammar used for the expression of his confessionalist theological rationality. He adopts, therein, an Schleiemacherian grammar of consciousness, particularly drawn from the early sections of the *Glaubenslehre*, or *Christian Faith*, and even an Schleiemacherian rationality, as a primary expression of his own theological-philosophical discourse. This is the central claim to be proven in the remainder of the study.

An examination of Bavinck's relationship to Schleiermacher cannot exhaust the question of his modern/orthodox relation. It serves, rather as a principal argument whose answer can be used as a paradigm for exploring other relations in the future of Bavinck scholarship. While recognizing the multiplicity of theological modernities one can, nevertheless, generalize about Bavinck's relationship to theological modernity through studying his relationship to Schleiermacher. Bavinck regarded Schleiermacher as the most important of all modern theologians: 'Schleiermacher has exerted incalculable influence', he writes. 'All subsequent theology is dependent on him'.[55] Schleiermacher offers, therein, a premiere or paradigmatic example of Bavinck's relation to theological modernity.

If, as Bavinck described, theological modernity in general is identified by new styles of thought and patterns of doctrinal formation according to a new method in response to the pressures of philosophy, then Schleiermacher is indeed the appropriate candidate for such an investigation. Schleiermacher has consistently been identified as the most momentous of modern theologians before Barth. When asked why Schleiermacher studies remain alive and resurgent today, Crouter proposes that his own interest in Schleiermacher 'rests on the

---

[54] McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern*, 17. Barth subsumes orthodoxy under the conditions of modernity.
[55] *RD* 1.166.

brilliance and versatility of his achievement in shaping a distinctively modern Protestant Christian thought'.[56] And if the acquiescence to new philosophical pressures is the key mark of theological modernity as Bavinck identified it, then this thesis suggests that Bavinck took some of the philosophical tendencies of post-Kantian thought, particularly Schleiermacher's central philosophical motifs (the borrowed propositions), and subsumed them under the strictures of his Reformed orthodox commitments in their theological applications.

Bavinck, in other words, expanded his theological horizons using the new philosophical grammar of the nineteenth century. The first and broadest claim is that, through the influence of Schleiermacher's tradition, Bavinck too turned to the subject. These philosophical concepts, in turn, re-informed doctrines of old and offered opportunities for expansion. But, they did so under the conditions of his own identity barriers. Bavinck developed a modern theological philosophy in his later career, a philosophy of revelation, under the conditions of his dogmatic commitments.

The paradigmatic case of Bavinck's 'modernity' in his adoption of Schleiermacher is his persistent use of the concept 'self-consciousness' (and especially immediate self-consciousness) set within a broader framework of emphasis on the human subject and with specific attention to 'feeling'. These concepts are present in most of his published work throughout his entire career and often set in close relation with the conceptual pairs relative and absolute 'dependence'. The attuned reader of historical theologies will instantly recognize in the terms themselves why Schleiermacher is the likely interlocutor. Schleiermacher's influence perpetuated the concept immediate self-consciousness and its important religious (*fromm*) element (the feeling of absolute dependence) for modern theologies a century following.[57]

---

[56] Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 1.
[57] The most famous presentation of which is in *CF* §3-5.

While much of Bavinck's use of the concept remained un-cited, he revealed his indebtedness to Schleiermacher explicitly in his 1908 Stone lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary: 'the core of our self-consciousness is, as Schleiermacher perceived much more clearly than Kant, not autonomy, but the feeling of dependence'.[58] While an opponent, as Bolt correctly suggests, of 'modern theology' in general according to its adoption of the subjective consciousness as a source-foundation for theological construction (as Bavinck understands it), in obedience to his own suggestion regarding the requirement that one must comprehend and engage modern philosophy in order to participate in contemporary theology, Bavinck appropriated much of the philosophical grammar that consciousness theologies so promoted. Schleiermacher showed Bavinck that feeling offers a unique, original form of 'knowing' (a pre-discursive certainty, an intuition with no direct object in view) and that such faith-knowledge, as Bavinck put it, is the foundation of religion and a universal fact of human nature.

This thesis, while proposing that Bavinck maintained a significant dependence on Schleiermacher and his progeny throughout his career, must be read with nuance lest misunderstanding ensue. The argument that Bavinck appropriated Schleiermacher's concept of immediate self-consciousness into his dogmatic and philosophical work should not be reduced to a holistic '*ism*'. The suggestion is not that Bavinck is 'Schleiermacherian' like he has been called Augustinian, Calvinistic or, more appropriately, Reformed. It is, rather, that he borrowed and indeed learned from Schleiermacher in a very specific way. That way hardly pertains to Schleiermacher's unique theological method (per the logic of divine causality or the

---

[58] *PoR*, 66. *WO*, 55. 'De kern van ons zelfbesef is, gelijk Schleiermacher veel beter dan Kant inzag, geen autonomie maar afhankelijkheidsgevoel'. Bavinck is transliterating here directly from Schleiermacher's *Abhängigkeitsgefühl*. The English translation of *PoR* by Vos and others uses 'sense' instead of 'feeling' but *gevoel* is best translated 'feeling' to maintain consistency with its German source. The German translation corroborates by using Schleiermacher's term: 'Der Kern des Bewußtseins unseres Selbst ist, wie Schleiermacher viel besser als Kant erkannte, keine Autonomie, sondern Abhängigkeitsgefühl'. Bavinck, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, trans. Hermann Cuntz (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's *Universitätsbuchhandlung*, 1909), 51.

search for a sufficient transcendental applied to the individual and communal Christian consciousness in its religious affections) in deriving the materials of his dogmatics, *seine Glaubenslehre*. Bavinck, rather, uses Schleiermacher to adapt the grammar of older dogmatic concepts to a world of ideas that had been re-shaped by Kant's relegation of theology to mere thinking and he does so with the permission of his reading of Augustine: 'Augustine expressly states that God can be known from the things that are visible but refers especially to self-consciousness and self-knowledge as the road to eternal truth'.[59]

Given that Bavinck's *deep* appropriation of Schleiermacher has never been argued, an ethic of modesty is also in order. Beyond mere suggestions of a superficial adaptation of Schleiermacher and slight recognitions of similar wording, Bavinck readers have rarely given any due to this appropriation.[60] Amongst older commentators, Bremmer briefly acknowledges that Bavinck's *Magnalia Dei* gives priority to the subjective, internal organon called 'impressionability' (*vatbaarheid*) as the passive faculty that receives God's general revelation. This faculty, Bremmer notes, is the correlative of Schleiermacher's concept of dependence used to express the 'how' in Bavinck's doctrine of general revelation.[61] Recently, B. Hoon Woo is most explicit about a Bavinck/Schleiermacher groundwork throughout Bavinck's corpus, correctly arguing that Bavinck 'wrestle[s] with the theology of Schleiermacher'

---

[59] *RD* 1.303. It is important already to note that Bavinck understood the distinction between knowledge of self that requires self-objectification and a pre-discursive consciousness of self.

[60] For brief mentions of Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher see Eugene Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason: E. Brunner and H. Bavinck* (Sheboygan Falls, WI: Van Gorcum, 1959), 7; S. Meijers, *Objectiviteit en Existentialiteit: Een onderzoek naar hun verhouding in de theologie van Herman Bavinck en in door hem beinvloede concepties* (Kampen: Kok, 1979), 285-86; Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 239. R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus* (Kampen: Kok, 1961), 175, 328-331. The most nuanced of the earlier scholars is Veenhof who does begin his survey of Bavinck's relation to Schleiermacher with instances of praise for Schleiermacher. The survey is, nevertheless, very brief. Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 400-404, 557-561.

[61] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, 165.

throughout his career.[62] Woo offers a reading of the Bavinck/Schleiermacher relation with regard to the doctrine of revelation that is novel material indeed. But, more precisely, Woo's work is a study of both Bavinck and Barth's interaction with Schleiermacher on the doctrine of revelation that organizes Bavinck's criticisms of Schleiermacher in *RD* into an article. Woo does, however, helpfully point out Bavinck's dependence on Schleiermacher in *PoR* but underestimates Bavinck's relationship to Schleiermacher by setting it in equal terms with that of Kant. He mistakenly suggests that Bavinck puts Schleiermacher's fundamental definition of self as dependent agent in tandem with Kant's 'perspective' on human freedom.[63] Woo also misunderstands Bavinck's adoption of the term 'immediate' and its distinct uses in *PoR* and *RD* leading to the claim that 'there is no immediate revelation' conceptually in Bavinck's corpus.[64] Woo bases this conclusion on a qualification Bavinck makes in *RD* 1.309 but fails to see that Bavinck is speaking there in the 'strictest sense' referring to the fact that there is no 'direct' access to God *in se*, no pure *visio Dei*, that God does not reveal God without means.

But Bavinck also uses 'immediate' alongside Schleiermacher's notion of immediacy as an intuitive, pre-discursive, underlying consciousness of self, world, and God, that accompanies all states of representational life.[65] Here, 'immediate' is in relation to 'self-consciousness', which is a domain of revelation that has no direct object in view (because self, world, and God are not objects to be perceived) and is directly associated with 'feeling'. In this way, God can

---

[62] B. Hoon Woo, 'Bavinck and Barth on Schleiermacher's Doctrine of Revelation', *Korea Reformed Theology* 48 (2015): 38-71, 40-41.

[63] Woo, 'Bavinck and Barth on Schleiermacher's Doctrine of Revelation', 50.

[64] Woo, 'Bavinck and Barth on Schleiermacher's Doctrine of Revelation', 65.

[65] Regarding Schleiermacher, an editor's note in *CF* helpfully explains his notion of immediate: 'In the proposition, the adjective *unmittelbar* ("immediate") before "self-consciousness" means without any mediation … It does not mean instantaneous'. *CF* §3.2, n.4.

be revealed in immediate self-consciousness, because that experience is a feeling of being in relation with God. Here, in this primal subjective experience of self, God is not an object in view. But, what is immediate is the awareness or consciousness of being a self in distinction from not-I, the objective. Therein, the correlate of feeling arises from being in relations that are both relative and absolute. Bavinck, following Schleiermacher, uses immediate with respect to the self to refer to the pre-cognitive (as prior to thinking as the reasoning process), in which the domain of 'feeling' qualifies the term 'immediate'. For Bavinck, feeling is indeed an aspect of the knowing faculty, but 'feeling' is a term that signifies one aspect of knowing. Hence, while self-, world-, and God-consciousness arise in the experience of being a self in the world, they are not first concepts that result from thinking (*denken*). The 'immediate' it must be emphasized, qualifies 'self-consciousness' and not one's relation to God, which can never be immediate. Immediate, therefore, is a word that speaks of the self's intuition of the self. And this consciousness has a correlative relationship to a feeling of dependence on that which is not-self. The idea of the immediate, for Bavinck, in relation to revelation does not refer to the negation of means in which one is removed in self-consciousness from human life in the world or of a *direct* consciousness of God *in se*. Rather, 'immediate' with respect to self-consciousness is a reference to an intuitive, felt unity of the self with the world, which together depend absolutely on a personal, Absolute essence. Such self-consciousness is immediate because the basic awareness of the 'I' (*Ik*) is the ground of all thinking and willing. It is not discovered, but given. This feeling of self, of world, and of the Absolute God, before all evidence, for Bavinck, is the primal subjective correlate of the fact of God's general revelation, what he calls after Calvin and Schleiermacher, *pietas*, referring to a religious feeling that exists by nature, in general.

Woo's point in the end is that Bavinck offers better resources than Barth for overcoming Schleiermacher's subjectivity, and this may be the case. Regardless, the point is made by treating three mammoth figures who each left a prodigious corpus with only the briefest of strokes.[66]

Henk van den Belt offers the most precise account of Bavinck's relation to Schleiermacher thus far. He correctly remarks that Bavinck stands closer to Schleiermacher and the German mediation theologies than does his Dutch audience.[67] His comments are derivative of Bavinck's adoption of self-consciousness as the solution to the epistemic problems of modern philosophy in *PoR*. Van den Belt's remarks are brief, however, and his purpose is to uncover the fact that Bavinck moved beyond Schleiermacher.

It remains true that the proceeding argument pertaining to Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's fundamental philosophical-theological motifs is nearly new territory. There are several possible reasons for Schleiermacher's omission from general claims regarding influence including translation error (as it pertains to Anglophone readers), which has and will be highlighted throughout. But primarily, there is in general a deep suspicion in Bavinck's theological tradition of even the mildest adoptive reference or interaction with modern

---

[66] While brief, Woo also offers helpful evidences for perceiving a unique Bavinck-Schleiermacher relation throughout Bavinck's corpus citing proofs like the immense number of instances that Bavinck interacts with Schleiermacher in *RD*, and the fact that Bavinck always treats Schleiermacher's impact amid each dogmatic *locus*. These evidences and more are developed in detail in Ch. 3 in this work. Yet, Woo's comment that, like Barth, Bavinck 'wrote [a book] about the theology of Schleiermacher' is misleading (pg. 40). The book he cites is Bavinck's treatment of the theology of de la Saussaye, a French-Dutch pastor and theologian, who was influenced by Schleiermacher's legacy (see Ch. 3). He derives this misunderstanding directly from Eugene Heideman.

[67] Henk van den Belt, 'An Alternative Approach to Apologetics', in *The Kuyper Center Review: Revelation and Common Grace*, vol. 2, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 43-60, 55.

theologians or philosophers that might be something other than critique—this is to say, a suspicion of contamination. For example, Mattson writes: 'while Bavinck appreciates Schleiermacher's emphasis on the subjective feeling of absolute dependence, it is of little use to him because of its pantheistic character'.[68] While the opposite is the case, such suspicion rightly stems from Bavinck's own position as a thoroughgoing orthodox and Dutch Reformed theologian that did, in fact, stand up against the 'challenges of modernity' and criticized the dogmatic works of theologians like Schleiermacher often. Yet, one must not let his general theological identity mask the reality of his development of ideas.[69]

In total, Bavinck used Schleiermacher's concepts to develop his own grammar regarding the given certainty of human experience as well as a religious certainty in feeling (*gevoel*) correlative to a universal revelation of God first felt before discovered by reason. The point thus far, nevertheless, is that there are no other interpretative battles in the secondary literature to address as it pertains to how Bavinck uses Schleiermacher and very few as it pertains to the fact that he is using Schleiermacher. It is important, therefore, that the argument be considered with nuance from the outset and to recognize that the claim does not obstruct Bavinck's adherence to the boundaries of his tradition's commitments.[70]

iv. The Way Forward

---

[68] *Restored to Our Destiny*, 111, fn. 47.

[69] The suspicion was also clear in Pass' earlier considerations of Bavinck's use of '*cogito*' following van den Belt: 'At first glance [at Bavinck's use of *cogito*], this statement appears extraordinarily subjective, a statement one might expect from the pen of Friedrich Schleiermacher rather than the doyen of the Dutch. If one reads further though, it soon becomes apparent that Bavinck is not proposing a quasi-idealist religious proof for the existence of God, but as Henk van den Belt notes, Bavinck invokes the *cogito* to illustrate the strength of religious certainty over and against a merely "scientific" certainty'. Bruce Pass, 'Herman Bavinck and the Cogito', *Reformed Theological Review* 74:1 (May, 2015): 15-33, 15.

[70] This point is developed in detail at the end of chapter three by examining Bavinck's critique of Schleiermacher.

The way forward in the final four chapters of five will be a simultaneously chronological and thematic examination of Bavinck's corpus that advances four levels of claims across two parts in a relation of interdependence on one another. These claims appear in simultaneity across the whole of the study. The first claim is that Friedrich Schleiermacher and his progeny in both Germany and the Netherlands were Bavinck's most significant modern-theological interlocutors. The second is that Bavinck adopted their terminology and emphases and, in fact, appropriated the arguments of Schleiermacher into his own corpus. The third is that, within this milieu, Bavinck awoke to the fact of subjectivity and set his own constructive work on the relation between subject and object in the theological lineage of Augustine, Calvin, and Schleiermacher. The fourth, this appropriation of Schleiermacherian concepts and arguments unveils precisely Bavinck the Reformed catholic theologian's subjection of the demands of the modern theological intellect to the boundaries of his confessional Reformed heritage.

Before taking up the essential evidence of this argument in part II, part I, which includes chapters one through three, is a presentation of the context of the question presented and a historical/textual development of the argument from Bavinck's early corpus. Chapter one provides some further details regarding Bavinck scholarship offering a justification of the broader modern/orthodox question in relation to trends in secondary literature. It also provides, more importantly, a reading of Bavinck's philosophy or *sophia* (approaching dogmatics with wisdom) regarding the task of the dogmatician as self-consciously Reformed catholic. This reading is intended to make sense of his eclectic use of modern theologies in a broadly antithetical tradition.

Chapter two addresses the question of Schleiermacher as a primary modern interlocutor for Bavinck. How did Schleiermacher reach Bavinck (the question of history)? Subsequently, chapter three asks a derivative question: did Bavinck appropriate Schleiermacher in his early work? In consideration, then, are Bavinck's works from 1880 through 1901. These dates mark the completion of his doctorate at Leiden unto the publication of the final volume of the first

edition of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* as well as the final year of his lectureship at the Kampen Theological School, but this chapter especially focuses on his earliest works. Particular attention is paid in chapter two to his study of Christian ethics, which establishes the early use of the concepts of self-consciousness and dependence in his corpus.

Turning to part II, both chapters four and five argue for a development in his career and investigate the climax of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework in his 1908 Stone lectures and its 1909 publication as *The Philosophy of Revelation*. This text is important for proving Bavinck's dependence on Schleiermacher and unveiling his development from his early works. In chapter four, the focus is on Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's concepts in relation to the philosophical. In chapter five, the central focus is Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's concept of dependence as it relates to religion. For Bavinck, immediate self-consciousness and the feeling of dependence are, in short, fundamental concepts for providing an account of the 'how' of both reality and religion.

Part I

Deeply Misunderstood and Too Highly Esteemed

_____

Reformed Catholicity between the Modern and Orthodox

Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's concepts unveils a paradigmatic example of how he perceived the theological task. This chapter unveils that perception pertaining especially to his methodological catholicity. What is the task, in other words, of the theologian in his relationship to the old and new? If one adopts the modern ethic as Lauzon recounts it—'to be modern… meant more than simply to see the present as equal or superior to the past; it also implied the rejection of the idea that the past should in any way constrain the present'—then Bavinck rejects wholly the modern methodology.[1] Francis Bacon likewise argued in his 1620 *Novum Organum* that the failure of Aristotle, particularly the *Organon*, lead to the necessity of 'new foundations', a position that finds no place in Bavinck's corpus. He regularly upholds Aristotelian logic and common principles.[2] René Descartes, like Bacon, in his search for a certainty that could only begin from an absolute doubt, affirmed something comparable.[3] In contradistinction, Bavinck as a modern theologian outlined the very structure of his dogmatics in order to let the ancient speak to the modern and the modern to the ancient; to speak from a

---

[1] Matthew Lauzon, 'Modernity', in *The Oxford Handbook of World History*, ed. Jerry Bentley (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 73-74.

[2] Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1877), 1.74. Quoted in Lauzon, 'Modernity', 74.

[3] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 17. In his thought experiment, Descartes dismissed all that he had learned and searched for a new ground of certainty, one that ignored history and experience: 'I saw that at some stage in my life the whole structure [of built opinions] would have to be utterly demolished and that I should have to begin again from the bottom up if I wished to construct something lasting and unshakeable in the sciences'.

tradition (*gereformeerd*), under the authority of Scripture guided by the confessions—a requirement of his Reformed catholicity and the recognition of his position as a dependent, finite creature.[4] The past must constrain the present, he argued, insofar as the doctrines of his Reformed confessional theology offered a fence of freedom within which to work. His use of Schleiermacher did not tear down that fence but sought to make the most use of its territory. In a phrase, his catholic task demanded a search for truth wherever it could be found.

In the broadest of claims, it was stated in the introduction that Bavinck, through the influence of Schleiermacher and the mediation theologies (what he calls the 'consciousness-theology' tradition), turned to the fact of subjectivity as a prominent motif in his corpus. And in this broad adoption, more specifically, this study unveils what Bavinck learned from Schleiermacher most specifically: a grammar and logic for conceptualizing his theological-philosophical speech in the light of the principle of subjectivity. He applied Schleiermacher's philosophic-religious reasoning to the problem of the duality of subject and object especially. The duality, often construed by Hegel as that between nature and spirit,[5] by Kant as that between subject and object,[6] and Schleiermacher, between being and thinking,[7] was the context in which Bavinck constructed the problems facing modern philosophies. By indirect

---

[4] Schleiermacher too possessed an irenic sensibility. Both his epistemic modesty and wide use of authoritative voices that move beyond the Christian consciousness of his 'given time' are notable examples of irenicism in *CF*. Such a sensibility is characteristic of the highest theologians of the Reformed theological tradition.

[5] 'In §18 of the Encyclopaedia, Hegel writes that "the Idea shows itself as the thinking that is merely identical with itself [Logic], and this at once shows itself to be the activity of positing itself over against itself [Nature], in order to be for-itself, and to be, in this other, only with itself [Spirit]" (TWA 8, §18: 63)'. Cinzia Ferrini, 'Hegel's Transition to Spirit: Some Introductory and Systematic Remarks', *Hegel-Studien Band* 46 (2012): 117-150, 124. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden,* vol. 8 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983).

[6] Kant, *CPR*, A115, B131–2, B134–5.

[7] For example, 'we bear in ourselves the identity of being and thinking'. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Friedrich Schleiermachers Dialektik* (1822), ed. Rudolf Odebrecht (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 270. Translated in David E. Klemm, 'Mediating Schleiermacher: The Prospect for a Transcendental-Anthropological Theory of Religion' in *Schleiermacher, the Study of Religion and the Future of Theology: A Transatlantic Dialogue*, eds. Brent Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 165-178, 175.

implication, Bavinck found the unity of thinking and being along the path (*weg*) of immediate self-consciousness, which was a discovery situated within his general turn to the fact of subjectivity.[8]

The treatment of this central thesis of appropriation begins in part II, chapter four. In part I, in preparation for the arguments of appropriation, one must begin by establishing justification for the broader proposition of his modern/orthodox relation. Before embarking on the study of Bavinck's texts to vindicate the introductory claims, it is important to investigate first (i) Bavinck and his interpreters—the justification for the modern/orthodox question develops directly from the prevailing trends of Bavinck scholarship. Among these scholarly trends, there are two that deserve attention foremost: (a) the two-Bavincks hypothesis in relation to the organic motif; (b) Bavinck's contested genealogical relation to both post-Reformation scholastic theology and post-Kantian philosophy and theologies. These two trends, however, are not equals. The two-Bavincks hypothesis, the bi-polarity narrative briefly presented in the introduction, consists of architectonic questions regarding the presuppositions of Bavinck interpretation from which other questions must be asked.

One begins then by considering appropriate aspects of Bavinck's biography and the most recent debates regarding tension and bifurcation in his life and thought between what has been called a pull of two distinct traditions creating 'two Bavincks'. A brief examination of these recent scholarly trends will reveal in this chapter that all of them, at base, are offering responses to the modern/orthodox binary without necessarily giving specific attention to the question in this manner. An investigation of Bavinck and his interpreters will make clear that all agree that he is both a modern and orthodox theologian, although under the guise of various definitions.

---

[8] *PoR*, 55.

The penultimate portion of this chapter, (ii) the task of the Reformed catholic theologian, unveils Bavinck's theological method by answering this question: 'what is the duty of the theologian in his development of dogmatics with regard to the relationship between old and new'? The answer provides a norm for understanding why Bavinck generously used Schleiermacher within an opposing tradition. To state it positively, his appropriation of Schleiermacher exemplifies his conception of the task of a Reformed catholic theologian as one who hunts for truth wherever it can be found. In the final section of this chapter, before turning to the material evidence of the historical argument, it is critical to briefly consider (iii) the nature of proof. Such a foray into the historical and textual dimensions of Bavinck's relationship to Schleiermacher demands some remarks regarding a description of the characteristics of evidence.

1.1. Bavinck and His Interpreters

Born on 13 December 1854 in Hoogeveen, Bavinck's location in the history of Dutch ecclesiastical development reflects the question presented. To elucidate the narrative mentioned earlier, the culmination of the secession movement was the 1834 separation from the *Hervormde Kerk*, the state church of the Netherlands, because of overreach by the state coupled with doctrinal issues and a call to renewed spirituality.[9] The newly formed body, originaly known as the *Afgescheidenen* and later called the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, organized a seminary for ministerial training in Kampen by the year of Bavinck's birth. Jan Bavinck declined an offer from the Synod to be one of its first professors after casting lots in the form of two letters (one with *ja* and one with *nee*). The *Afscheiding* (secession) associated

---

[9] Bolt categorizes the secession movement as a modern equivalent in theology and piety to both English Puritanism and the *Nadere Reformatie*. John Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.12.

with the spiritual roots of the *Nadere Reformatie* found some companionship in a parallel movement to which Kuyper attached himself, the aristocratic and evangelical *Réveil* (revival).[10]

The religious climate of the secession lobby and Bavinck's education at home and church throughout his childhood and teenage years were pietistic and confessional. He also attended a top school at the Gynasium in Zwolle. According to Bolt, 'Bavinck's church, his family, and his own spirituality were thus definitively shaped by strong patterns of deep pietistic Reformed spirituality' as well as surrounded by a sectarian climate.[11] While the sectarian narrative is somewhat troubled with respect to Bavinck's family (see Ch. 2), it is generally recognized to obtain for the Kampen environment, which Dosker's letter previously quoted affirms. To the disappointment of a small segement of the secession community, after attending the theological school at Kampen for one year, Bavinck chose to attend the University of Leiden to attain a 'more scientific' induction into academic theology.[12] This transfer to Leiden embodies what has been called a two-fold constituency: the pull between the modern and pre-modern, liberal scientific theology and an old orthodox and pietistic oriented secessionism.[13]

1.1.a. Two-Bavincks and Organic Unity

The early move from Kampen to Leiden, as mentioned previously, introduces a narrative of biographical extremes that has been used as a caricature and the basis of a dualistic hermeneutic known as the 'two-Bavincks hypothesis', which presupposes incoherence and challenges Bavinck's own intellectual facility. This tension is often expressed as the competition between secessionist orthodoxy and religious engagement in culture, a this-

---

[10] For a concise theological introduction to the Dutch 'second Reformation' or *Nadere Reformatie* see Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol. 1, trans. Bartel Elshout (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), lxxxv-cxi.
[11] Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.12.
[12] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten* (Kampen: Kok, 1966), 20.
[13] This 'pull' runs parallel in multiple ways to Schleiermacher's own development between Moravian pietism and his education at Halle (see Ch. 2).

worldly vs. other-worldly (Kingdom of Heaven) binary.[14] The dualism was first posited by one of his principle biographers, Valentijn Hepp, and then one of his most significant interpreters, Jan Veenhof.[15]

Eglinton offered the premiere reconstruction and critique of this hermeneutic. 'The two-Bavincks hypothesis', Eglinton argues

> rests on a particular interpretation of his personal narrative… it combines the factors of his… employment as a reformed dogmatician, involvement in politics, philosophy, psychology, and education and various events of his old age (the most famous being the sale of his theological library and dying statement: "My dogmatics avails me nothing, nor my knowledge, but I have my faith and in this I have all").[16]

The two-Bavincks hypothesis is an attempt to frame conceptually a real tension in Bavinck's life and works. After studying at the University of Leiden, Bavinck described an anxiety in his soul concerning his participation in the scientific and modern world. At the completion of his studies at Leiden in 1880, Bavinck reflects on the costs of his decision: 'Leiden has benefitted me in many ways: I hope always to acknowledge that gratefully. But is has also greatly impoverished me, robbed me, not only of much ballast (for which I am happy), but also of much that I recently, especially when I preach, recognize as vital for my own spiritual life'.[17] Accordingly, A. Anema, Bavinck's colleague at the *Vrije Universiteit*, recognized this duality:

> Bavinck was a secession preacher and a representative of modern culture… that was a striking characteristic. In that duality is found Bavinck's significance. That duality is also a reflection of the tension—at times crisis—in Bavinck's life. In many respects it is a simple matter to be a preacher in the Secession Church, and, in a certain sense, it is also not that difficult to be a modern person. But in no way is it a simple matter to be the one as well as the other.[18]

---

[14] Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.14-15.

[15] V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 317-18; Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 108-11.

[16] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism,* 28; V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 317–18; Henry Elias Dosker, 'Herman Bavinck', *Princeton Theological Review* 20, no. 3 (1922), 21.

[17] Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 84.

[18] Cited in Veenhof, *Revelatie En Inspiratie*, 108; Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', in Bavinck, *RD* 1.13.

In turn, a Wellhausian-like hermeneutic has been applied to Bavinck's texts using both a 'M' (modern) and 'S' (secessionist) source.[19] Eglinton argues, however, that 'Bavinck's theological vision is considerably more sophisticated and united than the normative reading makes out'.[20] The two-Bavincks hypothesis initially profited from a misreading of Bavinck's organic motif, which created a '*de facto* apartheid' between modernist and secessionist readings. The organic motif, argues Eglinton, is the conceptual framework that governs the plurality of Bavinck's works and disciplines: the coherence and interdependence of all created being as *universe* or *world* instituted by the Triune God and revealed in the fact of nature and human consciousness. The concept of organism means in simplest form the vital movement of growth unto an ultimate unification, to the negation of chaos, and is applied lavishly across his corpus. The concept signals unity and blossoming, parts coming together for a purpose, unto the Kingdom of God as the *summum bonum* of existence. In an ironic turn, Eglinton proves that the organic motif, while previously misunderstood, is not an agent of disunity but unity across the spectrum of Bavinck's works. The chief irony is, perhaps, that Bavinck was a theologian most antithetical to all dualisms—sin in his Augustinian rendering, being the power of disunity, disorder, non-being, and chaos.

Organicism is, regarding Bavinck, an ontic expression with ethical implications. It is a concept derivative of God's act as creator that identifies both the unified structure of reality (cosmos) and every individual sphere of reality (the diversity of creation) in its relation to the whole. It further identifies the trajectory of that unity—the blossoming of the Kingdom of God (thus, the metaphors of mustard seed, vine/branch, bread/leaven and kernel/husk are incorporated throughout). Bavinck nowhere offers a comprehensive definition of this concept. There are several ways to construct a precise definition by piecing the concept together from various

---

[19] The 'M' and 'O' is a play on the Documentary Hypothesis from historical-critical studies of Torah/Isaiah, etc. The allusion to Wellhausen was first made by Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 12.

[20] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 29.

texts. One way is to examine the definition and task of dogmatics located in the *Prolegomena* to see the motif in action.

The definition begins then with the dogmatic task. The task of dogmatics is the sum of his ontic and epistemic *principia*: it is the science of 'thinking God's thoughts after Him'.[21] In reflecting on this task, at least three implicit strands of organicism come to the fore: (i) the self-conscious God is a (vital and personal) unity in his Triune being. God is one. His essence is his existence. In creation, God organizes a unified, organic cosmos that analogously reflects his unity. Yet in the realm of creation, unity is qualitatively creaturely. The realm of the creature strives toward a complex (not simple) unity and coherence. The scope of revelation and purpose of redemption is, therefore, all-encompassing in its 'organic' movement dispelling the powers of dis-unification as the attribute of sin; (ii) in an analogous way, the science of dogmatics must seek an organic unity in its parts that reflects in human speech the nature of God's revelation *ad extra* by constructing a coherent system—a mark of its scientific purpose. It is the task of the dogmatician to repristinate God's thoughts systematically because they cannot stand in contradiction if God's self-manifestation in history is, in fact, *God's* self-manifestation. The dogmatician recognizes, however, that this task is one taken up in finitude, containing paradox, and temporally incomplete, remaining always a process of becoming; (iii) in this task, the dogmatician is united to the whole of the church of all ages, which is itself an organic unity, the body of Christ. The catholic scope of the body presupposes, for Bavinck, the catholicity of the Christian religion unto the establishment of the Kingdom.

Bavinck draws the reader's attention from the start to an organic motif that contains at least three dimensions within the outline of the dogmatic task. The task is one, in other words, that depends upon the conditional: if God's being is essential unity, then all his creation images a unity analogous to his being while remaining entirely distinct from his being. From within, this

---

[21] *RD* 1.44.

motif beckons the ethic of catholicity in pursuit of a system constructed from God's revealed speech while seeking interpretative unity with the Spirit-filled church of the ages. This relation between the unity of the church, the horizon of the coming Kingdom, catholicity as a present task, and speaking of God in a way commensurate with God's revealed being is, for Bavinck, a world and life view of organism in, through, and for the glory of Christ Jesus, the appointed judge of heaven and earth:

> The worldview of Scripture and of all Christian theology… its name is theism, not monism; its orientation is supernatural, not naturalistic. According to this theistic worldview, there is a multiplicity of substances, forces, materials, and laws. It does not strive to erase the distinctions between God and the world, between spirit (mind) and matter, between psychological and physical, ethical and religious phenomena. *It seeks rather to discover the harmony that holds all things together and unites them* and that is the consequence of the creative thought of God. Not identity or uniformity but *unity in diversity* is what it aims at.[22]

In order to construct his own precise definition Eglinton turns to Bavinck's 1904 work *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (The Christian Worldview) where Bavinck provides the closest instance, perhaps, of a primary definition of the organic.[23] The idea of organism is first contrasted here with the mechanistic, a closed-system monistic universe.[24] In contradistinction, according to Bavinck, 'there is a most profuse diversity [in the cosmos] and yet, in that diversity, there is a superlative kind of unity. The foundation for both diversity and unity is in God'.[25] Eglinton then derives four principles that guide the reader through Bavinck's organic concept: (i) 'the created order is marked by a simultaneous unity and diversity …it must reflect [God's] identity as three-in-one';[26] (ii) in this Triniform structure,

---

[22] *RD* 1.368. Emphasis added.

[23] Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1904), 51.

[24] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 67.

[25] *RD* 2.435-6.

[26] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 67. It is important to note that Bavinck is not offering what is called today a 'social Trinity'. To suppose so would be anachronistic and conceptually false. The Trinity does not offer a paradigm for the social ethic or its ideal construction. The Trinity is absolutely mysterious and dogmas constructed about the Trinity are done so with attention to the fact that the theologian does not comprehend who God is in himself but only reflects on God's self-disclosure. It is, however, also important to note that his organic language is used in a similar fashion (the language of unity-in-diversity) by Stanley Grenz and others. That

'unity precedes diversity';[27] (iii) arguing that organicism is quite 'unlike the chaos of multiformity', unity-in-diversity is orchestrated by a common idea, a synchrony like that of the human body;[28] (iv) and it has a 'teleological definiteness': the glory of the Triune God.[29]

In *RD*, Bavinck explicates the all-encompassing scope of his organic motif. Many relationships, nature and grace, creation and re-creation, God's revelation and the life of the cosmos, all exhibit a 'connectedness' that find their meaning in reference to the Trinity and their fulfillment in an eschatological definiteness, the Kingdom. Revelation, herein, is the secret, the mystery of all existence:

> To this, finally, we must add that these arguments uncover and preserve the connectedness between nature and grace, between creation and re-creation. The God who created and sustained us is also he who re-creates us in his image. Grace, though superior to nature, is not in conflict with it. While restoring what has been corrupted in it by sin, it also clarifies and perfects what is still left in it of God's revelation. The thinking mind situates the doctrine of the Trinity squarely amid the full-orbed life of nature and humanity. A Christian's confession is not an island in the ocean but a high mountaintop from which the whole creation can be surveyed. And it is the task of Christian theologians to present clearly the connectedness of God's revelation with, and its significance for, all of life. 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.[30]

---

creaturely being is, for Bavinck, diversity is not a reflection on God in himself in a manner that suggests God as unity between three diverse beings with three distinct centers of consciousness and will. Rather, organic creaturely ontology is derivative of God as one in essence and three in person with a single Divine Consciousness in the most qualitatively absolute way. His doctrine of God is utterly opposed to anthropological projection and tritheism. While creation is like the Trinity insofar as God is its ultimate source and principle of being, the Trinity is not like anything, including the social order of creaturely community. One wonders, nevertheless, if Bavinck was writing today if he might alter his grammar. See, for example, Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 302.

[27] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism,* 68.

[28] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism,* 69.

[29] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism,* 69.

[30] *RD* 2.330.

The purpose of this reconstruction of the organic motif for this study is three-fold. First, this motif provides a fundamental hermeneutical key to interpreting Bavinck's texts in tension. Second, this rendering of the organic motif is a reinterpretation of the motif that has inaugurated a paradigm shift that now demands reconsideration of the most salient themes in Bavinck scholarship. 'Bavinck has hitherto been read through a hermeneutic based on a highly particular interpretation of his personality', Eglinton writes.[31] In rejecting this reading for a reconstruction of the organic motif, Eglinton is proposing that the Bavinck readership recognize and presuppose a unified Bavinck without ignoring the modernist/secessionist (orthodox) tension. Third, the concept of the organic is interdependent with the concept of immediate self-consciousness as an awareness of organic unity of self as mind/body, subject and object. The turn to the self throughout his corpus makes good on his argument for the organic nature of reality insofar as the unity of self is a microcosm of the unity of the finite, establishing human beings as the *mikro-theos* of creaturely existence. This is to say, that 'full' self-consciousness leads to an awareness of the gift of organic unity of self, of the organic relation between self and world, and of the God who gives, a self- and God-consciousness.[32]

This study, to summarize, participates in the ongoing rereading of Bavinck's texts that both appropriates and investigates the unified Bavinck under the banner of the organic motif. 'If it is only appropriate to speak of a single Herman Bavinck', Eglinton argues, 'it is not simply the organic motif that must be reappropriated. Rather, the breakdown of the two-Bavinck's model calls for nothing less than a paradigm shift in Bavinck studies'.[33] The unified Bavinck and particularly the organic motif will serve both, at times, as a point of departure and an object of investigation throughout this work, which in reconsidering the modern/orthodox relation in the detail of his appropriation of Schleiermacher, participates in Eglinton's call. It is in the

---

[31] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 207.
[32] Bavinck, 'The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good', trans. Nelson Kloosterman, *TBR* 2 (2011): 133–170 150. Hereafter: 'KGHG'. This idea has a downstream relation to Schleiermacher's 'original unity of consciousness' (see Ch. 2, 4), *OR*, 42; *CF* §4.3.
[33] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 209.

thesis that Bavinck is orthodox yet modern exemplified in his subsumption of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework under and within his tradition, that this study stamps Eglinton's conclusion that there is a real modern/orthodox tension in Bavinck without the need for claims of personality or theological dualism.

The focus of the two-Bavincks hypothesis with Eglinton's thesis also offers additional insight into previous scholars' conception of modernity in general. This narrowing of the concept of modernity is two-fold. The most prominent definition has largely been constructed based upon the duality that existed for Bavinck as an orthodox *dogmatician*, Bavinck *als dogmaticus*, with living as a participant in modern society.[34] For Bavinck, Kuyper, and the neo-Calvinist movement, according to Puchinger, their theory of modern culture rested with Groen van Prinsterer, the father of the anti-Revolutionary sentiment, and his antipathy toward principles and outcomes of the French Revolution. Puchinger notes, the 'French Revolution gave the Netherlands a powerful, initially unexpected push towards a Christian, anti-revolutionary conscience which…promote[s] the message and rights of religion'.[35] The neo-Calvinists' antithesis to the '*Ni Dieu, ni maitre*' (neither God nor master) defines their opposition to the revolutionary and novel aspects of modern culture and society. This revolutionary dictum, as it pertains to participating in modern society, is the modernity that Bavinck so opposed.

On the other hand, however, neo-Calvinism was a thoroughly modern movement according to the way Harinck has defined the term: novel social 'practices'.[36] Present in the development of aspects of modern society, according to its practices, are the underlying concepts of freedom, democracy, and progress. Bavinck's relation to social modernity in general, then, is

---

[34] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 207.

[35] G. Puchinger, 'Groen van Prinsterer, aangestoken door de Franse Revolutie', *Radix* 15 (1989), 120; cited in Hugo den Boer 'Another Revolution: Towards a New Explanation of the Rise of Neo-Calvinism', eds., James Eglinton and George Harinck, *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2014), 177–178.

[36] George Harinck, 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion', 62.

not only antithetical. In this way, Bavinck, den Boer argues, 'testified to this ambiguity in that [he] accepted the practices deriving from the French Revolution, but at the same time placed the Christian faith in absolute opposition to the so-called principles of the French Revolution out of which modernism had arisen'.[37] In terms of society and culture, Bavinck's relationship with modernity was nuanced and dialectical rather than a simple 'for' or 'against'.[38]

It cannot be denied therefore that Bavinck was a modern man shaped by modern ideals. He was not primarily an aggressor against the advancement of modern culture but lived under the conditions of modern culture as an active participant. Bavinck argued for a plurality of religious voices in the public sphere and saw this as a positive condition of the 'religious character of modernism'.[39] The relationship of Bavinck to this aspect of social modernity has been widely explored because public theology stands at the very center of common definitions of the neo-Calvinist movement.

Yet, as stated in the introduction, there is a second and, for this work, primary locus for the term 'modern'. It relates to the tension between Bavinck's *dogmatiek* and the modern *dogmatiek* rather than Bavinck *als dogmaticus* in relation to Bavinck as participant in modern culture.[40] Both aspects deal with the tension of orthodoxy and modernity. In the former, the tension appears in the relationship regarding the question of Christ (orthodox) and culture (modern). In the latter, the tension is present between Dutch Reformed theology (orthodox) and post-Kantian liberal theologies (modern).

---

[37] Den Boer, 'Another Revolution', 181.

[38] See, for example, John Bolt, *The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck*; Harinck, 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion', 60-63.

[39] Harinck, 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion', 60.

[40] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 205-210.

Bavinck, in his early career in the 1880s, identifies these 'modern' theologies by offering each of them space in several separate publications. As seen in the introduction, they include the philosophy and theologies of Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Ritschl; the derivative theologies of the *Vermittlungstheologie* (especially Rothe, Schweizer, and Dorner) and the various adaptations of German influence in the Netherlands: the Groningen school, the Modern Theology (a proper name for Leiden's theological school) and, most importantly, the Dutch Ethicals, particularly D. Chantepie de la Saussaye—all of which he subsumes under the broad title 'consciousness-theology'.

In other words, it is one thing to speak of a tension between an orthodox theology and living as a participant in modern culture and, while closely related, another to speak of the consanguinity between an orthodox and modern theology. It is in this latter sense that the question and thesis of this study is posed. That Bavinck was a theologian trying to engage a modern culture with Christianity is not in question. Yet, was he a *modern* theologian while engaging a modern culture?

That he is both, at least at times, is the supposition of most Bavinck interpreters of the last century. That there is a tension between his modernity and orthodoxy is basic to both the two-Bavincks hypothesis and the unifying organic motif. Locating Bavinck's orthodoxy in these previous debates is not, therefore, in question. His embrace of the codification of the theology of the Reformers in the Three Forms of Unity situates his theology thoroughly in what is Reformed, Calvinistic and today called 'classical theism'. The contested activity of the two-Bavincks hypothesis, rather, consisted in setting his modernity against his orthodoxy in a relation of contradiction. The disagreement is over this question: is his appropriation of modern theological-philosophical trends as a committed Dutch confessionalist theologian evidence of a dualistic thinker or commensurate with a kind of unity per an idiosyncratic, irenic theological method? After Eglinton's work of answering that question contra dualism,

one is left with the task of precisely defining the relationship between the modern-orthodox tensions that remain. His relationship to Schleiermacher is key for this task.

1.1.b. Between Calvin and Kant

In addition to the undermining of the two-Bavincks hypothesis, there stands another closely related trend in historical-theological Bavinck scholarship: identification. Identification refers to the attempt to locate his motifs predominately within specific traditions. Here one understands more of the second aspect of the tension. Bavinck's orthodoxy is in continuity with the Reformed scholastic theology emphasizing the knowledge of God as the object of theology. This tradition prioritizes the revelation of God inscripturated and prizes adherence to the confessional codification of the Reformer's theology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Evidences of continuity from this tradition are ample in Bavinck's *RD*. They include, for example, striking similarities to the dogmatics of Bullinger, Junius, Voetius, Polanus, and de Moor, consistently making use of Aristotelian logic, and the structuring presence of the fundamental distinction between archetypal and ectypal theology, a doctrine that first appears in Junius.[41] In addition to the generations that codified the Reformation theology, Bavinck's orthodoxy is indebted even more to Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Calvin. His defense of Chalcedon parallels various attacks on two-nature Christology from 'modern' theologies. He is, nevertheless, above any other single theologian, influenced by Saint Augustine. While quantity does not guarantee influence, he does cite Augustine nearly eight hundred times in the *RD*, which is substantially more than his use of Calvin.[42]

---

[41] Franciscus Junius, *A Treatise on True Theology with the Life of Franciscus Junius*, trans. David C. Noe (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 1-58. See the index of *RD* 4 for references.
[42] The index of *RD* 4 offers a host of these references, but not all.

In light of Bavinck's confession to this tradition of orthodoxy, the most substantial of these proposed identities is to argue, and rightly so, for his affinities with post-Reformation Reformed scholastics. [43] 'From Bavinck's numerous citations of key Dutch Reformed theologians such as Voetius, De Moor, Vitringa, van Mastricht, Witsius, and Walaeus as well as of the important Leiden *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, it is clear he knew that tradition well and claimed it as his own'.[44] This second trend is closely aligned with the first in that the division within the two-Bavincks hypothesis between the modern and secessionist Bavinck results in identifying the latter in terms of the Dutch Reformed scholastic tradition in antithesis to the developments of the late eighteenth century. 'It is evident that the broader issue of the 'two Bavincks', Mattson argues, 'repeatedly finds its focal point in the narrower question to Bavinck's relationship to scholasticism'.[45] The appropriation of Bavinck's scholastic identity can be broken down further into two discussions that, while closely related, have functioned separately: (i) the genetics of the neo-Platonic/neo-Thomistic and (ii) the Kantian contra Thomistic. The interest here is only to reveal the importance of the modern/orthodox tension for each rather than offer a defense or rebuttal.

(i) The discussion surrounding neo-Thomism and its neo-Platonic heritage is not as current as the discussion regarding Bavinck's epistemology between Thomas and Kant. Although, Huttinga's recent monograph re-raises the question of Bavinck's relation to neo-Platonic themes like participation. The central thesis of this relatively older form of identification is to

---

[43] For example, see David S. Sytsma, 'Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology: The Argument and Sources of His Principia of Science', in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology*, ed. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011), 1–56; John Bolt, 'Sola Scriptura as an Evangelical Theological Method?', in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2008), 154–65; Theodore G. Van Raalte, 'Unleavened Morality? Herman Bavinck on Natural Law', in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology*, ed. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011), 57–100.
[44] Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.11.
[45] Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 10.

suggest that Bavinck's conceptual framework is a synthesis of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian themes which he acquired through the era of the post-Vatican I neo-Thomism in which he lived. The commentator who offers the clearest explanation of what he means by 'Bavinck the neo-Thomist', is Albert Wolters. According to Wolters, 'Bavinck's conceptual apparatus is very largely borrowed from neo-Thomism, whereas Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd have evolved a categorical framework and terminology of their own, which do fuller justice to the religious intuition of Calvinism'.[46] Wolters explains the 'conceptual apparatus' of Bavinck's neo-Thomistic framework as a system of Aristotelian categories of substance and accidents, an indisputable claim to be sure. In an earlier essay, Wolters, however, offers another characterization: Bavinck's theology is 'neo-Platonic'.[47] According to Wolters, in fact, the tradition of Neo-Platonism is essentially equivalent with all western Christian orthodoxy—what Hans Boersma distills into the monolithic idea of 'the Great Tradition' as a 'Platonic-Christian synthesis'.[48]

The early neo-Calvinists, Wolters argues, were all dependent upon the neo-Platonic ontology of the chain of being and their theology represented a continued synthesis of Christian, Platonic, and Aristotelian themes.[49] Bavinck exemplifies such dependence on Platonism thought through his well-known dictum in the *RD*: 'for [Bavinck], scholarship was a matter of "thinking God's thoughts after him"'.[50] Wolters does not explain the precise connection between such a hierarchical ontology and Bavinck's dictum. He does explain the neo-Platonic ontology that influenced Bavinck briefly: 'God is defined as the highest grade of "being"

---

[46] Albert Wolters, 'Translator's Preface', in Jan Veenhof, *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck,* trans. Albert Wolters (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006), 1-6, 3.

[47] Albert Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality', in *Rationality and the Calvinian Tradition*, eds. H. Hart, J. van der Hoeven and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Toronto: UPA, 1983), 113-131, 125.

[48] Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism', 125. Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 33-39.

[49] Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism', 125.

[50] Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism', 125. See *RD* 1.44.

(*summum ens*) and "being" itself, as both "substance" and "essence," and is defined as the objective correlate of rationality (*logos, nous*)'. In the church, Aristotelian categories were used to elucidate 'the basic ontology of the visible world'.[51] From Augustine to Aquinas to Bavinck, Wolters draws a simple and straight line. For all of them, the Son is the archetype of ideas in the mind of God and these ideas are transmitted to the world by ectypal rationality. Disturbing to Wolter's distillation, perhaps, is Bavinck's strong Creator-creature distinction as an absolute difference. Further, Bavinck's dictum 'thinking God's thoughts after him', is intended to point to the theologian's ethic under the authority of the biblical witness, and does not first convey a neo-Platonic sub-text. Wolters, nevertheless, takes his thesis further by asserting that this neo-Platonic structure results from Bavinck's relationship to neo-Thomism: 'Bavinck, more than the other neo-Calvinists, was influenced by the revival of Thomism that was taking place in Catholic circles in response to the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879)'.[52]

Wolters was not the first to posit this reading. According to R. H. Bremmer's 1961 work, 'all Bavinck commentators agree that the neo-Thomistic philosophy has exercised great influence over [Bavinck]'.[53] In fact, for Bremmer, neo-Thomism is the primary 'ground-motif' in Bavinck's *dogmatiek*.[54] Other interpreters have offered similar statements about Bavinck including Veenhof, Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, and Van Til, although for different reasons and with nuances.[55] The point of these interpretations (principally Wolters) is to suggest that Bavinck along with the other early neo-Calvinists, in Veenhof's words, made 'too great use of

---

[51] Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism', 124.

[52] Wolters, 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism', 125.

[53] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, 328. 'Nu zijn alle Bavinck-commentatoren het er over eens, dat de neothomsitische wijsbegeerte grote invleud op hem geoefend heeft'.

[54] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, 386.

[55] See for example, Cornelius Van Til, 'Bavinck the Theologian: A Review Article', *WTJ* 24, no. 1 (1961): 48–64. Van Til reviews Bremmer's conclusion that one must go beyond Bavinck's scholastic, Platonic tendencies. Van Til defends Bavinck against Bremmer at times determining that Bavinck provides the impetus for 'going beyond' scholasticism in his scriptural commitments. Yet, he affirms with Bremmer that Bavinck is inconsistent.

unbiblical ways of thinking' because they were overly indebted to Greek thought as was the 'whole of traditional theology, including Reformed Theology'.[56]

In contradistinction to Bavinck and Kuyper, the late neo-Calvinists (Dooyeweerd particularly) were set against such a synthesis of Reformed scholasticism and neo-Thomism, so they argue. The implication of this evaluation is that only Dooyeweerd's Cosmonomic philosophy structured according to the hermeneutical norm of special revelation appropriately constructs a theological philosophy or a philosophy that is truly *coram Deo*. Bavinck, in succumbing to the legacy of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian concepts has committed the occasional error of both the early (Hellenized fathers) and the modern Roman tradition: appealing to a universal intelligibility governed by the general principles of philosophy and allowing this sphere of common reason to penetrate the frame of his dogmatics.

While tempting, it is beyond the intention of this study to critique this reading.[57] These claims treat Greek thought and neo-Thomism in a similar way as some treat modernity: as thoroughly monolithic. In contrast, the diversity of Greek philosophies and the multiplicity of Thomisms troubles the picture presented. This reading, nevertheless, is pertinent for the present study insofar as the underlying question that pervades the initial assertion of neo-Thomism concerns the relation between a modern and orthodox theology. Wolters, for instance, has implied that 'orthodoxy' is theology decoupled from any non-Christian thought patterns, or, in this case, without the conceptual baggage of Enlightenment rationalistic and autonomous pagan thinking, especially Aristotle and Plotinus. Per these readings, Bavinck only came halfway. Under the conditions of modernity, particularly the modernity of neo-Thomistic thought in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Bavinck lost the purity of a

---

[56] Jan Veenhof, 'Theology and Spirituality in the Dutch Reformed Churches', *CTJ* 28.2 (November 1993), 266-297, 281.

[57] For a critique, see Cory Brock, 'Bavinck the Neo-Thomist?', (MTh dissertation: University of Edinburgh, 2014). Also, Kevin Vanhoozer offers a list of counter-proposals to the Hellenization thesis: *Remythologizing Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 139-49.

biblically infused conceptual orthodoxy to Leo XIII's call to return to Thomas Aquinas. The irony herein is that in succumbing to something very old at the beckoning of something very new, Bavinck's 'orthodoxy' was derivative of a modern, Leonine, and Roman Catholic movement baptized in the Protestant waters of Reformed scholasticism.

While this study will not deal with the question of Bavinck's neo-Thomism specifically, the investigation of the way Bavinck relates modern theological developments to the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy is basic to the question of the extent to which he allows neo-Thomism (as defined by its post-Vatican I expression) to be an actual influential force in his work.[58]

(ii) In consanguinity with the 'Bavinck the neo-Thomist' thesis, dispute over Bavinck's epistemic foundations and their implications have taken place more recently and largely in North American publications. Most of this debate is set in the context of defining Bavinck's relationship to later Dutch thinkers in the tradition of the Amsterdam school. Due to the relatively recent translation of Bavinck's major works into English, much of the secondary literature regarding epistemology functions as comparison material that does not deal significantly with the deep logic or the wide scope of Bavinck's texts across the span of his lifetime with nuanced attention to developments.[59] While Dooyeweerd and Kuyper had secured a prominent Anglophone audience in the middle of the twentieth century, Bavinck has long stood under their shadow and scholarship concerning his lesser-known texts is

---

[58] On the multiformity of Thomisms see Étienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 130-134, 144-147. Such generalizations do little to help one understand the genealogy of Bavinck's texts. When considering the details of the text, only slight attention is paid to the 'who' of this neo-Thomist influence by Bremmer and his claim is based on seven total citations of the neo-Thomist Matteo Liberatore across the whole of the *RD*.

[59] A significant study of Bavinck's epistemology that considers the whole of his writings on knowledge is a primary need.

lacking, particularly in the Anglophone world.[60] This fact is the result of the ever-diminishing privation of translated primary sources rather than something based in merit.

While there have been several works[61] that contain discussions of Bavinck's epistemology, the most recent and focused conversation regarding Bavinck's epistemic foundations that epitomizes the spirit of the whole is by Arvin Vos.[62] Vos' treatment of Bavinck's moderate realism is a development of Sytsma's articulation of the scholastic sources underlying Bavinck's 'Thomistic epistemology'. Vos proposes that Bavinck uses Aquinas to 'counter' empiricism, rationalism, idealism, and particularly Kant's philosophical thought. Although his presentation is a reduction that lacks specific treatment of 'rationalism(s)', this is the case to be sure. He also notes with helpful nuance that Bavinck's discussion of the same epistemic themes in *PoR* is 'recast to meet the current debates including the Kantian tradition'.[63] Vos argues that although Bavinck uses Aquinas to counter the opposition of subject and object in Kant's first *Critique*, he nonetheless falls short of ridding himself of Kantian influence. Vos is correct in this supposition insofar as Bavinck structures his entire constructive corpus within the parameters of the subject-object relation after Kant. Yet Bavinck, although critical of Kant, cannot move beyond the Kant he criticized because he fails to break with Kant's conception of subject and object, Vos argues. Bavinck needs, Vos suggests, an entirely

---

[60] Attention will be drawn to many of these texts in this study starting in chapter two.

[61] David S. Sytsma, 'Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology: The Argument and Sources of His Principia of Science'; John Bolt, 'Sola Scriptura as an Evangelical Theological Method?', 154–65; Theodore G. Van Raalte, 'Unleavened Morality? Herman Bavinck on Natural Law', 57–100; Laurence O' Donnell, '"Bavinck's Bug" or "Van Tilian" Hypochondria? An Analysis of Prof. Oliphint's Assertion That Cognitive Realism and Reformed Theology Are Incompatible', in *For the Healing of the Nations*. Edited by Peter Escalante and W. Bradford Littlejohn (Burford: The Davenant Press, 2014), 139-172.

[62] Arvin Vos, 'Knowledge According to Bavinck and Aquinas', *TBR* 6 (2015), 9-36.

[63] Vos, 'Knowledge According to Bavinck and Aquinas', 24.

different account of objectivity if he is to be free of modernity. He adds: 'there are also elements [in Bavinck's *Foundations of Psychology*] which have a strongly Kantian flavor'.[64]

The reason Vos epitomizes the trajectories of these discussions regarding Bavinck's epistemology is that he brings together, albeit in a mostly descriptive fashion, two distinct trends. There are those, on the one hand, that describe Bavinck's epistemology solely in Thomistic terms especially highlighting his indebtedness to Aristotle.[65] These presentations, however, while presenting a true facet of Bavinck's philosophical grammar are also one-sided lacking broad treatment of Bavinck's widest corpus with attention to his diverse borrowings of other frameworks (see Ch. 4). There are those, on the other hand, who have pushed against such notions and argued for an additional particularly modern conceptuality existent within much of his later philosophy alongside his use of an Aristotelian conceptual framework.[66] Regarding the latter, van der Kooi argues that 'Bavinck's epistemology is not just a repetition of realism, or reduced to a form of logos speculation. In his thought, a central place is

---

[64] Vos, 'Knowledge according to Bavinck and Aquinas', 30. And Vos is correct, especially as it pertains to this quote: 'Reason and understanding [make up] so little of the essence of man and so little of the entire content of our knowing capability, that they are merely particular activities of the knowing capability, which first begin their work after the basic elements of human knowing are already laid down broad and deep in the unconscious. *Understanding and reason are not thereby robbed of their value... they must bring law and order to the chaos of representations.* But they are limited to their own task and must therewith be satisfied'. Bavinck's psychological construction consistently admits of the fact of the distinction between representation and the thing in itself and that the human psyche 'brings' categories to the manifold. Emphasis added. Original: 'Zoo weinig zijn verstand en rede het wezen van den menschen en de gansche inhoud van het kenvermogen, dat ze daarvan veeleer slechts bijzondere werkzaamheden zijn, die dan eerst hun arbeid beginnen, als de fundamenten der menschelijke kennis reeds breed en diep, tot in het onbewuste toe, gelegd zijn. Daarmede worden verstand en rede niet van hun waarde heroofd ... da ze juist in dien chaos van voorstellingen orde en regel hebben te brengen. Maar ze worden beperkt tot de hun eigene taak en moeten daarmee tevreden zijn'. Herman Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie, tweede herziene vermeerderde druk bezorgd door Hepp* (Kampen: Kok, 1923), 97-8.
[65] See especially Sytsma, 'Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology', and O'Donnell, "'Bavinck's Bug" or "Van Tilian" Hypochondria?'.
[66] It must be remembered that modern epistemologies make much use of Aristotelian concepts.

assigned to the knowing subject…[This] betrays, in a high degree a post-Kantian situation, and could never really have been uttered by someone like Calvin'.[67] He critiques Bavinck for placing the religious subject as the 'cornerstone' of theology and asks: 'Does the anchoring of theology in the believing subject not lead to the danger that one ends up in the anthropo-centrism that is a hallmark of post-Kantian, modern, and postmodern culture'?[68] He goes on to suggest that 'Bavinck cooperates in the turning towards the subject, and thereby (probably more than he likes) pays tribute to the anthropocentrism of modernity'.[69] Van der Kooi, while considering Bavinck's subjectivism 'dubious', stands in a small corner of Bavinck scholars that have correctly identified Bavinck's consistent emphasis on the fact of subjectivity as an 'anchoring' point in his theology. It is one of the purposes of this study to situate and explain this turn in detail.

Additionally, Eglinton has suggested that points of general similarity are clear between the shape of the dogmatics of Bavinck and Barth: Bavinck's triniform structure, his totalizing use of the doctrine of God as the whole of theology, his suspicion of natural theology, and the central place of the doctrine of revelation over against speculative and natural forms of knowing God. Indeed, Eglinton locates this last point as Bavinck's '*Nee*!' corresponding to Barth's '*Nein*!'[70] According to Bavinck, 'strictly speaking, natural theology never existed any more than "natural rights" and "natural morality"'.[71] Natural theology, so he argues, is a proper activity only under the authority and logic of revealed theology.

---

[67] Cornelius van der Kooi, 'The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, Especially in H. Bavinck', *JRT* 2:2 (May 2008): 103-112, 108.

[68] C. van der Kooi, 'The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit', 104.

[69] C. van der Kooi, 'The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit', 107.

[70] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*, 90, 95, 106, 120, 137, 174.

[71] *RD* 2.70. Also: 'our Reformed theologians [treat] *Theologia Revelata* before the *Theologia Naturalis*'. Bavinck, 'The Conscience', trans. Nelson Kloosterman, *TBR* 6 (2015), 23.

Therefore, those fundamental aspects of Bavinck's 'pre-modernity' include his affinity for an Aristotelian conceptual framework, realism (which is difficult to reconcile in whole with his quote in fn. 64 from *Beginselen der Psychologie* if that realism is registered as a 'common-sense' that denies representation or ascribes the mind/object relation to the naïve 'given'), Dutch confessional orthodoxy, and the synthesizing of Platonic notions of participation with incarnational theology. And the relation between those characteristics with the modern post-Kantian trend toward what van der Kooi, after Barth, calls subjectivist anthropocentrism, remains unclear. In articulations like those of Vos, one is directed backwards toward the two-Bavincks once more—a man who could not decide between Thomas and Kant.

The combination of these themes highlights the eclecticism of Bavinck scholarship, which features the eclecticism of Bavinck as a writer and thinker. 'It needs to be noted', Bolt rightly argues, 'that Bavinck was not simply a chronicler of his own church's past teaching. He seriously engaged other theological traditions, notably the Roman Catholic and the modern liberal Protestant ones, effectively mined the church fathers and great medieval thinkers, and placed his own distinct neo-Calvinist stamp on the Reformed Dogmatics'.[72]

For purposes of this study, underlying both the discussions of Bavinck's relation to neo-Thomism and his epistemology is the question of his relationship to a particular modernity. In the former, it is for his attachment to something acutely old by way of a new Leonine influence that interpreters have challenged his framework and, in the latter, it is his attachment to new Kantian concepts for which he is said to be incomplete or contradictory.

Like the two-Bavincks hypothesis and Eglinton's organic synthesis, advocates of both the new and old are correct in identifying a tension that corresponds to reality. Without attention to it, interpretations remain myopic. Bavinck's dogmatics is birthed in his Reformed scholastic

---

[72] Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.11.

tradition. Bavinck's theology is not, however, a mere repristination of Reformed protestant theology in method and content. [73] As Richard Muller has noted, 'with little formal and virtually no substantial dogmatic alteration, orthodox or scholastic Reformed theology appears in the works of Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and Louis Berkhof'. [74] One might say, Bavinck is not absented from this list by accident. Louis Berkhof's theology is of direct derivation from Bavinck's dogmatics yet lacks attention to the most salient motifs of Bavinck's corpus including the emphasis on the human agent and the modern-romantic concept of the organic. There is a discontinuity in Bavinck's theology from that of Reformed scholasticism. In Bavinck, the reader finds a modernity, a newness that has been pointed toward but not defined—something alternate to, for example, the theologies of the Princetonians. Absent from Bavinck's scientific account is the inductivist-biblicist approach that downplays the mediation of the self, among other things, present in a theologian like Charles Hodge. This study identifies one prominent aspect of his distinction from this tradition: the incorporation of the grammar and rationality of Schleiermacher.

One must, therefore, turn first to a proper identification of Bavinck as Reformed catholic theologian, an identification marker that aids the reader in recognizing diversity and eclecticism across his texts and barricades readings that reduce his conceptual framework to one past movement (e.g. Platonic, Aristotelian, Thomistic, Kantian, Augustinian, Calvinistic). By exploring his own professed task as a Reformed catholic, one can locate the impetus behind his appropriations of Schleiermacher and the consciousness progeny.

1.2. Reformed Catholicity and its Task

---

[73] This latter claim is admittedly a reduction of the great diversity of the Reformed scholastic era and its use here corresponds to a caricature in relation to the current discussion.

[74] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy; Volume 1: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 29.

Herman Bavinck's theology is catholic, ecclesial, and ecumenical. Harinck remarks that G.C. Berkouwer's memoir described Bavinck's task using only one idea: catholicity.[75] The *RD* along with Bavinck's wider writings is not a repristination of classical orthodoxy so-named but a re-appropriation of it in a modern context.[76] Consider his doctrine of God. God is, Bavinck proclaims in a modern grammar, Absolute, fully self-conscious, and personal.[77]

> In humans, we witness only a faint analogy of divine personality. Personality in humans arises only because they are subjects who confront themselves as object and unite the two (subject and object) in an act of self-consciousness. Hence three moments (constituents) constitute the essence of human personality… In God, however, because he is not subject to space or time, to extension or division, these three are not moments but "hypostases," modes of existence of one and the same being… This self-differentiation results from the self-unfolding of the divine nature into personality, thus making it tri-personal… the unfolding of his being into personality coincides with that of his being unfolding into three persons. The three persons are the one divine personality brought to complete self-unfolding, a self-unfoldment arising out of, by the agency of, and within the divine being.[78]

Isaak Dorner, in 1879, describes 'the eternal result of the eternal Self-discrimination of God from Himself, together with the equally eternal re-entrance into Himself' as 'the Organism of the Absolute divine Personality'.[79] For Dorner, this latter description of God is a rejection of the traditional expression of God as 'absolute substance'.[80] While unwilling to set 'absolute substance' and 'absolute personality' in antithesis, Bavinck self-consciously sees his description of God as comporting with the ancient concept but also a grammatical augmentation. He

---

[75] G.C. Berkouwer, '*Katholiciteit.* H. Bavinck', in *Zoeken en Vinden. Herinneringen en ervaringen* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989), 40-70; Harinck, 'Something That Must Remain, If the Truth Is to Be Sweet and Precious to Us', 250.

[76] A distinct form of some of the material in this section was published in Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, 'Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicity, Consciousness, and Theological Epistemology', *SJT* no. 3 (2017), 310-32.

[77] *RD* 2.194.

[78] *RD* 2.303.

[79] Isaak Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, trans. Alfred Cave (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880), 412.

[80] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Divine Attributes', in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, eds. Bruce McCormack and Kelly Kapic (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 47-66, 48.

consistently turns both to Aquinas and Calvin and, in moments, to Dorner, Schelling, and others, to construct his doctrine of God.[81]

His theology, therefore, never cries *ad fontes* without inciting development. Bavinck's catholicity brings the ancient into conversation with the modern but never precludes the modern by rousing the ancient: 'to cherish the ancient simply because it is ancient', he writes, 'is neither Reformed nor Christian. A work of dogmatic theology should not simply describe what was true and valid but what abides as true and valid. It is rooted in the past but labors for the future'.[82] In 1879, in a letter to his dear friend at Leiden, Snouck Hurgronje, Bavinck was critical of modern theology (a title particularly associated with Leiden) but then defended his time at Leiden expressing his desire that 'we both through struggle and doubt and suffering, always seek that which is inherently true and good…'.[83] It is at the center of Bavinck's concept of catholicity to be both a Reformed orthodox dogmatician, appealing to the creeds and confessions from the early ecumenical to the (Dutch) Reformed as accurate interpretations of the Scriptures, and a modern dogmatician engaged in the new questions of both philosophy and theology looking for truth where it can be found. If one looks for the so-called 'modern Bavinck' by setting him across from his orthodox self, each staring into the eyes of the other recognizing their opposite as a moment of confusion, then neither will be found. Rather, his modern self is an aspect of his commitment to his orthodox self, standing shoulder to shoulder rather than across.

Before developing one of the premier examples of such catholicity and eclecticism regarding his relationship to Schleiermacher, one must examine Bavinck's use of a well-known set of

---

[81] See *RD* 2.115, 260ff.

[82] Herman Bavinck, 'Foreword to the First Edition (volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*', trans. John Bolt, *CTJ* 45, (2010), 10.

[83] Translation by Harinck. Bavinck to Snouck Hurgronje, August 19,1879, in *Een Leidse vriendschap: De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 1875-1921*, ed. J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck, (Baarn, 1999), 57.

terms in the much neglected and, in the Anglophone world, relatively unknown original foreword to the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. In this text, Bavinck explains the task of his dogmatic project regarding the relationship between theological modernity and ancient unto early modern orthodoxy using two concepts: reformed and catholic. For Bavinck, the point is this: the requirement for modern theological, dialectical engagement is already contained in the concept of Reformed catholicity and its given ethic.

In his address to the Kampen Theological School in 1888, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', Bavinck reflects upon the ancient symbol, the Apostles' Creed, and its confession regarding the 'catholic church'. According to Bavinck, the creedal use of 'catholic' is synonymous with 'universal'. Bavinck employs the universal concept in three ways that reflect his use of the organic motif: (i) the church is a unified whole, (ii) is inclusive of all believers of every nation in all times and places, and (iii) the church embraces the whole of human experience including both the provision of the cure of sin and its reach in reforming the entire life of humanity.[84] Yet, his central point is that the notion of a 'catholic Church' must presuppose a catholic faith (a catholic Christianity). The resurrection of Christ, for Bavinck, accomplishes and inaugurates this reality of a truly catholic religion wherein the national election of Israel, in the ascension, stretches to encompass all peoples, institutions, and spaces:

> 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. Sin has corrupted much; in fact, everything… 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.[85]

The catholicity of Christianity is expressed within the bounds of the grammar of the organic nature of the Kingdom—a movement that will have dominion over all, in bloom, under the kingship of the exalted Christ. And it is this idea that first, prior to any concept of catholicity as retrieval, controls his notion of theological mission. While Bavinck's 1888 address

---

[84] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 220.
[85] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 224.

proclaims the ontological reality of the catholicity of the church (as both an invisible and, partly, visible unity) set within a broader conception of the catholicity of the Kingdom in becoming, his 1895 foreword outlines *catholicity in action*. In other words, he discusses catholicity as a task, as an imperative in obedience to its indicative. He answers this question: what does a dogmatician *do* in a religion that *is* catholic? The task of catholicity, for Bavinck, comprises three elements: (i) universal communion, (ii) ecumenical polemics, (iii) and the hunt for truth.

The first task of the catholic dogmatician is to commune, to fellowship with the generations of the saints of the past and present. One returns here to the fact that dogmatics is the enterprise of 'thinking God's thoughts after Him'.[86] Such an illumined form of rationality based on something more than reason left to itself, operates under the conditions of God's thought made speech and God's speech grasped hold of in faith. In doing so, one forms an organic synchronous relation to the whole of history (which is, for Bavinck, a redemptive organism itself) with all those who have engaged in the same. The task of theology, then, fulfills the command that the church be one body. The one body drinks deeply from the depths of every other age, tribe, nation, and tongue not for the sake of creating structures of authority but in order to read the Scriptures in community toward the truth, Jesus Christ, and the *telos* of the pilgrimage of faith.

Accordingly, in the *RD*, the reader will find an immense quantity of citations and engagement with traditions other than Bavinck's own. For Bavinck, 'Irenaeus, Augustine, and Thomas do not belong exclusively to Rome; they are Fathers and Doctors to whom the whole Christian church has obligations'.[87] He also aims, nevertheless, the principle of catholic communion at the present—it is not merely a principle of *ressourcement* or 'retrieval'. Perhaps to the reader's

---

[86] *RD* 1.44.
[87] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 9. This is also true of the Calvinist tradition following Calvin's own example.

surprise, Bavinck's engagement with Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Ritschl nearly parallel in quantity the citations and engagement with Augustine, Thomas, and Calvin. [88] Bavinck's catholicity takes none as authority but precludes none as interlocutor and partner in 'thinking God's thoughts'. Dogmatics as a task embraces a universal communion of both the past and present, which is reflected in Bavinck's method: eclecticism. His eclecticism, which is implicit in the foreword itself, precludes a reductionist identification of a singular tradition in the *RD* as total and is an agreement with his discourse on the theological-philosophical relation, that theology makes use of any philosophy to serve its needs. [89]

The second task of the catholic dogmatician is to make distinctions. Through polemical engagement, the dogmatician pursues the purity of the church catholic. In the context of the late nineteenth century after the publication of *Aeterni Patris* and the establishment of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, Bavinck emphasizes the commonality that Protestantism shares with Rome. He does so, however, without ignoring disagreement or refusing to engage in irenic polemics. It is here that Bavinck's ecumenicity considering his commitment to polemics comes to the fore. For Bavinck, the catholic dogmatician necessarily polemicizes against what Bavinck sees as the nature/grace dualism of Rome. [90] One does so,

---

[88] The point here is to make note of the extent of engagement. While much of it is, admittedly, critical of modern philosophical-theological thought, it is also appreciative and adoptive. Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher is surprisingly vast. See the index of *RD* 4 for examples.

[89] This is not to say that he does not prioritize conceptual frameworks. It is the argument of this thesis that he prioritizes Schleiermacher's grammar among modern theological discourse.

[90] Bavinck's presentation of Roman Catholic nature/grace dualism has been questioned repeatedly and particularly by Eduardo Echeverria. Echeverria agrees with Bavinck's refutation of this RC interpretation of protology and eschatology but disagrees with his insistence that nature/grace dualism represents the whole of RC theology. Echeverria's project is well represented by this quote: 'The main point here is to show my critical appreciation, as a Catholic, for Bavinck's position on natural theology, to outline the shape of a Catholic natural theology, and to show that an ecumenical rapprochement between Catholic and (neo-) Calvinist can be found in Bavinck's thought on the nature and significance of natural theology'. Eduardo Echeverria, 'The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology: A Catholic Response to Herman Bavinck', *CTJ* 45 (2010), 87-116, 88. Regardless, if one addresses

however, for the sake of pursuing (i) the possibility of ecumenicity (ii) and because of the fact of the Church as a unity in diversity, for the promotion of a pan-Christendom that embraces a wide-ranging ecclesiology which transcends any instantiation of *the* church as an institution and power structure in one geographic locale.[91]

According to Bavinck, then, the catholicity of the church demands an organic rather than a merely institutional concept of the church. The task of Christianity as a renewing leaven rather than a systematic elevation of the natural order (which he perceives from Rome's institution) is the presupposition of this necessary polemical task:

> It depends on our concept of this universalism of the Christian religion whether we become narrow or broad in our ecclesiology. How we relate grace to nature, re-creation (*herschepping*) to creation (*schepping*), determines whether our ecclesiastical vision will be broad or narrow. The affirmation of the catholicity of the church and of the universalism of Christianity is of the greatest significance in our time, which is so rife with errors and schisms.[92]

Additionally, he writes, 'with this, Rome, that considers itself to be truly catholic, changes the character of New Testament catholicity'.[93] The catholicity of the Christian principle that

---

Bavinck on his terms, the point about his catholicity remains true even if his presentation of Rome is over-influenced by current events, e.g. *Aeterni Patris*.

[91] This is not to suggest that Bavinck did not have specific views regarding ecclesial structure but that its structures need to be transcended in the affirmation of an invisible and universal church under the headship of Christ.

[92] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 229.

[93] Bavinck's protest against the Roman notion of 'catholic' is similarly defined with respect to the reformers' self-conscious protest against Rome in Kevin Vanhoozer's recent work on the five *solae* of the Reformation, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity*, 51: 'The Reformers did not view themselves as schismatics, nor were they. To protest is to testify for something, namely, the integrity of the gospel, and, as we will see, this includes the church's catholicity. It also includes prophetic protest (the negative gesture) whenever and wherever the truth of the gospel is at risk. Unity alone (*sola unitas*) is not enough unless the unity in question is a *unitas* of *veritas* (truth). What Luther objected to was not the church's catholicity per se but the narrowness of its Roman qualifier--that is, to constricting catholicity to the city limits (so to speak) of Rome. In John McNeill's words: "It was, then, the narrowness of Rome's alleged catholicity that antagonized Luther"'.

purifies and sanctifies everything is exchanged for a dualism that separates the supernatural from the natural.[94]

The Christian principle is the idea of the application of the power of the gospel, the authority of Christ that authorizes, as a leaven that does the work of renewal and reformation by the Spirit and, eschatologically, upon the whole cosmos. This principle works from within the church outward by the agency of the Spirit of Christ in the human heart unto the nations, the arts, and sciences, but is ultimately located in the advent of the Kingdom of God. For this reason, Bavinck's principle of ecumenicity requires a polemic against Rome's soteriology and ecclesiology. Bavinck interprets Rome's sacramental soteriology (because of a nature/grace dualism) and the ecclesiological bounds of the church catholic to its hierarchy, as a mechanical rather than organic relation between the two. For Bavinck, the concept of catholicity requires the recognition of a pan-Christendom that promotes the broad work of the Church, visible and invisible at once, within the natural order. The grace of God renews and restores nature. Grace does not elevate nature to super-nature. *Immanuel*, the principle of condescension is the first word of redemption.

The third and final task of the catholic dogmatician is an assumption of the previous two: one must search for what is true and valid no matter where it is found. The search for the truth transcends the retreat to structures of institutional authority, but stands on the authority of God's self-manifestation and theological reason. The principles of communion and polemics assume the search for truth in the contemporary age: 'a work of dogmatic theology should not simply describe what was true and valid but what abides as true and valid. It is rooted in the past but labors for the future'.[95]

---

[94] Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 229.
[95] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 10.

The term 'reformed' (*gereformeerd*) is, for Bavinck, a catholic nuance. Its scope is limited in relation to the weight of the word 'catholic'. The concept 'reformed' is a reference to the way catholicity performs, a recognition that one works from a tradition. It is a theological sensibility. He argues that the Reformed tradition contains the most relatively pure reflections on theology ever produced. According to Bavinck, nevertheless, while generally being the purest statement of truth, the Reformed tradition is not 'exclusively' so.[96] As noted in the introduction, he proclaimed as much at the fifth general council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System in Toronto in 1892: 'Calvinism is not the only truth!'[97]

The term 'reformed', nevertheless, employs only one sense because the concept catholic co-inheres with the concept reformed. To be reformed is to be catholic. The adjective reformed adds little to its noun. 'In no other confession [than the Reformed] does the Christian faith in its religious, ethical, and theological character come as clearly into its own; nowhere else is it acknowledged as deeply and broadly, so widely and freely, is it so truly catholic, as in the churches of the Reformed tradition', he proclaims.[98]

One of the central reasons for writing the *RD* is that Bavinck read the most recent era as a devolution in reformed thought, particularly in the eighteenth century where theology increasingly became wedded with rationalism, so he recalls. He hints here at the motivation for his own dogmatic work: 'the Reformed faith has also experienced a lack of progress and even deformation'.[99]

---

[96] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 10.
[97] Herman Bavinck, *Mijne reis naar Amerika*, ed. George Harinck (Barneveld: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, 1998), p. 58. 'Het calvinisme is toch niet de eenige waarheid'. See George Harinck, 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth. Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA', 151-160. Bavinck makes clear that the concepts Calvinism and Reformed are not entirely the same but one can permit the synonymous use here as he often does.
[98] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 10.
[99] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 10.

Bavinck's catholic dogmatics and broad theological project is epitomized using the kernel/husk metaphor.

> The author, who has a preference for the older generation whose freshness and originality exceeds that of later ones, thus reserves the right of a dogmatic theologian to distinguish kernel from husk in the history of Reformed theology. To cherish the ancient simply because it is ancient is neither Reformed nor Christian. A work of dogmatic theology should not simply describe what was true and valid but what abides as true and valid. It is rooted in the past but labors for the future.[100]

While maintaining a preference for the older generations, Bavinck searched for the kernel of the truth wherever it was to be found. It is not insignificant then that fourteen years after expressing his task using the kernel/husk metaphor he uses the same language in his 1908 Stone lectures in search for the truth regarding the ideal and real: 'the *kern* (kernel) of our self-consciousness is, as Schleiermacher perceived more correctly than Kant, not autonomy but a feeling of dependence'.[101]

1.3. Concerning the Nature of Proof

In chapter two, this study turns first to the historical and textual evidence of Bavinck's early corpus to substantiate the importance of Schleiermacher for Bavinck and the revelation of Bavinck's catholic approach to theological grammar. Such a foray demands some remarks regarding the nature of proof or a description of the characteristics of evidence. The proposal is that Herman Bavinck significantly appropriated ideas specific to Friedrich Schleiermacher into his own constructive corpus. Bavinck especially appropriated Schleiermacher's concepts of immediate self-consciousness and the feeling of absolute dependence. These claims are based upon Bavinck's pervasive adoption of these motifs, which were also present in the movement Bavinck titles 'consciousness-theology'—a movement he directly attributed to

---

[100] Bavinck, 'Foreword', 10.
[101] *PoR*, 66.

Schleiermacher as a new approach to theological method from the perspective of the fact of subjectivity and its use in theology. Such an emphasis gives rise to an increase in references to self-consciousness, feeling, relative and absolute dependence, and to the inner-self generally, as they relate to philosophical and theological *loci*. Bavinck, after Schleiermacher, adopted this turn to self within his own corpus insofar as Bavinck understood that Christian theology needed to give attention to the fact of subjectivity, an attention which arose most prominently in the philosophical milieu of the Enlightenment (after Descartes), but had its roots in Christian, Augustinian theology.

In the following two chapters of part I, there are two significant points to establish regarding his early career that will aid in clarifying this appropriation: (i) that Bavinck's adoption of the distinctive motifs present within consciousness theology is apparent from his earliest writings and consistent while in Kampen. There are also two further distinctions within this first point: (a) one must speak not only of Schleiermacher's influence but also of the influences of 'consciousness theology' taken together as a milieu. Bavinck's adoption of this grammar is derivative of the context of mediation theology that developed in the Netherlands after Germany; (b) in claiming appropriation, one must distinguish between a weak and strong conceptual appropriation. The difference between these two ways of appropriating can be illustrated through Bavinck's use of the kernel/husk metaphor.[102] Weak appropriation is the adoption of, for example, the term 'God-consciousness' but used by the secondary author as a 'husk' for a meaning that is idiosyncratic and pays little attention to the arguments present in its original source, Schleiermacher in this instance. One, in this example, would re-fill this husk

---

[102] Bavinck uses the kernel and husk metaphor in a variety of ways. He uses it to speak of organic growth: the movement from seed to harvest, from being enclosed to full blossom. The most common example of the first instance is his representation of the movement of the Kingdom of God per this metaphor of growth. He also uses it to express the distinction between exterior and interior meaning, which is in view in the comments above. 'The prophets unveil for us the mystery that Israel's religion will not be restricted to national Israel. The universal kernel breaks out of the particular husk in which it is enclosed'. See 'Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', 223, fn. 4.

with an entirely new kernel (*kern*).[103] The reader would first see the term 'God-consciousness' (and associate the term with Schleiermacher perhaps) and a close reading will unveil that at its *kern* the argument is absent of direct Schleiermacher appropriation but betrays a mere terminological borrowing with new intentions. There is no sharp transition between weak and strong and in both cases, appropriation exists and does so in degrees.

The strong conceptual appropriation builds upon the former insofar as the argument and not only the term in the use of the second author is derivative of the original author's argument. For example, if 'God-consciousness' in Bavinck's texts is accompanied with a definition drawn from Schleiermacher's argument that shares a significant degree of similarity then one can propose a strong (or stronger) conceptual appropriation.

(ii) The second claim, consequently, is that there is a transition within Bavinck's corpus from a weak appropriation of Schleiermacherian 'consciousness' grammar in his early career to a more robust, stronger conceptual appropriation of Schleiermacher's arguments directly in the second half. Again, this heuristic of appropriation exists in degrees. There is a most obvious point of strong development, nevertheless, appearing in 1908. The fifty-four year old Bavinck, in his Stone lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary, adopts not only Schleiermacher's grammar but also his arguments pertaining to immediate self-consciousness and feeling (see Ch. 4).[104] The point in chapter two is to establish first the historical record of the relation between Schleiermacher's work and its Dutch reception in order then to develop an early

---

[103] The irony here is that Bavinck associates the kernel/husk metaphor with its use in Hegel, various neo-Hegelians, and Adolph von Harnack. In these authors, it refers to the relation between religious consciousness/absolute knowledge and the historical Jesus/biblical Jesus. There is then, perhaps, a modern/orthodox relation in Bavinck's use of the metaphor itself. Bavinck reconstituted a metaphor used for separating religious/philosophical knowing and the historical/canonical Christ to reverse such claims. This adoption is present for example in *RD* 1.167, 255. Bavinck's citations: Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, XVI, 15ff; "*Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie der Religion*," in *Werke*, XII, 15ff; D. F. Strauss, *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre*, 2 vols. (Tubingen: C. F. Osiander, 1840–41), I, 12.
[104] *PoR*, 55ff.

account of appropriation in Bavinck's corpus, a reception that is weaker (or merely derivative of a general milieu) than in his later career (Ch. 3).

Such import, whether weak or strong or something in between, is to be understood in this study according to Bavinck's interpretation of the modern theologies. The intention is not to take contemporary scholarly interpretations of Schleiermacher's (and his progeny's) texts and use them to critique or commend Bavinck's vision of Schleiermacher and the consciousness theology (particularly mediation theologies) that followed. This study is not intended to offer a new reading of Schleiermacher or a critique of Bavinck's reading of Schleiermacher but an account of Bavinck's appropriation of Bavinck's Schleiermacher. To be sure, Bavinck reads Schleiermacher in some ways that will not satisfy the contemporary scholar. For instance, along with most of his Dutch contemporaries, he inaccurately renders Schleiermacher's version of the Creator-creature relation as pantheism (the God-world correlate). He does so more carefully than most, however, in a culture prone to reductionism and philosophical caricature. Bavinck does indeed read Schleiermacher with nuance at times. He gives credence to the importance of Schleiermacher's *Dialektik* for understanding the development of Schleiermacher's dogmatic concepts (an insight that Schleiermacher scholars emphasized in the twentieth century).[105] This study, regardless, allows Bavinck to speak as much as possible. The Schleiermacher of this study, while at times more filled out and developed in description than Bavinck offered, is Bavinck's Schleiermacher. And following Bavinck's lead, Bavinck's Schleiermacher will also briefly be set alongside Bavinck's Calvin and Augustine—the other prominent theologians in Bavinck's development of his concept of self.

---

[105] See, for example, Thandeka's account of this narrative, *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* (New York: NYU Press, 1995), 4-11. Also see, Christine Helmer, Christiane Kranich, and Birgit Rehme-Ieffert, eds., *Schleiermachers Dialektik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003); Brent W. Sockness, 'The Forgotten Moralist: Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Science of Spirit', *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 317–48.

Finally, how does one assess influence and appropriation? What is it that the reader must look for in Bavinck's corpus to make such claims? As Anthony Lane posits in his study on Calvin and the patristic fathers, one may take a maximalist or minimalist approach to the question of influence.[106] This study takes a relatively minimalist approach and this is especially so in the second half where the primary claims of appropriation are elucidated. That is, there is no proposition of appropriation unless it can be demonstrated from the texts either by citation or clear implication. The clarity of implication comes by looking for characteristics of Bavinck's text that resemble Schleiermacher's direct language, philosophical, or theological lexicon, key words, phrases, and arguments. These sometimes appear as un-cited allusion but, on occasion, as directly cited and extensive argument. Direct references to Schleiermacher do abound. Yet, it is no surprise to the initiated reader that Bavinck often opposes Schleiermacher's re-formulations of theological method and dogmatic contents. In fact, close to ninety percent of his references to Schleiermacher in the *RD*—about two hundred fifty—contain a negative spirit.[107] To speak of interaction is one thing but to speak of constructive appropriation is another. One must embrace a hermeneutic of suspicion in approaching the texts where this constructive influence first appears to register its validity. The concern in this study, therefore, is not as much with what Bavinck says about Schleiermacher directly as with what he does with some of Schleiermacher's central emphases, namely the concepts of the feeling of absolute dependence and immediate self-consciousness.

Richard Muller, among others, has expressed a concern over comparative theological studies and especially those that span the centuries: 'projects that compare Calvin and Barth or Calvin and Schleiermacher will not enlighten us particularly about Calvin – nor probably about Barth or Schleiermacher, for that matter'. Rather we ought to compare in Calvin's case 'actual partners in the ongoing sixteenth-century theological conversation', or those of any other

---

[106] Anthony Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers*, (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1991) xiiff.
[107] See the index in *RD* 4 for a partial list. This percentage was culled by examining each instance of Schleiermacher citation in the *RD*.

century, one would suppose.[108] This study fulfills Muller's wish in two ways. The first is obvious: although this study does indeed connect the eighteenth century to the twentieth, Bavinck and Schleiermacher are nineteenth century men, one at the beginning and the other at the end, with similar backgrounds in pietistic, peripheral environments, and both as ecclesial dogmaticians. Second, this is not a comparative study. It is, rather, recognition of appropriation and what that appropriation means for the relation between Bavinck the orthodox and Bavinck the modern theologian. The aim of any comparison between the two is to elucidate the appropriation, which is a task distinct from, for example, the comparison of Calvin's doctrine of election to Barth's without a study of Barth's appropriation of Calvin first.

Conclusion

Considering Reformed catholicity so defined, the two-Bavincks hypothesis, that Bavinck is a duality split between a theological modern/orthodox binary at various points in his writings and life, was not a result of fabricated evidence but a result of misreading the mandate of his catholicity: to be both a Dutch Reformed, orthodox pastor of the secession church and a modern theologian insofar as it is defined as one who 'labors for the future'. Can Reformed catholic orthodoxy coinhere with modern dogmatic theology? For Bavinck, according to the concept of catholicity, it must converse and engage in the questions of the present in the light of the wisdom of the past and present.

Bavinck's catholicity, therein, drinks from the well of the fathers for the sake of reading the Scriptures in the whole communion of saints. This, for Bavinck, includes exploring the questions of theological modernity and modern Roman Catholicism. No tradition in history has the claim to the one structure of authority. Rather, in prudence, the catholic theologian listens to those who have come before but for the sake of the future and with an open mind

---

[108] R. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 187.

to clarification and expansion. To be catholic is to be informed by both ancient and modern. This modern-meet-catholic *ressourcement* in a culture of *aggiornamento* was vibrant in the neo-Calvinist enterprise in the Netherlands decades before Karl Barth's project of retrieval or that of *la nouvelle théologie*. Emil Brunner, in fact, suggested that because of Bavinck's work one would be 'unjust' to claim that Barth alone is the progenitor of the revival of theological retrieval and renewal in the twentieth century.[109]

It is possible now to turn to the claim that one of the primary ways Bavinck enacts his own principle as a Reformed catholic theologian is through appropriation of his primary modern interlocutor: Friedrich Schleiermacher. This also includes Schleiermacher's broad progeny in Germany and the Netherlands, the *Vermittlungstheologie*, and the Dutch Ethical theologians.

---

[109] Emil Brunner, *Die christliche Lehre von Gott. Dog.* I, 3rd ed. (Zwingli Verlag 1960), 103. Cited in Eugene Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason: E. Brunner and H. Bavinck,* 130.

_____

What has Berlin to do with Kampen?

What has the father of modern Protestant theology[1] in Berlin to do with the nineteenth century codifier of *gereformeerde* theology in Kampen?[2] This question first demands a turn to the historical, a turn that follows directly from the claims of the previous chapter. Chapter one unveiled the underlying structure of much of former Bavinck scholarship per its interest in Bavinck's relation to both Dutch *gereformeerde* orthodoxy and the social/philosophic-theological developments within his modern context. That there was a tension in Bavinck's work between the modern and orthodox is a typical claim. Yet, corresponding to Eglinton's signal, these tensions need not be taken as dualisms. Rather, Bavinck's Reformed catholic theological method includes the subsumption of modern questions and conceptual frameworks within and under the boundaries of his confessional commitments. Chapter two turns toward the detail of the premier example of subsumption throughout Bavinck's corpus: his use of Schleiermacher. Attention is first due to the historical account of the relation between Schleiermacher and Bavinck, between Schleiermacher's texts and concepts and Bavinck's reception of those texts and concepts.

The primary question therefore is this: did Bavinck interact with Schleiermacher's texts and adopt within his own corpus any of Schleiermacher's concepts, especially in Bavinck's early

---

[1] The 'father of modern protestant theology' remains the common mark of identity for Schleiermacher. So, Tice: 'Friedrich Schleiermacher is widely reputed to be the father of modern theology, somewhat on the analogy of the early church fathers'. Terrence Tice, *Schleiermacher* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), xiii.

[2] It is a *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* rather than *Hervormde* thereby associating it with the history of the codification of the Reformation theology in the seventeenth century. See Jan de Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: A Pictorial Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 149.

career? Several secondary questions follow: did Schleiermacher's blend of enlightenment, pietistic, and romantic influences reach the rural and secessionist-dominated town of Kampen in the Netherlands by the 1880s? If Schleiermacher's influence is manifest in Bavinck's writings where specifically does said influence lie? These are the questions of both this chapter and the next, which together form parts one and two of a historical-textual analysis of Bavinck's early career. His early career is taken here from the time of his doctorate at the University of Leiden to the publication of the first edition of the *RD*, completed in 1901, and, shortly after, his acceptance of a professorship at the *Vrije Universiteit* in 1902.

This chapter traces the historical relationship from (i) Berlin to Kampen—this phrase is shorthand for Schleiermacher's writing of *OR* in 1799 onwards and the early Bavinck—but it does so by developing a picture of the Dutch theological context reaching back to the Reformation and forward to the early moments of Bavinck the lecturer in Kampen. Schleiermacher after 1799, to be distinguished from Schleiermacher's earlier works focused, among other subjects, on philosophical ethics in Drossen and Berlin, is the Schleiermacher with whom Bavinck most regularly engaged (*OR* and *CF* foremost). This examination of the historical context and spread of Schleiermacher's ideas will (a) unveil the fact of Bavinck's early interactions with Schleiermacher, (b) show that while not all, much of Bavinck's early adoption of Schleiermacher came initially through an indirect relationship by way of the traditions derivative of Schleiermacher, and (c) will set up a direct textual analysis of works from Bavinck's early career in chapter three. Also in this chapter is a brief elucidation of (ii) Bavinck's relation to Kuyper as it pertains only to Bavinck's appropriation of the motifs of consciousness theology so-called.

2.1. From Berlin to Kampen

Schleiermacher, Bavinck argues, 'was the most influential theologian of the nineteenth century'.[3] 'Since Schleiermacher the whole of theology has changed, mediating, confessional and liberal…into a theology of consciousness'.[4] 'Schleiermacher', therein, 'has exerted incalculable influence. All subsequent theology is dependent on him. 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'.[5]

Bavinck's high estimation of Schleiermacher in the preceding three quotes traverses the whole of his career. The first is from a twenty-seven-year-old Bavinck in 1881. The second and third appear in both the 1894 and 1906 editions of the *Prolegomena*. The gravity of position with which Bavinck estimates Schleiermacher's worth was echoed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His biographer Martin Redeker summarized Schleiermacher's bearing in the whole of theological history: 'Schleiermacher's theology and philosophy are amongst the most significant events within German, and especially Protestant, church history since the days of the Reformation'.[6] Though, one need only consider Barth who, in his 'song of praise' for Schleiermacher—the theologian he did not concur with in 'any fundamental sense whatsoever'—wrote: 'as this particular man, thinker, preacher, teacher and writer, Schleiermacher *determined* the nineteenth century… his influence has survived… truly a great man and a great achievement'.[7] Barth's 'song of praise' multiplies the much-simplified yet similar assessment from Bavinck's pen: 'all subsequent theology is dependent upon him'.[8] The 'all', which comprises confessional theologies in addition to mediating and liberal, necessarily includes Bavinck himself. Schleiermacher's imprint on the whole of theology does not pass by

---

[3] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 134.

[4] *RD* 1.78.

[5] *RD* 1.166.

[6] Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1973), 34.

[7] Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. G. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 274. Emphasis added.

[8] *RD* 1.166

Bavinck without impress. How did it come to him and in what way was this secessionist preacher and theologian formed by *the* theologian of the nineteenth century?

Such 'incalculable influence' flowing from both the early nineteenth century's *Driefaltigkeitskirche* Berlin (Trinity church) and the then recently formulated University of Berlin (of which Schleiermacher was co-founder) first penetrated the ranks of a stubborn Dutch theological mainline starting in the latter portions of the first half of the nineteenth century. In the early century, a leading Dutch theological journal protested the infiltration of such liberal German theology: 'we consider it beneath the office of a Protestant…to translate such writings [of Schleiermacher] and publish them without corrective annotations'.[9] Despite early barricades, by 1881, in the secessionist stronghold of Kampen, Bavinck opened one of his first professorial addresses by suggesting that Schleiermacher was 'deeply misunderstood'.[10]

In between, Dutch Protestantism had not remained as suspicious of German influence as its leading journal attempted to popularize in the first half of the century. The narrative of nineteenth century Dutch Protestantism can be summarized as the slow bifurcation of modernist-oriented schools and the subtle yet consistent penetration of German theologies into the mainline (*Hervormde Kerk*) creating a fragmented setting that was suspicious of the dogmatic enterprise classically understood. Thus, Vanderlaan's history of *Protestantism in Modern Holland* concludes with this point: 'No modernist produces a *dogmatiek*. Some felt that on a "modern" basis, with authority gone, no generally acceptable system of dogmatics could be written. And yet, if some new Schleiermacher should arise, to set all religious thought once again on a new foundation who knows whether the Dutch modernists may not yet enjoy a renaissance of systematic theology'.[11]

---

[9]Cited by Roessingh from the journal *Godgeleerde Bijdragen* (1830). K.H. Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland; hare voorberieiding en eerste period* (Groningen: Ervan B. van der Kamp, 1914), 24. Also, Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 6.
[10] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 134.
[11] E.C. Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland* (Oxford: OUP, 1924), 122.

Vanderlaan's comment was perhaps unintendedly prescient. Commenting on Vanderlaan, Eglinton concludes that 'the "new Schleiermacher" was the son of a separatist manse, the student of Scholten but the theological mouthpiece of neo-Calvinism', Herman Bavinck.[12] Bavinck, as the codifier of dogmatics in the neo-confessional, neo-Calvinist movement saw to the re-establishment of a robust *dogmatiek* in an impoverished dogmatic context. Yet, the title 'new Schleiermacher' has a more vigorous connotation than even Eglinton infers. While Bavinck was the vehicle in which the resurrection of dogmatics took place, he was also the mouthpiece that brought Schleiermacher's conceptual framework into the context of the confessional, separatist environment.

Throughout his career, small chastisements were muttered under the breath of some of his reviewers for this fact. In his 1921 biography of Bavinck written shortly after Bavinck's death, Valentijn Hepp records that some supposed that Bavinck's 1881 address in Kampen, 'The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good', was too heavily influenced by Schleiermacher.[13] B.B. Warfield implied something similar in his review on the first edition of Bavinck's *Zekerheid des Geloofs* (*The Certainty of Faith*). Henk van den Belt originally made the point that Warfield traces a tendency in Kuyper and Bavinck that he also attributes to Schleiermacher and the *Vermittlungstheologie*. Warfield describes such 'mystical theology' in *The Inspiration of the Bible* as the belief that the 'Christian man has something within himself—call it enlightened reason, spiritual insight, the Christian consciousness, the witness of the Spirit, or call it what you will—to the test of which every "external revelation" is subjected'.[14] Warfield expressed concern that Bavinck's high estimation of subjective Christian conviction (a Christian

---

[12] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 25.

[13] V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1921), 108.

[14] B.B. Warfield, *The Inspiration of the Bible* (1894) in Warfield, *Works*, I, pp. 51-74, 59. Cited in H. van den Belt, 'An Alternative Approach to Apologetics', 53.

consciousness) subordinated historical or traditional modes of apologetic argument and 'made little' of a 'rational' faith.[15]

Warfield correctly recognized Bavinck's emphasis on the inner-self across Bavinck's corpus, which augments 'traditional apologetics'. Twenty-two years prior to Warfield's review and some forty years after Schleiermacher's death, in one of his first publications in the secessionist church magazine (*De Vrije Kerk*) Bavinck introduced his exegetical work on the conscience (*Het Geweten*) as follows: in pre-lapsarian Adam there was no distinction between 'self-consciousness (*zelfbewustzijn*) and God-consciousness (*Godsbewustzijn*)'… [they] coincided at every point'. After sin, the conscience spoke due to 'the shattering of our God-consciousness and our self-consciousness'.[16] Such a description of the sinless state as the harmony of God and self-consciousness accords with Schleiermacher's description in his Christian ethics (*Sittenlehre*) regarding the eradication of sin and the harmony of consciousness as the end of redemption: 'what should be attained through redemption is nothing other than the communion with God, an essentially universal Christian expression meaning that God-consciousness is a constant companion to our consciousness, both together in harmony'.[17]

With Bavinck's use of self- and God-consciousness in 1881 is the first chronological manifestation of a translation error that hides an initial indication of the background of the terms 'self-consciousness' and 'God-consciousness' in Bavinck's text—namely, Schleiermacher's popularization of these terms in the domain of nineteenth century theology.

---

[15] Warfield, 'A Review of H. Bavinck's *Zekerheid des Geloofs*' in B.B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, vol. 2, ed. J.E. Meeter (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1973), 106-123, 117.

[16] Herman Bavinck, '*Het Geweten* I', *De Vrije Kerk* (Januari-Februari, 1881), 27-37, 30-31. ET: Bavinck, 'Conscience', trans. N. Kloosterman, *TBR* 6 (2015), 113-126, 116.

[17] F. Schleiermacher, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, trans. John C. Shelley (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 75. Cf. Schleiermacher on piety, *CF* §4.4: 'The second expression includes God-consciousness in self-consciousness at the same time, and it does so in such a way that the two cannot be separated from each other… The feeling of absolute dependence simply becomes a clear self-consciousness, in that this notion of it arises at the same time. To the extent that this happens, one can also well say that God is given to us in feeling in an originative fashion'.

Nelson Kloosterman's otherwise excellent translation of *Het Geweten* renders the terms as 'self-awareness' and 'God-awareness'.[18] While these terms may, in fact, capture something of the intent and are a correct translation from Dutch, they fail to evoke the striking evidence of translation between Schleiermacher's *Selbstbewusstsein* and the Dutch rendition *zelfbewustzijn*. Both words have a direct meaning from a more precise lexicon in English: self-consciousness. This is an error on repeat throughout Anglophone translations of Bavinck's corpus that has helped to hide the significant adoption of Schleiermacherian terms across Bavinck's writings.

2.1.a. Schleiermacher and the Development of a Theologian

Bavinck interacts explicitly with six of Schleiermacher's works across his corpus including the final editions of *CF* and *OR*, the *Dialektik*, *Die Christliche Sitte*, *Brief Outline*, and *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn*. The latter three are mentioned rarely. *Dialektik* has only six total references across the whole as far as surmised. The overwhelming majority, nearly two-hundred, are devoted to *CF* and most of those to the introduction. The central features of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework which reached Kampen by the 1880s, therein, included an emphasis on human subjectivity, self-consciousness, God-consciousness, religion (piety) in general, and the feelings of relative and absolute dependence. Regardless of Schleiermacher's intent, this was the primary locus of his reception.

The development of Schleiermacher's grammar regarding the motif of self-consciousness and its relationship to dogmatics culminating in *CF* is derivative of his own *Sitz im Leben*, especially in the first half of his life. One ought to imagine Schleiermacher's theology forged in the crucible of three distinct 'biographical backdrops': pietism, enlightenment, and romanticism.[19]

---

[18] Bavinck, 'Conscience', trans. N. Kloosterman, *TBR* 6 (2015), 116.
[19] Paul Nimmo, 'Introduction to the Third Edition', in F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 3rd edition (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2016), x.

Gottlieb Schleiermacher, Friedrich's father, experienced a conversion in 1778 through his interactions with a Moravian pietistic commune at Gnadenfrei. Previously, although a Reformed pastor, Gottlieb was a student of Enlightenment rationalism. He was an avid reader of Spinoza and Kant in his old age—that is, until 1778.[20] In his newly found piety, Gottlieb prized an experiential relationship with Christ in the redemption purchased through the vicarious satisfaction of the cross. Although never joining a community, he determined to educate his children within the Moravian society, and so he did. Friedrich, after being admitted per the casting of lots, entered the Moravian school at Niesky at fourteen and later attended the Moravian seminary at Barby.[21]

Although having a conversion experience of his own at Niesky, while at Barby, Schleiermacher consumed several taboo texts (Goethe, Kant) and decided to separate himself theologically from the Moravian community by denying the atonement, for which he was nearly expelled.[22] He wrote to his father of his decision and after being informed his father cautiously denounced Friedrich. Gottlieb wrote: 'O foolish son, who has bewitched you, that you do not obey the truth... Go then into the world whose approval you desire'.[23] In 1787, Schleiermacher did just that. He left the Moravian society behind and moved to Halle to live with his uncle and study at the university. Although leaving pietism in Barby, in a letter to Georg Reimer written twenty years after he entered the Moravian school, he recounted in his pietistic experience that his 'awareness of our relation to a higher world began…[and] first

[20] Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 8.

[21] Christine Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 31-57, 44. Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 9. Interestingly Bavinck's father Jan also used lots to determine whether he would take a place at the Kampen Theological School.

[22] Schleiermacher's argument, 'I cannot believe that his death was a substitutionary atonement because he [Jesus] never said so himself', was, at this stage, an underdeveloped and perhaps immature one. Jan 21, 1787. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Aus Schleiermachers Leben in Briefen*, 4 vols., vol. I (Berlin: Reimer, 1858-60) 42-43. Hereafter, *Briefen*. Cited in Albert Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life: Determinism, Freedom, and Phantasy* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 8.

[23] *Briefen*, I. 46. Feb 8, 1787; *Briefen* I. 46, 49. Cited in Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 14.

developed that basic mystical tendency… [now]', he wrote, 'I have again become a Moravian, only of a higher order'.[24] The revelation of such higher pietism became central in his 1799 work *On Religion* where he appealed to the concept of piety in relationship to religion as a human sensibility and taste for the infinite.[25]

It was at Halle that Schleiermacher re-entered that rationalist context that his father left through the texts of Leibniz, Wolff, and Kant, among others, under the tutelage of Johann August Eberhard (1739-1809). Halle, while once a center of pietism, had become a place enamored with Kant's herald, *Sapere aude* ('dare to know')![26] In fact, a common slogan amid the students was as follows: 'So you are going to Halle? You will either return a pietist or an atheist!'[27] But Schleiermacher's own scholarly ambitions awakened when he left Halle after only two years and moved with his uncle to Drossen. At Drossen, Schleiermacher made attempts at various topics in philosophical ethics, which were responses to his interactions with Kant's first two *Critiques*. His initial foray into scholarship unveiled a trajectory of idiosyncrasy. Tice comments on Schleiermacher's early texts accordingly: 'as for theology, he was getting his "critical", non-Enlightenment, nonrationalist, nonsupernaturalist, nonbiblicist bearings [in Drossen]'.[28] He had a consistent skeptical mindset in these early years. He later put it: 'I had a peculiar affliction. It consisted in an amazing skepticism, the origin of which I can no longer recollect …'.[29] If anything was to come from him as a philosopher or theologian, it was bound to be both unique and vigorous. It was his doom, he suggested, that he had a passion for studying not by the clock but *con amore*, until his thinking was finished.[30]

---

[24] *Briefen*, I. 294-5. Cited in Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 9.

[25] *OR*, 23, 46.

[26] Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life*, 8.

[27] Friedrich Paulsen, *Geschichte des Gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten. Vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart* (3rd edn, Leipzig: Veit, 1919–21), i. 537–9. Cited in Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 112.

[28] Tice, *Schleiermacher*, 5.

[29] *Briefen*, I. 6. Cited in Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life*, 15.

[30] Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life*, 17.

He was, others remarked, idiosyncratic, private, not well kempt, and an independent thinker.[31] Such an ethic of free thought would position him suitably for his future life in the romantic circle of Berlin which prized individual formation and individuality (*Bildung, Individualität*).

Over the next few years after Drossen, he spent much of his time in Berlin (from 1790-93 intermittently) engaging with some of the Enlightenment philosophers he had read. By the end of this period, he had written three full works that remained unpublished in complete form until 1984: 'On the Highest Good' (1789), 'On Freedom' (1790-92) and 'What Gives Value to Life?' (1792-3).[32] Schleiermacher was a critical Kantian—Kantian insofar as he accepted limits to theoretical reason. His critique, nevertheless, concerned Kant's concept of freedom. Schleiermacher wrote, Kant's freedom 'as a power of causality having no necessary connection with what precedes' fails to account for the 'unity of consciousness' that Kant's first *Critique* was constructed upon.[33] With no intention of unveiling the arguments here, the point is that in Schleiermacher's early interactions with Kant and other Enlightenment philosophers regarding the relations between freedom and determinism, subject and object, self and world, being and morality, as he expressed in *OR*, he adopted such emphases on the concepts of intuition (*Anschauung*) and consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) that would suit his development for his later theological constructions.[34] As Helmer states, a feature of Schleiermacher's modern thought is his 'propensity to take thinking as an object of itself'.[35] His development as a mature, Christo-centric and 'consciousness-theologian' was, Bavinck estimated, both adoptive of and contra to Kant:

---

[31] Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life*, 19.

[32] Tice, *Schleiermacher*, 7.

[33] Schleiermacher, *On Freedom*, trans. Albert Blackwell (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1992), 295. Also see Schleiermacher, '*Notizen zu Kant: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*', KGA I/1, 132-34.

[34] For a full treatment of the Kant-Schleiermacher relation see Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*; Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 30-122. Jacqueline Mariña, *Transformation of Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Oxford, OUP, 2008).

[35] Christine Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', 31.

Another road was taken by Schleiermacher [than that of Kant]. Although he too rejected the church's doctrine of Christ, he nevertheless sought to avoid the mistake of speculative philosophy, the mistake of looking for the essence of Christianity in an abstract idea and detaching it from the historical person of Christ. To that end, he based his view on the experience of the church, on the Christian consciousness, whose content is reconciliation and fellowship with God… Schleiermacher's influence became perceptible, first, in that, in contrast to Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, theologians tried to maintain that Christ was a most extraordinary and wholly unique revelation of God.[36]

Schleiermacher experienced within his early expedition into philosophical ethics an 'awakening' which, he later described in the *Monologen* (Soliloquies) of 1800: 'with a proud joy, I remember the first time I found the meaning of humanity and knew then that I could never again lose it'… 'Thus, there dawned upon me what is my highest intuition (*höchste Anschauung*). I saw clearly that each [person] is meant to represent humanity in [one's] own way, combining its elements uniquely'.[37] Intuition for Schleiermacher denoted the passive, receptive aspect of human existence in a world of objects, a definition that originates from Kant but is later augmented by the concept of feeling.

Enlightenment philosophies had beckoned him reject traditional views of Christ's sacrifice at Barby, and, in Berlin and Drossen, Kant's first and second *Critique*, among others, provoked him to retreat to philosophical ethics wherein he found the intuition and feeling of the unity of self and world through reflection on the concepts of determined individuality and freedom. Schleiermacher, while a student of Kant, at the same time, remained tethered in a way to a Moravian emphasis on the 'consciousness and uniqueness of the individual's experience'.[38]

In 1796, Schleiermacher moved to Berlin and would serve for the next six years as chaplain at the Charity Hospital. This was his second pastorate after a two-year stay in Landsberg. Most

---

[36] *RD* 3.262-63.

[37] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Soliloquies*, trans. Horace Leiland Friess (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 29, 30-31. Cited in Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 21; Tice, *Schleiermacher*, 8.

[38] Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 22.

significant in this move is the blossoming of his social circle amongst the elites of the Berlin salons. Through a relationship in one of his previous jobs as tutor to the Dohna family, he was introduced to Henriette Herz, the wife of Marcus Herz (Marcus, one of Kant's most prized students), a master of eight languages and famed in Berlin for her beauty; she became Schleiermacher's dearest friend.[39] Henriette hosted one of the salons Schleiermacher attended within the developing cultural milieu of *freie Geselligkeit* (free sociability), a displacement of the elite from the courts to more public spaces. Although publicly criticized, Schleiermacher maintained that his relationship to Henriette was but 'a close heart-felt friendship, having nothing to do with man and woman' (it was, however, common for young men to be emotionally involved with married women amongst the Berlin romantic circle).[40] Through her, Schleiermacher was enfolded into a particular Berlin elite including Wilhelm von Humboldt, the later founder of the University of Berlin.

The romantics were the second, interdependent society of elites in Berlin in to which Schleiermacher was inducted, particularly through Friedrich Schlegel. Schleiermacher and Schlegel met in Henriette's home. The close relationship lasted less than two years but Schlegel, being the center of the early German romantic circle, introduced Schleiermacher to a philosophical, political, and literary group through which Schleiermacher would gain fame. Heretofore, Schleiermacher's coming of age occurred in the moral philosophies of Kant and Plato, but early Berlin romantics drew him into an idiosyncrasy that transcended the milieu of the late German Enlightenment.

The romantic tendency of the early German romantics, it ought to be noted, was something other than mere, superficial subjectivism. As Hans Eichner, the German literary scholar remarks, the title 'romantic' like 'enlightenment' or 'modern' lacks any clear definition and

---

[39] Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 27-28.
[40] *Briefen* I. 261. Frederica Rowan, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Biography and Letters*, 2 Vols. (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860), I. 249. Cited in Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 29.

resists myopic treatment. The term refers not to 'romance' but to the *Roman*, or novel. Accordingly, in 'The Genesis of Romanticism', he writes: 'Romanticism is an unpleasantly vague term, whose meaning depends only too often on the preoccupations of the person who uses the word'.[41] For Schleiermacher's context, Schlegel, Novalis, and others, the concept 'romantic' referred not to cheap sentiment or subjectivism,[42] but to a particular coming of age, a passing through adolescence, a counter movement to aspects of Enlightenment, with less of an emphasis on reason and more on the freedoms of feeling and doing in the complexities of human experience and imagination. It was a movement open to the novel, mysterious, and emotive, inspired by the fall of the Bastille, and a despiser of rationalism. Romantics prized individual formation after Goethe's popularizing of *Bildung* and glamorized ancient Greece, the works and culture of the classics. Bavinck characterizes German romanticism similarly and the reader will notice the aforementioned adoption of some of the described key emphases with a negative tone:

> Romanticism was… a reaction of the free unfettered life of the emotions to objective, all-obligating and all-regulating classicism. Human subjects raised themselves above the laws laid down to prohibit them from spontaneous expression in every area of life. The imagination again asserted its rights over against the intellect. *The organic view came in the place of the mechanical.* The idea of "becoming" suppressed that of "making." In every sector of life, people opened their eyes to the free, to the natural, and to genius. Becoming, growth, development was the mode in which things came into being. Not the practical but the beautiful, not prose but poetry, not work but play, not manufactured things but art was supremely valuable. The affected mannerisms of an earlier day yielded to a superficial sentimentality.[43]

Additionally, the Berlin romantics cannot be characterized as entirely resistant to the Enlightenment. 'The young romantics', Beiser argues, 'never put themselves in self-conscious opposition against the *Aufklärung* in *toto*. If they strongly criticized it in some respects, they

---

[41] Hans Eichner, 'The Genesis of Romanticism', *Queen's Quarterly* 72 (1965), 213. Cited in Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 5. Also see Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany: State of New York Press, 2004).

[42] Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 32.

[43] *RD* 1.264.

also firmly identified themselves with it in others'. [44] Crouter describes Schleiermacher's relationship 'between Enlightenment and Romanticism' per an affinity for Enlightenment rationality filtered through the form of romantic spirit:

> Without ceasing to honor [the boldness of discovery, the autonomy of self-expression, and the demand to produce rational explanations] Schleiermacher became embued with the spirit of early German Romanticism. It provided the mental tools for a mode of rationality that sought to acknowledge fully the dimensions of unknowability and contingency within human experience. In his world both poetic and scientific experience were highly valued. By hindsight we can see that Schleiermacher's work embraces what we see as a perennial tension between Enlightenment and Romanticist perspectives. [45]

Present within his works is both a commitment to scientific rational exposition and a playfulness of Socratic dialogical form. In the Christmas Eve dialogue of 1806, for example, Schleiermacher offers a philosophical reflection in a fictitious scene on the meaning of the Christ-event, the festival of Christmas. [46] The text displays the ripples of his romanticized sensibilities forged in the Berlin circle. The themes are clear: that music invokes religious feeling more so than speech; that childhood (becoming child-like) is a basic requisite for the *Christian* consciousness; that the feminine spirit (women in general) best express the true piety of religion; that the narrative of Scripture, of the incarnation of Christ, etc., are to be objects of love, and that Christmas is about the unity of peace above all antitheses. [47] It is according to these motifs that Bavinck argues that Schleiermacher's 'view of religion' ought to be understood 'in light of this same romanticism' which '[broke] with objectivity; where the subject became the absolute first principle'. [48]

---

[44] Frederick Beiser, 'Early Romanticism', in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 318. Crouter, *Between Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 8.

[45] Crouter, *Between Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 8.

[46] Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve Celebration: A Dialogue*, trans. Terrence Tice (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

[47] Gerrish summarizes some of these themes, B.A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (London: Fortress Press, 1984), 13-18.

[48] *RD* 1.265.

The men in the dialogue (who appear as subtle antagonists) banter about the correct theological-propositional form for expressing the incarnation. The little girl (Sophie), in contrast, is the child heroine who uses her music to create peace. Other obvious contrasts appear: Edward warns that Sophie ought not be allowed to read the Bible on her own lest she succumb to the mythological 'superstition' which sends women to Roman convents and forms Moravian sects.[49] The proper study of theology, he adds, will cure children from believing such 'fairy tales'. Contained within this dialogue are Schleiermacher's vilification of rationalism and his portrayal of the beauty of child-like faith. It is a subtle defense of the best of Moravian piety but a piety diffused into the world rather than divided from it.

And at the center of Schleiermacher's dialogue is child-like, Christ-centered love—a more specific, Christian presentation of romantic motifs. 'Love', Schlegel proposed during Schleiermacher's time in the circle, 'is not simply the quiet longing for the Infinite; it is also the holy enjoyment of a beautiful present'.[50] There was, in the realization of the romantic sensibility, an 'idealism of humanity, belief in the power of the soul whose breath is creative love, faith in the inward god, in the eternal goodness of the inward being'.[51]

Schlegel's writings, at the same time, unveil the fact that the Berlin romantics were not only artists but also and most essentially philosophers whose works, as Walzel argued, are 'unthinkable without Kant, although the antithesis to Kant gives the movement its proper claim to existence'.[52] The Berlin romantics may be characterized then by the following emphases and pursuits: (i) the search for the reconciliation of humanity with the world; (ii) the

---

[49] Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve Celebration*, 23.
[50] Friedrich von Schlegel, *Lucinde* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1907), 7. Translated by Richard Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of his Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1968), 61
[51] Richard Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of his Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge*, 61.
[52] O.F. Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik*, vol. 1(Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1918), 25. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 62.

inwardness of the divine as expressed in the goodness of human nature in the fact of its existence; (iii) the ultimate harmony of nature, humanity, and divinity as expressed in the idea of organism; (iv) a longing for the Absolute; (v) an embrace of contradiction (vi) and an admiration for love, friendship, and art.[53] Their ideas were developed in the crucible of transcendental idealism with emphasis on the transcendental self, subjectivity and objectivity, and the Absolute, conjoined with longing, desire, and feeling for beauty and harmony. Beauty, Schlegel wrote, 'is one of the primary modes of action of the human mind…an eternal transcendental [fact]'.[54] Like the romantics, Schleiermacher emphasized the idea of unity or reconciliation with the world, individuality and creativity, friendship and love.[55] Yet, Schleiermacher attributes religion above all as the source of his romantic sensibility: in religion,

> my spirit breathed before it had discovered the world of external objects, experience, and scholarship. Religion helped me when I began… to purify my heart of the rubble of primitive times. It remained with me when God and immortality disappeared before my doubting eyes. It guided me into the active life. It taught me, with my virtues and defects to keep myself wholly in my undivided existence, and only through that have I learned friendship and love.[56]

While working with Schlegel on the romantic journal *Athenaeum*, Schleiermacher published his

---

[53] These are characterizations that appear across Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 61-64.

[54] Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum: Eine Zeitschrift* (Berlin: F. Vieweg, 1799) II. 69. Cited in Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 65. Schleiermacher was especially drawn to the emphasis on individuality as expressed in the pursuit of friendship. 'The highest moment is when two friends see their own holiest nature…in the souls of the other'. *Athenaeum*, II. 101. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher*, 67. Friendship expresses a reality of unity, that individuality is a form of membership in a particular unity of all mankind: 'Only all men make up humanity', Schleiermacher wrote, 'and only all forms, taken together, the world'. Schleiermacher was known to exemplify the romantic ideal of friendship. Schlegel wrote to Schleiermacher that 'To me you are…for humanity what Fichte and Goethe are for philosophy and literature'. *Briefen*, III. 86.

[55] See Gerald N. Izenberg, *Impossible Individuality: Romanticism, Revolution, and the Origins of Modern Selfhood, 1787–1802* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[56] *OR*, 84. The transitions between the Oman and Crouter translations are for the purpose of citing Schleiermacher's original 1799 text of *OR* as Crouter has translated it and his 3rd edition, translated by Oman.

well-known *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*[57] whose ethos and audience established him a writer within the bounds of Berlin romantics—even though much of its content was intended to persuade this circle, especially Schlegel who thought Schleiermacher's Christianity unreasonable.[58] *OR* is one of the texts that introduced the age so-categorized as modern Christian thought. Through its second speech Schleiermacher first expressed the fundamental motifs of what Bavinck would later call the catalyst of consciousness-theology. The work displays even in its earliest edition the two-fold relation between dependence and freedom in seed forms. The first speech beckons the romantic despisers to understand their misunderstanding. Schleiermacher appeals to the two 'primal forces', the two opposing forces of human nature: the 'one strives to draw into itself everything that surrounds it…wholly absorbing it into its innermost being. The other longs to extend its own inner self even further'.[59] No individual exists apart from the two—the relation to material nature that is fundamentally receptive, and the imparting to the outside something of the inner-self. In this relation, the human is determined: 'he can be nothing other than what he must be'.[60]

How shall these two forces be brought together? The answer depends on a second question presented in the second speech. 'What is religion?' is the most important query of the book. It is, he answers, neither acting (morality) nor 'a particular way of contemplating the world' in thinking (the theoretical, dogmatic), but piety. Piety is an 'immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the infinite, and of all temporal things, in

---

[57] Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, KGA I/2.

[58] Crouter offers a taxonomy of on-going debates regarding the impact and influence of the Berlin romantic circle on Schleiermacher's mature writings: 'scholarly opinion on Schleiermacher and romanticism falls into three camps. (1) Those who think Schleiermacher is thoroughly infused with romanticism… (2) Those who present romanticism as a passing phase of his thought… [and] (3) Those who recognize Schleiermacher's affinity with romanticism, but stress his distinctive contribution to a movement that, from its inception, was always heterogeneous. *Between Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 7. Bavinck states, at least, that Schleiermacher's theology from *OR* to *CF* in its final edition is essentially consistent. *RD* 1.265.

[59] *OR* (C), 80.

[60] *OR* (C), 6.

and through the Eternal…It is in itself an affection, a revelation of the infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it in God'.[61] Such immediate consciousness is predicated upon an 'original unity' that is manifestly expressed in both thinking and acting.[62] Piety is, in other words, the intuition (or by 1806 in the second edition, feeling) of unity in the self-world relation that senses and tastes the infinite from the standpoint of the finite. Herein, the unity of the two primal forces is the sense of religion, of a relation to the infinite, grounded in the unity of consciousness. So, Schleiermacher: 'Thus to accept everything individual as a part of the whole and everything limited as a presentation (*Darstellung*) of the infinite is religion'.[63]

The phrase 'original unity' is important for unveiling the sense of the infinite. Original unity is a consciousness present across all states and is directly connected to intuition or feeling, a feeling of both the unity of the self and the unity of self and the finite in which together there is a world (*Weltall*) or Universe (*Universum*).[64] It could be called a primordial self-awareness wherein one pays attention to her own origin. When reflecting on the givenness of consciousness, one discovers, as Kalwaitis summarizes Schleiermacher, 'that which is ontologically prior to any determination of thinking, willing, or perceiving, that which shows itself as the essential characteristic of "every act of… life itself"'.[65] Additionally, in the immediate consciousness of self, giving rise to the feeling of the dependent finite, one enters a

---

[61] *OR*, 28.

[62] *OR*, 21-22.

[63] *OR* (Crouter), 25.

[64] For an extensive treatment of this concept, see Carl Kalwaitis, 'The Meaning of Original Consciousness: A Philosophical Study of Schleiermacher's Second Speech', in *The State of Schleiermacher Scholarship Today*, eds. Edwina Lawler, Jeffery Kinlaw, Ruth Richardson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 81-110. 'For ordinary, mediating consciousness, which identifies with knowledge and action, self and world are merely given because it closes itself off to the kind of attentive listening required of primordial receptivity. The latter is original consciousness in that it lets origin originate. It is not concerned with what is merely given, but rather with the giving itself. This giving is the continuous creative process characteristic of the whole, or Universe, which is in unbroken activity, and reveals itself to us at every moment'.

[65] Kalwaitis, 'The Meaning of Original Consciousness', 90. *OR*, 42.

form of knowing (an intuitive form of awareness) that is pre-inferential. To experience is to experience the finite but to do so in the intuition (the revelation) that the finite is not the infinite. Such a revelation expresses affection for, as he would come to say in *CF*, a *Whence* who is not finite (and therefore wholly outside of the finite world, contrary to many pantheistic interpretations of Schleiermacher's original unity).[66]

Encapsulated here is Schleiermacher's way of subverting Kant's religion as morality. Whereas Kant denies knowledge of God *de facto* marginalizing religion to the bounds of practical reason, Schleiermacher beckons the motifs of romantic philosophy to establish religion as the ground of knowing and doing. Not to be missed, additionally, is that the expression of religion as *piety* finds its source in his Moravian pietistic history. Central and consistent throughout his career (despite minor changes in grammar), is the idea that there is a feeling or sensibility of the unity of consciousness in relation to the world that gives rise to a taste for the infinite grounded on the self-world relation. Feeling, therein, as a religious element of self-consciousness, is primary in the three-fold aspect of one's consciousness (feeling, knowing, and doing): 'the ground of [human] action and thought'.[67] Due to the receptive or passive nature of this aspect of feeling, his conception of the unity of human consciousness is determined by its relation to the world and, therefore, in utter contrast to Fichte's ego positing non-ego.[68] By 1806, then, the emphasis on the intuition of 1799 had become 'feeling'. Adams summarizes the point of the change: 'Defining the essence of religion as a matter of feeling

---

[66] *CF* §4.
[67] *OR*, 87.
[68] Jacqueline Mariña, 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty: A Reply to my Critics', in *Schleiermacher, the Study of Religion, and the Future of Theology*, eds. Brent W. Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 121-134, 122

rather than intuition is… in line with the view that the primary religious consciousness is a sort of self–consciousness', in distinction from the intuition of an external object.[69]

Bavinck, similarly, characterizes the key features of Schleiermacher's 'religion' in three moves. First, 'religion is neither thinking nor acting, neither metaphysics nor morality, but feeling for the infinite. The object of that feeling is not a personal God with whom a human lives in fellowship but the universe, the world as a whole, conceived as a unity'. Second, the 'faculty for the perception of that infinite is not the intellect, reason, or will but feeling, the focus of the mind on and capacity for intuiting the infinite'. And third, an ethic: 'one must open his faculty of feeling as widely as possible to the world as a whole, view all things in the One and the One in all things, regard all that is particular as a revelation of the infinite, etc'.[70] And because 'religious' feeling is regarded as the 'faculty which reveals to us the highest unity', religious feeling is not 'clearly demarcated from the aesthetic'.[71]

In Berlin Schleiermacher's maturation as theologian and pastor developed across most of the next thirty years. From 1817, Schleiermacher was a member of the United Protestant Church acting on his commitment to a project of unity between Lutheran and Reformed traditions, which reflected his strivings for unity in every aspect of his life and work—he intended the *CF* in part to be a dogmatics for a united church. But his capacities extended over a plethora of fields per the ability of his genius—a Plato scholar, a Prussian statesman, a theologian of the academy and preacher in the local church, a catalyst and architect for a new university in 1810, a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, a hermeneutical philosopher, an ethicist, a

---

[69] Robert Merihew Adams, 'Faith and Religious Knowledge', in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. by Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 35-51, 37.
[70] *RD* 1.265.
[71] *RD* 1.265.

biblical scholar—until his death in 1834.[72] The ethos of his funeral in Berlin matched that of a king.

Some basic distinctions within his corpus that play a prominent role in Bavinck's appropriation may be summarized in the dialectic introduced between two related sets: feeling and thinking, and immediate and objective consciousness. These two distinctions find full expression in Schleiermacher's elucidation of the Christian consciousness in speech from the standpoints of intellect (thinking) and will (doing) in his two later works, *Die Christliche Sittenlehre* and *Glaubenslehre*.[73] Although his arguments are tedious and complex, the relation between the 'consciousness-theology' developing in his 1799 work and his mature theology is simply expressed. In Bavinck's view, 'in *The Christian Faith* we basically encounter the same' as in *OR* but applied to distinct disciplines and with some distinct emphases.[74] These distinctions are two-fold, Bavinck argues:

> In the *Speeches* God was the [cosmic] whole; in *The Christian Faith* he is the absolute causality of the world. Correspondingly, feeling in the former was an intuition of the infinite; in the latter it is immediate self-consciousness and absolute dependence. Hence here God tends more to acquire an existence of his own, one that is distinct from the world, and religion therefore also acquires its own content, one that is distinct from the intuition of the world.[75]

---

[72] For a specific list of his accomplishments in the varied sciences, see Christine Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', 32-34.

[73] Schleiermacher, *Christliche Sittenlehre (Vorlesung im Wintersemester 1826/27): nach grösstenteils unveröffentlichten Hörernachschriften und nach teilweise unveröffentlichten Manuskripten Schleiermachers*, ed. Herman Peiter (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010). *Der christliche Glaube: Nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*. KGA 13/1, 2. Bavinck distinguishes the concept of ectypal theology, to which he subscribes, from Schleiermacher's logic of causality in *RD* 2.108: 'This opinion was again revived, especially by Schleiermacher. God, it was said, is absolute causality and nothing more. His so-called attributes are subjective designations on our part. Theology can be called neither ectypal nor analogical but should be considered symbolic. In this view religious representations are the products of the poetic imagination, ideals to be assessed aesthetically (Rauwenhoff, Pierson, F. A. Lange, et al.). Of late one can observe in certain modernist circles a tendency to persist in using biblical and ecclesiastical terms [merely] as symbols of higher spiritual truths'.

[74] *RD* 1.265.

[75] *RD* 1.265.

Schleiermacher's concept of dogmatics (*Glaubenslehre*) is a result of reflection on the contents of the Christian consciousness, the affections, per the logic of divine causality applied to the consciousness of being in relation with God in Jesus the Redeemer, formed into a scientific, didactic system set in conversation with a community.[76] According to *CF* §11, in Christianity 'everything is referred to the redemption accomplished through Jesus of Nazareth'. The object of doctrine is directly the Christian religious consciousness and then, indirectly, God per the consciousness of an absolutely dependent relation in Christ. Theological ethics (*Sittenlehre*) is the expression of the contents of the Christian consciousness in a system of action. It is thinking about acting according to the redeemed consciousness set forth in speech. These two forms of expression of the Christian consciousness are an objectification of the consciousness of the infinite precisely in the fact that the feeling of absolute dependence becomes a 'Christian' consciousness—a consciousness of a historical referent of redemption through the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Sections three and four of the *Glaubenslehre* (1830) are a distilled expression of his philosophical musing about religion in its relation to human subjectivity. Once again, in these passages Schleiermacher's focus is on the concept of piety. Piety, as he now expresses it, is the 'feeling of absolute dependence' (*schlechthinige Abhangigkeitsgefühl*), a feeling which must be constrained or elucidated by the concept of 'immediate self-consciousness'.[77] For Bavinck, Schleiermacher's 'immediacy' of self-consciousness is a pre-discursive awareness of self that renders the possibility of all forms of thinking and doing. Adams likewise describes it as 'preconceptual': 'religious consciousness, in its most essential form, is preconceptual or

---

[76] *CF* §15: 'Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech'.
[77] *CF* §3.1, 6, 4, 12.

independent of concepts, in the sense of not being structured by concepts'.[78] For Bavinck, the most important concepts in Schleiermacher's corpus are in *CF* §4.

Immediate self-consciousness grounds the awareness of self as precisely oneself ('selfsameness' in *CF* §4.1) in relation to a world of objects. In such consciousness, there is a constant dialectic between the receptivity and spontaneity (activity) of the self. Simply, the self exists in a relation of reciprocity with all 'others' wherein one can, on the one hand, express oneself actively. This activity is a moment of freedom. On the other hand, every interaction with the world and its objects requires a reciprocal receptivity. The one who acts must also receive and is, therefore, liable to change (conscious of a 'changing determination of oneself'). A constant relation of reciprocity exists with the world as freedom and dependence, neither of which, in relation to the world, can be absolutized.[79] In the former, 'we' feel ourselves free. In the later, 'we' feel ourselves dependent. The self, to put it in Bavinck's grammar, is always being in becoming. Immediate self-consciousness, therefore, expresses the (1) being of a subject and (2) co-existence with others. 'We' can neither be who 'we are' without consciousness of a 'selfsame' self and consciousness of another, one who 'we' are not. Schleiermacher is sure of this basic presentation of self-consciousness: 'assent to these statements can be expected without qualification' (§4.1).

Schleiermacher suggests that these two feelings of freedom and dependence can be one, truly a reciprocity. In other words, in the unity of self-consciousness, the fact of being and being in co-existence is evidenced by the consciousness of being a self, defined in relation to others. In this consciousness, the totality of the concept 'world' is where 'we' posit ourselves with 'what lies outside' as '*one*'. Self-consciousness in unity is a consciousness of 'being in the world' (*Dasein*), wherein there is no possibility of a feeling of either absolute dependence or freedom (§4.2). Necessarily, 'no feeling of absolute freedom can have its locus in any temporal being'

---

[78] Robert M. Adams, 'Faith and Religious Knowledge', 36.
[79] *CF* §4.1.

(§4.3). A feeling of absolute dependence, however, is not only possible but necessary for a temporal being, defined in consciousness by co-existence. 'Co-posited in self-consciousness', then, is a *Whence* of such dependence, and this consciousness of being absolutely dependent is a consciousness of 'being in relation with God' (§4.4). This whence, for Schleiermacher, is 'not the world', but the condition of the world. The feeling of absolute dependence is the nature (*Wesen*) of all piety. God as an existent object is not directly in view in this feeling. Rather, the feeling of absolute dependence signifies 'simply that which is co-determinant in this feeling and that to which we push back our being' (§4.4). In other words, the consciousness of a relation to God is a consciousness of the condition of our being because absolute dependence is the relation that must include all other relations. It is this delineation of immediate self-consciousness that Bavinck uses in his later career as the grammar of the subjective aspect of God's common gift, as a domain of general revelation, and as the subjective side of religion (*pietas*). For Schleiermacher, as well as for Bavinck, in this consciousness, 'God is given to us in feeling' (§4.4). In the harmony of piety, self-consciousness is directly akin to God-consciousness.

True piety, then, is the feeling of absolute dependence on God, the wholly other, the Whence of all activity and receptivity and the source of the original unity of self. Such consciousness is made *Christian* consciousness and, derivatively, Christian dependence, when it is objectified in relation to 'the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth'.[80] And so Bavinck conveys the significance of the most salient themes of Schleiermacher's 'consciousness-theology' for all theology after:

> In his *The Christian Faith* the basic philosophical ideas are the same [as *On Religion*], but here feeling is further defined as absolute dependence, God is conceived as absolute causality, and Christianity is described as an ethical religion in which everything is related to redemption through Christ. Dogmas, therefore, are and remain descriptions of subjective states of consciousness, still of such subjective states as are determined by the Christian community and thus by the person of Christ. With these three ideas—the immediate

---

[80] *CF* §11.

consciousness of the self as the source of religion, the community as the necessary form of its existence, and the person of Christ as the center of Christianity—Schleiermacher has exerted incalculable influence. All subsequent theology is dependent on him. 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.[81]

2.1.b. The Origins of Dutch Theological Division

The narrative of how Schleiermacher's 'consciousness-theology' forged its path to Kampen begins long before. The Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 produced an Anglo-Dutch accord under William of Orange (William III) that would eventually bring the 'golden age'[82] of Dutch dominance in urbanization, trade, manufacturing, and a high standard of living to a steady decline into the early nineteenth century.[83] The Dutch alliance with England resulted in a French war that left a financial burden in the Netherlands. Alongside financial dissolution, the two-fold split in Dutch politics that developed during the Reformation increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[84] On the one hand, the political philosophy of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) fueled the party of the urban regents, the lesser nobility who supported

---

[81] *RD* 1.165–166.

[82] It has been common practice to suppose that the seventeenth century was a golden age for the Dutch. In this century, the Dutch republic was officially formed and its economic prosperity, population, and cultural influence grew steadily. Yet, contemporary historiography questions this picture especially due to the consistency of war surrounding the nation and the fact that the death rate exceeded the birth rate throughout the whole of the century. If there was a high mark of Dutch culture in this age, it is the influence of Dutch painting under the leadership of figures like Rembrandt. See Willem J. van Asselt and Paul H.A.M. Ables, 'The Seventeenth Century', in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 259-261.

[83] The account of Dutch history surrounding this argument is largely developed from the works of James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), Herman J. Sederhuis, ed., *Handbook of Dutch Church History* (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), John Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi: Between Pietism and Modernism* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013), and K.H. Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland*.

[84] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 6.

the republic and the rights of spherical civil authority over religious authority (Grotius was also a distant Arminian supporter). On the other were those who esteemed the prince of Orange, promoted a constitutional monarchy and wanted the church free from state control for the sake of the protection of orthodoxy. The supporters of the House of Orange were generally Reformed Christians while those who favored the urban regents were largely non-Calvinistic Protestants and Catholics.[85] Some historians suppose that this narrative coincides with a polarization of Dutch culture per Erasmian humanism and Calvinist (*gereformeerd*) strains.[86]

'The country's political division' according to Bratt, 'ran parallel to a theological divide dating back to the time of the original revolt against Spain' which began in the 1560's'.[87] Revolt against the Spanish, and more specifically, against the Roman Catholic Philip II, was a 'Calvinist' revolt in part against Catholic rule that would culminate in the Union of Utrecht and the founding of the Dutch republic under the House of Orange in 1579 (although the Spanish war did not officially end until 1648). While the union constituted the rights of the individual to choose their religion, the Reformed religion became the majority. The codification of Calvinism and its relation to the republic occurred after the death of Jacob Arminius at the suppression of the Remonstrants, which became a joint venture between the theologians at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) and Maurice, the prince of Orange.[88] At the Great Convention of 1651, the Reformed Protestant tradition was established as the 'preferred religion'. [89] In the coming generations, the theological and political division remained, nevertheless, in the battles between Cocceius and Voetius, throughout the *Nadere Reformatie*, and in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century development of a Dutch enlightenment. The subordination of the ecclesiastical authorities to the magistrates became a central issue for

---

[85] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 6-7.
[86] Willem J. van Asselt and Paul H.A.M. Ables, 'The Seventeenth Century', 260.
[87] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper,* 8.
[88] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper,* 9.
[89] Bolt, *Two Essays*, 43.

the next two hundred years. 'Although the Great Convention of 1651 gave the Reformed Church the privileged position in the Republic, the Church lacked the autonomy to direct its own spiritual, theological and political destiny…[resulting] in a tug-of-war between the ecclesiastical and civil centres of authority'.[90]

In the nineteenth century, this theological and political duality that had existed since the seventeenth century was manifest in the post-Napoleonic Netherlands trying to sweep up after the financial and social crises it was left with after the 1813 Leipzig defeat of Napoleon. At the dethronement of Louis Napoleon, the re-constituted king from the House of Orange, William I, enacted the General Regulations (*Algemeen Reglement*) or centralization of the church in 1815-16. Effectively, church matters from liturgy to property ownership became the administrative purview of the king and a small synod of bourgeoisie advisers. The Reformed ecclesiology was turned upside down in a style of a centralized state government left over from French control. Yet, at the same time, the regulation was the climax of an evolution of tense ecclesial/political relations.[91] The Dutch church was renamed the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) wherein the *gereformeerd* (reformed) as a signifier of a particular Calvinist tradition was replaced with the more generic *hervormd*. By 1834, the ecclesiastical and political bifurcation in the Netherlands that had been present since the seventeenth century, the 'tug-of-war', was codified when two groups split from the state church and eventually unified in 1869 (*Gereformeerde Kerken*). This seceded church, in which Bavinck was raised, was at 100,000 members by 1870 just after the union.[92]

The narrative of political and ecclesiastical tension proposed is coordinate in the development of the nineteenth century Dutch theologies with two Reformed churches each propositioning alternate theological models for the nation. On the one hand, the act of secession was a signal

---

[90] Bolt, *Two Essays*, 48.
[91] George Harinck and Lodweijk Winkeler, 'The Nineteenth Century' in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 446.
[92] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, 14.

for the re-establishment and maintenance of that which had been: the theology of the synod of Dordt (orthodoxy). On the other, the *NHK* was left to find its own theological identity in modernity. The result was a century-long series of opposing alternatives and reform movements. It is within these various theological movements and counter-movements that German thought slowly pervades a number of these schools. Although there are at least five significant theological schools that developed in response to the lack of a clear theological orientation in the *NHK* in the nineteenth century, the three most important for the purposes of this study that had direct impact on Bavinck are the Groningen, the 'Modern', and the Ethical.

2.1.c. German Thought from Groningen to the Modern School

The 'Modern' school, which is a title rather than a marker of era, is particularly associated with the theology of Johannes Scholten (1811-1885) who spent nearly forty years at Leiden University. Scholten's prominence as a theologian arose after an 1840 lecture that polemicized against what he saw as the Groningen theology's Christological Docetism.[93] The Groninger School was the first prominent Dutch theology of the nineteenth century. Dutch theology had, prior to Groningen, 'slept a deep supernaturalistic sleep'.[94] Theology in the Netherlands 'came up from behind' slowly finding its identity in a new Europe after Napoleon. The pietistic and Calvinistic theology of the pre-secession conservatives dominated the rural areas. Many mainline theologians in the cities remained uninterested in the theological creativity of Germany in the early century.[95] Both shared a high view of the Scriptures as a revelatory text

---

[93] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 98.
[94] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 98
[95] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 6.

resulting in forms of biblicism. Roessingh, accordingly, suggests that Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel made little impact in the Netherlands in the first half of the nineteenth-century.[96]

The narrative of the Groninger school begins with the modest entrance of German thought into the Netherlands through the first significant theologian of the century: Philip Willem van Heusde (1778-1839). Van Heusde became professor of theology at Utrecht in 1804. The Groninger School arose due to his popularity as a lecturer. Among the *Heusdiaans*, his student following, four were hired to professorships in Groningen in 1829 and 1830.[97] De Groot, a Heusdiaan who studied at Groningen instead of Utrecht, was appointed head of the seminary.[98] The two influences underlying the classifiably heterodox theological orientation at Groningen were (i) Erasmus, who they took to be their spiritual father, and (ii) van Heusde's emphasis on Plato. Van Heusde found a commitment to education through Plato's works and esteemed the Platonic dialogical method. The Groningen theologians clung to this manner of intellectual incitement and gained the sympathetic ear of the nationalistic elite. Yet, while van Heusde had moderately introduced a simplified Kant to the Netherlands, his Groningen progeny offered instead a 'genuinely Dutch' theology that opposed outside movements like 'Calvinism' as a 'foreign importation imposed on them in 1619 by the sword of Maurice'.[99] Instead, they sought a theology that came from and existed for their compatriots—from Erasmus, for the Netherlands.

Their national theology was marked by anti-intellectualism, prizing 'life' over dogma. Yet, Mackay remarks, they were 'forced to dogmatize' to make clear their positions.[100] From the formation of the journal *Waarheid en Liefde* in 1837, they expressed themselves in three

---

[96] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie*, 22-4. Cited in Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 6

[97] Louis Gerlach Pareau, Johan Frederick van Oordt, Willem Muurling, and Petrus Hofstede de Groot.

[98] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 7.

[99] J.H. Mackay, *Religious Thought in Holland During the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 52, 56.

[100] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 51.

emphases: (i) the original Christ (a pre-Chalcedonian concept) is a pre-existent but not eternally equal person in the godhead; (ii) the church today is the ongoing realization of human potential as a community under the education of Christ; (iii) salvation is the education 'in heart and will and understanding' within this community.[101]

Their denial to address adequately the symbols of the patristic Christology led to an 1840 lecture by Scholten, mentioned above, to label the Groningen school docetists. Their ideology expressed an empiricism that led away from doctrinal and philosophical intricacies and 'back' to the simple, original *Christ for us*. Accordingly, into the 1840s, while having a small readership, Kant, Hegel and the newer philosophies and theologies from Germany still had no prominent place in the Netherlands. Professor Nieuwenhuis, philosopher at Leiden, wrote that this was due to the fact that van Heusde was 'unspeakably great… in literature and history, [but] he was not up to the mark—*op de hoogte*—in the philosophy of the nineteenth century'.[102] The spirit of the movement was summarized accordingly: 'It is not to the credit of our national Church that is should go for its spiritual milk and meat to Scotsmen and Englishmen, the French and the Swiss… And although there is no distinction before God between Jew and Gentile, let everyone remain as he is called: he who is called as a Dutchman, a Dutchman let him remain'.[103]

At the same time, if there was a remnant of foreign influence in Groningen, it was Schleiermacher. Hofstede de Groot, Roessingh points out, especially understood 'religion' in the lineage of Schleiermacher. Groningen journal publications appropriated Schleiermacher's concept of 'feeling' as a valued resource.[104] While de Groot denies that Schleiermacher's 'absolute dependence' can exhaust the essence of religion, he formulates his own expression of the religious inner-life along these themes: the feeling of dependence, the feeling of

---

[101] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 66.
[102] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 57.
[103] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 57.
[104] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie*, 30.

neediness, and the feeling of love (the additional two added to Schleiermacher's 'absolute dependence' are '*gevoel van behoefte*' and '*gevoel van liefde*'). [105] The Groningen theology, as Roessingh suggests, develops its 'deeper understanding of the spiritual life' as a 'tribute to their knowledge of Schleiermacher'. [106]

The importance of the Groninger School from the perspective of Bavinck's development is two-fold. First, while relatively nationalistic, it also subtly introduced Schleiermacher and German philosophy into the Netherlands. Secondly, the Leiden or 'Modern' school of Scholten, in which Bavinck was directly educated, grew up in response to Groningen. Scholten was educated at Utrecht. He is the nephew of the progenitor of the Groninger School, van Heusde. He, in fact, lived with van Heusde in Utrecht. More than his uncle however, Scholten became comfortable traversing post-Kantian German texts and especially the German mediation theologians. Unlike the Groninger School, at the same time, he also identified with Genevan theology. In his novel approach, Reformed theology found its full coming of age in interaction with German idealism. [107]

Between Utrecht and Leiden, Scholten was a minister in a rural Calvinistic setting to which his interest in Reformed theology is likely due. Although attracted to the Groninger theology through his reading of *Waarheid in Liefde* in his pastorate, he reacted to their apparent docetism and became a harsh critic. After a short lectureship at the University of Franeker (the state decided the institution would best serve as an asylum for mental illness) he left for Leiden in 1844. The first edition of Scholten's *Doctrine of the Reformed Church* was published only four years into his professorship at Leiden in 1848. [108] Scholten's doctrine was a *hervormde* theology whose self-proclaimed method was 'reflection based on observation' of the cosmos. [109] It

---

[105] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie*, 30.
[106] Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie*, 30.
[107] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 98.
[108] J.H. Scholten, *Der leer der Hervormde Kerk* (Leiden: P. Engels, 1848, 1850).
[109] Scholten, *Der leer*, 4.lxi.

began methodologically with the concept of determinism and predestination, and was highly influenced by scientific discovery and empircism in order to form a doctrine of God.

The central debate surrounding Scholten's adaptation of the Reformed theological tradition concerned the formal and material principles of theology. [110] Scholten's method was descriptive. He regarded the question of principles as an historical question. The Reformed confessions, he supposed, teach that the Bible is the formal principle of theology and God's sovereignty the material in contrast to the material as justification by faith. His descriptive method and derivations had many critics. The Dutch Ethical school distinguished themselves from Scholten, for example, by removing principles from theology altogether. Upholding a two-principle system, it was proposed, concedes to the rationalistic-supernaturalistic disposition of old because these principles have little to do with the affections of the heart. [111]

It is most significant nevertheless that Scholten's *Doctrine* relied heavily on the work of Alexander Schweizer, the Swiss mediation theologian born in 1808 in Zurich. Schweizer, just a few years before Scholten in 1844 and 1847, published *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelish-reformierten Kirche*, a two-volume dogmatics in the spirit of his late teacher Schleiermacher. [112] As Barth described him, 'he was the type of theologian that approved of the union between traditional Christianity and modern culture', a *Vermittlung* theologian. [113] In his final work, *Die christliche Glaubenslehere nach protestantischen Grundsatzen* (1864-69), Schweizer declared his principal concern: to unveil the unity between the theological past and the modern mind as a natural development of thought. [114] He rejected the inspiration of Scripture, the divinity of Christ,

---

[110] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 15.

[111] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 94.

[112] Alexander Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, Dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt*, 2 vols. (Zürich: bei Orell, Füssli und Comp. 1844-47).

[113] Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 569.

[114] Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 570.

amongst other doctrines.[115] But, in terms of influence, it was Schweizer's declaration of predestination as *Zentraldogma* that Scholten appropriated.[116]

In the spirit of Schweizer, Scholten reworked several similar doctrines. He, for example, introduced a distinction between the religious and historical work of the Spirit and denied the presence of any historical inspiration in the depiction of the events of Scripture.[117] He proposed, in the legacy of rationalism, that miracle stories, while acceptable on the grounds of religious import, must be natural occurrences mistaken as supernatural event per the scientific ignorance of previous generations.[118] Scholten separated fact from value with regard to Scripture, God's acts from God's word. Bavinck specifically criticized Scholten for this move:

> To apply the Kantian phraseology to a higher subject: without God's acts the words would be empty, without his words the acts would be blind… Every attempt to explain the facts of revelation naturalistically has up until now therefore always ended with the acknowledgment that between the supernatural worldview of Scripture and that of naturalists there yawns an enormous gap and that reconciliation between them is impossible. Professor Scholten has produced a striking example of this reality.[119]

In addition to Scholten's adaptations of a number of Schweizer's tendencies, he particularly adopted two unique moves: first, in his work, Reformed theology '[finds] its fulfillment in idealistic thought'.[120] Second, he developed a form of Calvinistic determinism which put sovereignty and election at the center and carries on, as Brouwer argues, a Spinozistic motif.[121]

---

[115] Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 570.

[116] Rinse H. Reeling Brouwer, 'Election', in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology*, eds. Paul Nimmo, David Fergusson (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), 55.

[117] Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 74.

[118] J. H. Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in Verband met Bijbel, Christendom en Protestantisme* (Leiden: P. Engels, 1867), 8ff.

[119] *RD* 1.366; Scholten, *Het Evangelie naar Johannes* (Leiden: P. Engels, 1864), III–VI.

[120] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 98.

[121] Brouwer, 'Election', 55.

The publication of Scholten's work signaled the entrance of the 'Modern' theology in the Netherlands which was derivative of the mediation theology movement in Germany 'in which people heard the Latin *modo* (just now, today) or the late mediaeval *via moderna* (as opposed to the *via antiqua*)'.[122] The details regarding the content of both Schweizer's and Scholten's theology is not as important as is the fact that Schweizer was 'arguably Schleiermacher's most gifted student'.[123] In searching for some rapprochement between Schleiermacher and Barth, in fact, McCormack turns to Schweizer as Schleiermacher's representative in order to move 'beyond the impasse' between Schleiermacher and Barth. Schweizer, he argues, is one Schleiermacherian who with Barth was 'chewing on two ends of the same bone' regarding the doctrine of election.[124]

It is important to understand therefore that Scholten's dependence on Schweizer is one of the initial indirect connections between Schleiermacher and Bavinck.[125] It is the case, in other words, that the mediation theologies of Germany were one of the significant vehicles for bringing Schleiermacher into a Dutch context and then through the 'Modern' (Scholten) school at Leiden, Bavinck first came to significant study of Schleiermacher.

2.1.d. A Foray into *Vermittlungstheologie*

---

[122] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 98.

[123] Bruce McCormack, 'The Sum of the Gospel: The Doctrine of Election in the Theologies of Alexander Schweizer and Karl Barth', *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions,* eds. David Willis-Watkins and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 470. Cited in Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 15.

[124] McCormack, 'The Sum of the Gospel', 493.

[125] In one instance, after stating that Schleiermacher subjected the doctrine of the Trinity to severe criticism, Bavinck in *RD* 2.295, fn. 82 cites Schleiermacher, Schweizer, and Scholten side by side to support his description of this critical lineage: F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §§170–72; cf. A. Schweizer, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre nach protestantischen Grundsätzen dargestellt*, §§103ff.; J. H. Scholten, *De Leer der Hervormde Kerk in Hare Grondbeginselen*, II, 238.

As much as Schleiermacher, Hegel, and German theology and philosophy in general dominated the nineteenth-century, German mediation theologians (*Vermittlungstheologen*) were some of the most widely read theologians in the first half of the century.[126] In the midst of the Romantic movement, the defeat of Napoleon, theology's participation in the turn to *Wissenschaft*, the mediation trend promoted a 'living' theology rather than mere static dogma, a solution to breaking down the dividing trench between supernature/nature (revelation and reason). In the second half of the nineteenth-century, their influence extended across the Western hemisphere even into the United States, as one 1884 magazine wrote: 'It is undoubtedly true that German books and German ideas are influencing powerfully our schools of thought. … So, the works of Dorner, and of other younger Biblical and theological teachers in Germany, must be read by our students and clergy who would understand modern theology'.[127]

Isaak Dorner was one of the most widely read mediation theologians alongside Richard Rothe, Auguste Twesten, C.I. Nitzsch, Schweizer, and Karl Ullmann—Ulmann was a co-founder of the journal in which the trajectory of mediation theology was first encapsulated in the described mission: '*wahre Vermittlung*' (true mediation) between Christianity and modern science in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* founded in 1828.[128]

---

[126] Bavinck offers a list of primary text sources he used, *RD* 1.397: C. E. Nitzsch, *System of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1849); August Twesten, *Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1834, 1837); L. Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans. William Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871); J. P. Lange, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: K. Winter, 1852); I. A. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Rev. Alfred Cave and Rev. J. S. Banks, rev. ed., 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888). Also see Annette G. Aubert, *German Roots of Nineteenth Century American Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 15.
[127] Newman Smyth, 'The Late Dr. Dorner and the "New Theology"', *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 28 (May 1884 to October 1884): 779. Cited in A. Aubert, *German Roots*, 15.
[128] The journal was devoted to the reconciliation of Christianity and culture. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. I (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1972), 269.

'Mediation theology', while interested in the reconciliation of Christ and culture, was so diverse that the title is simply a multi-faceted boundary marker.[129] First among these marks is that most mediation theologians were appreciative students of Schleiermacher and Hegel who adapted the broad contours of their thought. Not one mediation theologian wholly adopted Schleiermacher and all were distinct from the so-called 'confessionalists'. John Williamson Nevin at Mercersburg put it succinctly: 'Schleiermacher, it is well known, left no school behind him, in the strict sense of the word. But he left behind him a vast number of prolific ideas, which have taken root in other minds'.[130] Second, the consistent mediation-theological distinctive derivative of Schleiermacher is the adoption of idiosyncratic forms of Christocentrism. The doctrine of Christ is, in this case and for dogmatic rationality, a *Zentraldogma*, a principle from which all other doctrines must be deduced. [131] This Christocentrism is distinct from the Christocentric soteriological emphasis of earlier Reformed thought where Christ, while the center of theology, occupies a locus of theology amongst other *loci*. Christology, in this earlier form, is, perhaps, a central locus but not a central dogma. Muller explains the distinction between the Christocentrism of mediation theology and Christ-centered Reformation theology:

> Neither the theology of the Reformers nor the theology of their successors was "christocentric" in the modern sense of identifying Christ as the fundamental cognitive principle for all doctrine—nor was their theology centered on the divine decree as a deductive principle—nor, indeed, did their doctrine of God provide a deductive basis for the other topics of theological system. The very method of their theology, the gathering of topics or *loci*

[129] For a full treatment of the movement see Knut Ragnar Holte, *Die Vermittlungstheologie: Ihre theologischen Grundbegriffe kritisch untersucht*, trans. Björn Kommer (Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells, 1965). John E. Wilson, *Introduction to Modern Theology: Trajectories in the German Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 101–22; Matthias Gockel, "Mediating Theology in Germany," in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 301–18.
[130] John W. Nevin, preface to *Antichrist; Or the Spirit of Sect and Schism* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1848), 4. Cited in Aubert, *German Roots*, 36.
[131] A. Aubert, *German Roots*, 63, 66.

drawn out of their exegetical work, stands in the way of such models for theological system.[132]

Third, mediation theologians are participants by degrees in a new epoch of progressive doctrine that is willing to do more than merely accommodate aspects of dogmatics to scientific development and a changing modern culture but also willing to re-write traditional Protestant doctrines. Such attempts are closely associated with the Romantic notion of the organic development of ideas in the progressive nature of the history of a developing human and spiritual consciousness as well as a longing for order, to put things into an 'organic system'.[133] Johannes August Wilhelm Neander, for instance, was widely known for the idea of the progressing, organic *Geschichte*.[134]

Fourth, the mediation theologians are participants in the continuation of a pietistic trend that developed into a form of religious, experiential *réveil* (revival),[135] which proclaimed the dictum: *Nicht Lehre, sondern Leben* (not doctrine, but life).[136] Even in some of the most dogmatic-oriented mediation theologians like Schweizer, for example, dogmatics ought not be a static, cold presentation but 'express living piety', after the living piety of the late Schleiermacher.[137] Therein, they also embraced the culture of historical-critical studies, *Wissenschaften*, the developing authority of the hard sciences, a willingness to yield doctrine to other disciplines, as well as the need for an awakening of the feeling of dependence in Christ the redeemer and

---

[132] Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy; Volume 1: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 39. Also, Richard A. Muller, 'A Note on "Christocentrism" and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology', *WTJ* 68, no. 2 (2006): 253–54.

[133] Aubert, *German Roots*, 63ff.

[134] Aubert, *German Roots*, 63, fn. 14. Also, Horst Stephan and Martin Schmidt, *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland seit dem Idealismus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), 134–36.

[135] The 'revival' was a broad movement across Europe that included conservative, confessional groups like the one Kuyper participated in as well as mediation and liberal groups.

[136] Aubert, *German Roots*, 65.

[137] Schweizer, *Die Glaubenslehre*, I.12. Cited in Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 571.

transformation of the heart. They were, as Barth put it, 'standing in the middle'.[138] Finally, the mediation theologians, like Schleiermacher, were not interested in emphasizing differences (unlike 'confessionalists') but offering a theology that drew together the Lutheran and Reformed, for example, in an eclectic, catholic consciousness.[139]

Bavinck, the son of a secession pastor, entered his studies at Leiden under Scholten, the 'father of Modernism' in the Netherlands. Although Scholten was past his prime when Bavinck arrived at Leiden, Bavinck nonetheless was encouraged by Scholten to read his *Doctrine of the Reformed Church* and Bavinck interacted with Scholten's works considerably when he began to write the *RD*. Scholten exhibited many mediation characteristics but particularly a willingness to draw together disciplines in an eclectic theological method. As Berkhof suggests, in Scholten's theology are the 'echoes of classic German idealism… a strong sense of freedom reminiscent of Fichte is in the foreground; in the background is a determinism of spirit, a combination of Calvinistic predestination and Hegelian dialectic'.[140]

It is, therefore, while studying at Ledien that under Scholten's supervision Bavinck came to read the writings of the German mediation theology as primary sources. This deduction is evidenced in the fact that by the earliest days of his doctoral career (from 1880), the mediation theologians played an overwhelming role as Bavinck's interlocutors in his earliest publications.[141] It was under Scholten also, to be sure, that he engaged with Schleiermacher's texts at the level of close, careful primary readings. The central evidence for this fact is that Bavinck's doctoral *scriptie* under the supervision of Scholten was entitled 'A Succinct Demonstration of the Influence of Schleiermacher upon the Exposition of Holy Scripture'.[142]

---

[138] Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 571.
[139] Aubert, *German Roots*, 65-66.
[140] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 99.
[141] This is particularly so in 'The Conscience', and 'The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good'. Both articles were published within a year of his graduation from Leiden.
[142] R. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten* (Kampen: Kok, 1921), 23.

A brief series of notes taken on the subject remains in the Bavinck archive at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam. While the *scriptie* itself is not available, the notes are likely provoked by a doctoral module Bavinck took at Leiden under a Prof. Prinse. He marks this occasion where he studied the 'influence of Schleiermacher on the interpretation of H. Scripture' in his journal on 28 March 1879.[143] Additionally, his doctoral dissertation uses Schleiermacher's work on Christian ethics as a modern framework that introduced the revitalization of ethics and the need for re-visiting Zwingli's ethics in the modern 'today'.[144] There, in one of his earliest works, he writes: 'Schleiermacher's powerful influence on the whole field of theological science is remarkable'.[145]

Bavinck's relationship to Scholten, further, reflects the duality that existed in nineteenth-century Dutch life between the theologies in the *NHK* and *Gereformeerde Kerken*—a duality whose ancestry can be regressively traced into the Dutch Reformation. Prior to 1816 (at the pronouncement of the General Regulations), a theological formula produced by the Synod of Dordt (1619) mandated and demanded adherence to the Three Forms of Unity. 'Future ministers had to promise by their signature that they "will diligently teach and faithfully advocate" this doctrine' contained therein.[146] In 1816, however, the vow changed: the new proponents' formula required ministers to profess that 'the doctrine, which, in agreement with God's Holy Word, is contained in the accepted formulae of unity of the Netherlands Reformed Church'.[147] The subtle shift from promising to teach with diligence to professing a generalized 'agreement' led to an 1841 synod wherein the *NHK* articulated more clearly that confessional writings do not necessarily agree with God's Word *per se* and that ministers only need subscribe to a confessional 'essence'. In addition to the bifurcation between the state and

---

[143] H. Bavinck Archive, '*Eene beknopte aanwijzing van den invloed van Schleiermacher op de uitlegging van der H. Schrift*', *Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/298.

[144] Bavinck, *De ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1880), 1.

[145] Bavinck, *De ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli*, 1.

[146] Karel Blei, *The Netherlands Reformed Church: 1571-2005*, trans. Allan J. Janssen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 61-62.

[147] Blei, *Netherlands Reformed Church*, 62.

secession church, the *NHK* itself was divided, at least from 1841, in such a way that Blei describes the nineteenth-century situation of the Dutch churches as one of 'emerging conflict' between multiple schools of 'moderns and [the] orthodox'.[148]

Bavinck's decision to study at Leiden in 1874 and under Scholten by 1876, rather than at the secessionist church seminary in Kampen where he had been for the previous year, locates him as a premier example of the modern/orthodox conflict embodied in a singular person. The orthodoxy of the secession church had come to study under 'The Modern School' of Scholten, a school forged in the crucible of van Heusde and German mediation theology, and therefore, students of Schleiermacher. Bavinck's explanation to his family and secession society was that he desired 'to become acquainted *with modern theology* firsthand' and to receive 'a more scientific training than the Theological School [at Kampen] is presently able to provide'.[149] Bavinck's studies at Leiden were the first evidence, as Bolt rightly suggests, of 'his willingness as a theologian to engage modern thought and science seriously'.[150] They were, additionally, the location of significant engagements with Schleiermacher in the life of the young theologian. Significant they must have been, for he decided to write on Schleiermacher in his doctoral *scriptie* and to use him to frame his doctoral dissertation on Zwingli.

The narrative, however, is made more complex when attention is given to his father, Jan Bavinck. There is evidence that it was not simply at Leiden that Bavinck was exposed to a positive adoption of theological modernities and their emphases but already in his secessionist home. While the traditional narrative of Jan and Herman is that between a 'secessionist pietism' that hated modernity and a boy slowly breaking from the mold of his father, Jan diversifies the picture of secessionist pastors and complicates the narrative of a modern-

---

[148] Blei, *Netherlands Reformed Church*, 61.
[149] R. H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*, 20; cf. V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 30. Cited in Bolt, 'Editor's Introduction', *RD* 1.12. Emphasis added.
[150] *RD* 3.14.

orthodox duality in his 1868 article for *De Getuigenis* (The Witness magazine) on the concept of God drawn from Scripture. Jan argues:

> It is undeniable that a fiery desire is present in the human spirit (*geest*) to know who and what God is. We are of God's lineage and, therefore, no thoughts are nearer to us than the thoughts of God. *God-consciousness is ours as is self-consciousness. As soon as the latter in us begins to awaken the former is felt too.* And that consciousness is so deeply printed in our spirits (*geest*) that no one is able to fully pluck it out and eradicate it. Therefore we are especially distinguished from the irrational creatures and we are driven again and again to search for God or we also might grope and find him… God is thus an infinite essence, an Absolute Spirit, gifted with self-consciousness and freedom.[151]

Bavinck was fourteen years old when his father wrote this piece which implicitly draws from Hegel (Absolute Spirit) and, more significantly, from Schleiermacher's joint concepts of God- and self-consciousness for developing a doctrine of God. The point is, perhaps, that Bavinck's departure for Leiden and his attraction to the scientific, liberal environment that would develop into a fascination with Schleiermacher was precipitated in his childhood home. This detail disturbs the biographical narrative offered in Hepp's biography of a father and secession environment that was dominated by an '*anti-cultureele strooming*' (anti-cultural current).[152]

Additionally, in affirmation of Bavinck's growing relation to Schleiermacher during his time at Leiden, he once returned to Kampen in 1875 to listen to his self-proclaimed favorite lecturer, Adriaan Steketee. Bavinck was twenty-one years old when Steketee gave a lecture entitled '*De Studie van Plato, met het Oog op de Theologische Vorming*' ('The Study of Plato with an Eye to

---

[151] Jan Bavinck, 'Iets over het Godsbegrip volgens de Heilige Schrift', *De Getuigenis* (1868-69), 7-28, 7, 15. Original: 'Ook valt het niet te ontkennen, dat een vurig verlangen in den menschelijken geest aanwezig is, om te weten, wie en wat God is. Wij zijn van Gods geslacht en daarom ligt ons geene gedachte nader, dan de gedachte aan God. Het Godsbewustzijn is ons zoo eigen, als het zelfbewustzijn; zoodra het laatste in ons begint te ontwaken, laat het eerste zich ook gevoelen, en dat besef is zoo diep in onzen geest gedrukt, dat niemand in staat is dien trek volkomen uit te wisschen en uit te roeien. Daardoor vooral zijn wij onderscheiden van de redelooze schepselen, en worden wij telkens aangedreven om God te zoeken, of wij Hem ook mogen tasten en vinden… God is alzoo een oneindig Wezen, een absolute Geest, met zelfbewustzijn en vrijheid begaafd'.

[152] Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*, 14.

Theological Formation').[153] Later, in 1914, Bavinck recounts in his foreword to Steketee's *Contemplations of a Christian Thinker* his relationship to Steketee in some detail. He states that in 1873-74 after his time at the gymnasium in Zwolle, he wanted to go to Leiden immediately to study modern theology but his parents wanted him to stay home for one year in Kampen since they had just moved there. But when Bavinck arrived at Leiden, he needed help in some of his courses at Leiden so he turned to Steketee at Kampen who had been appointed lecturer in classical languages in 1872. Bavinck recounts getting lost in conversation on many nights with Steketee and that he found the highest joy in those days in Steketee's company. For that reason, he, like he did often, went to Kampen in 1875 to hear his favorite teacher.[154]

In his lecture, Steketee was critical of the overwhelming use of Aristotle's philosophy as the primary grammar of Christian theology in history. In contrast, Steketee argues, 'we will do well then if we are willing to learn from a most famous Platonist and theologian of Germany… we mean Schleiermacher'.[155] Schleiermacher re-applied Plato's 'neglected method' (*veronachtzaamde*). Bavinck, in a journal entry on Dec. 15, 1875, recounts that he went to

---

[153] It was then published: *De Studie van Plato, met het Oog op de Theologische Vorming* (Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsmen, 1875); thanks to James Eglinton for discovering this resource.

[154] H. Bavinck, 'Ter Gedachtenis', in A. Steketee, *Beschouwingen van een Christen-Denker* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1914), v-ix. "Het was in de jaren 1873, '74. 'Ik had den gymnasialen leertijd achter den rug, en koesterde eene sterke begeerte, om in Leiden mijne studie voort te zetten en met de moderne theologie van nabij kennis te maken. Maar mijne ouders waren toen pas naar Kampen verhuisd, en drongen erop aan, dat ik althans voor een jaar thuis zou komen en mij als student aan de Theol. School zou laten inschrijven… In mijne verlegenheid wendde ik mij toen om raad tot Doe. Steketee, die door de Synode van 1872 tot docent in de klassieke talen aan de Theol. School was benoemd, en hier al spoedig door zijne breede ontwikkeling, rijke kennis en vriendelijke welwillendheideen uitstekenden naam hadverworven… en als ik de vacanties in Kampen doorbracht, bestond er voor mij al geen grooter genot, dan om een avond in Steketee's gezelschap door te brengen en te genieten van zijn rijken geest.'

[155] Steketee, *De Studie van Plato*, 21. The full quote: 'Gaarne zullen wij dan willen leeren van een der beroemdste Platonisten en theologen van Duitschland, die de veronachtzaamde methode op Plato toepassend, door een gelukkig geslaagde indeeling der boeken, de studie er van een reuzenschrede vooruit hielp, wij bedoelen van Schleiermacher; alsmede van andere geleerden, die zijn spoor volgden'.

Kampen to listen to a '*schoone rede*' (beautiful lecture) by Steketee.[156] While engaging with Schleiermacher at Leiden, Bavinck came to Kampen to hear his favorite lecturer engage with Schleiermacher appreciatively. Steketee complicates the sharp seceder-modern theological antithesis. He, like Jan Bavinck, was a forerunner to H. Bavinck, adopting Schleiermacher in mild form but, more notably, pushing against aspects of his tradition in affirmation of Schleiermacher's sensibilities.

2.1.e. Mediation Theology and the Ethical

Although in opposition to Scholten, Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, a French-Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian in the Netherlands, also returned to Reformed theology. He argued that the Reformation was a *Levensrichting*, a living religious and ethical movement that offered a 'life' persuasion (the term ethical is derivative of *ethische* and the conceptual range extends both to the moral and existential nature of religion as 'living', a movement of the heart). Questions of authority and principles come second. God-consciousness comes first.[157] The language echoes its source: the Ethical theology in the Netherlands found its inspiration in the German *Vermittlungstheologie* generally with its roots in the theology of Schleiermacher foremost.[158] Chantepie de la Saussaye, Bavinck writes, 'counts himself among the great party (*groote partij*) of the so-called mediation theologians'.[159] His theology grew in prominence between 1850-1870 and Johannes Hermanus Gunning, his pupil, was a popular lecturer in The Hague, Amsterdam, and Leiden up to the twentieth century.

---

[156] H. Bavinck Archive, '*Ex animo et corpore*. H. Bavinck. Theol. stud. 1874-79', *Vrije Universteit* Amsterdam, #346/16.

[157] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, 95.

[158] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 105.

[159] Bavinck, *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye,* 2nd ed. (Leiden: D. Donner, 1903), 8.

The famed Swiss professor Alexander Vinet (1797-1847) who was responsible, Bavinck argues, for a theological method Bavinck labeled the 'ethical-psychological', a method particularly associated with an existential apologetic, influenced Chantepie de la Saussaye in the Netherlands foremost. So, Bavinck describes Vinet: 'though Vinet for his part did not spurn the historical proofs, he attaches greater value to the internal evidence [of Christ]. He wants the apologist to take the ethical road, commending Christianity to the human conscience from the side of its ethics as embodying true humanity'.[160] Vinet, the 'living example of spiritual Christianity', was exceedingly popular and well admired by figures like Victor Hugo.[161] He, among others, took over Vinet's method but 'with the neglect of and sometimes even disdain for the historical proofs'.[162] The most important point, however, is that Vinet's interests especially and consistently pertained to the concept of the human conscience. He wrote *Essai sur la conscience* in 1829 emphasizing human action and the process of perfection: 'in morality man cannot comprehend anything short of perfection and in the conscience every incomplete sense [of perfection] is non-sense… The only possible perfection is progress—progress which knows neither limit nor cessation'.[163] He emphasized both the freedom of conscience from political tyranny and the possibility of a renewed, righteous conscience in the unity of humanity with God in Christ.[164]

The Ethical theology in the Netherlands first went public in direct response to Scholten's 1848 publication of *Doctrine*. That was, however, after Chantepie de la Saussaye had been educated by Groningen influenced theologians who were working at Leiden. Most importantly, through van Oordt, he came to know something of the organic knowing of

---

[160] *RD* 1.537. Vinet, *L'Evangile compris par le coeur*, *Discours*, 6th ed. (Paris: Ches Les Èditeurs, 1862), 29–41; '*Le regard*', *Etudes Evangéliques* (1847); J. Cramer, *Alex. Vinet* (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 99ff., 117ff.

[161] Laura M. Lane, *The Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), v.

[162] *RD* 1.537. Cf. H. Bavinck, *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 55, 64.

[163] Vinet, 'The New Religious Discourses, Extracts from Sermons' in Lane, *The Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet*, 221.

[164] Lane, *The Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet,* 212.

theological science (*het organisme kennen der theologische wetenschap*).[165] Chantepie de la Saussaye, who became the French Reformed pastor in Leiden, published a series of articles titled 'Appraisal of Scholten's Doctrine of the Reformed Church'. His thesis, 'the truth is ethical', was rarely understood (Scholten included amongst the guilty), usually being associated with an attempt to totalize morality in a post-Kantian form.[166] He, however, was committed to the project of mediation between confessionalist orthodoxy and the modernism of both Groningen and Leiden with an emphasis on the relation between Christ and the conscience. In response to Leiden, he wanted to maintain a willingness to be confessional. Against Groningen, he wanted to assert that the modern, personal consciousness demands the same existential needs that human nature always has had, but whose arousal extends beyond the possibility of education: the satisfaction of the human heart.[167]

The needs of the human heart are first to be identified in the speech of conscience, which asserts the demands of the 'ought' upon the ethically impaired 'is' of this world. Jesus Christ is the mediation of the crises of fact and value, 'is' and 'ought'. In Him, is the reconciliation of *Sollen und Sein*.[168] Chantepie de la Saussaye's indebtedness to Schleiermacher and the *Vermittlungstheologie* is most apparent in the organization of his existential-theological emphasis entirely through the Christocentric union between God and humanity and his development of the concept God-consciousness as the ethical (existential) appropriation of Christ's reconciliation of God and the ethical order (moral).

It is not a coincidence that Bavinck's first publication after his doctorate was an article on the conscience (*Het Geweten*) published in *De Vrije Kerk* in 1881. Although he does not directly reference Chantepie de la Saussaye, the footnotes reveal his source. His interlocutors include Richard Rothe (also interested in the conscience), Heinrich Friedrich Theodor Ludwig Ernesti

---

[165] Bavinck, *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 2.

[166] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 106.

[167] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 107.

[168] Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years*, 107.

and Jacob Isaak Doedes, amid others. Rothe studied directly under Schleiermacher at Berlin and was a leading mediation theologian in Germany. Ernesti was a pastor and student of Friedrich Lücke, Schleiermacher's colleague at Berlin. Schleiermacher's *Letters to Dr. Lücke* remain an important hermeneutical tool for reading both *OR* and *CF* through Schleiermacher's own comments regarding his work.[169] Lücke was also a leading mediation theologian in Germany after Schleiermacher's death. Doedes was an Utrecht theologian from 1859 who, in Bavinck's own words, was especially influenced by post-Kantian critical epistemology: Doedes judged 'that in reference to God and divine things, strictly speaking, knowledge is not possible; and consequently, he made a sharp distinction between believing and knowing'.[170]

The Ethical theology of Chantepie de la Saussaye exposed Dutch theology to the German mediation tradition in a more substantial way than had been present in the Netherlands prior. This is due, per Bavinck's assessment of him, to his dissatisfaction with the Dutch theological scene:

> De la Saussaye was an amiable personality, a deep thinker, a powerful preacher. None of the existing schools could fully satisfy him. The Réveil was not sufficiently theological, the Groningen School had too little of philosophy, the orthodox tendency was lacking in scientific spirit, the Modern Theology saturated with unbelief. He looked about for something different and better, which finally he discovered in the German *Vermittelungstheologie* of Nitzsch, Twesten, Müller, Dorner, Rothe and others.[171]

Bavinck graduated from Leiden with his doctorate in 1880. He began a lectureship at the Kampen Theological School a little more than a year later. Besides his dissertation on Zwingli, his first book length treatment came in 1884 as a short work on Chantepie de la Saussaye: *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye: Bijdrage tot de kennis der Ethische Theologie.*

---

[169] Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke*, trans. James Duke, Francis Fiorenza (Oxford: OUP, 1981).

[170] Bavinck, 'Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands', *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* Vol. III (1892), 209-228, 219.

[171] Bavinck, 'Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands', 221.

Although it was ultimately a critique of Chantepie de la Saussaye foremost, the text was an appreciative description. Bavinck's critical remarks were measured and his estimation of Chantepie de la Saussaye high. As he would later write:

> De la Saussaye's significance for the history of Dutch theology should not be underestimated. For many he has become a rich blessing by his powerful and attractive preaching. He opposed intellectualism and empiricism with all his might, set forth clearly the darkening influence of sin, and emphatically argued the necessity of regeneration for attaining to knowledge of the truth. He had the advantage of the Utrecht Theology in this, that he felt absolved from the duty of demonstrating the claims of his faith on the basis of a broad and unstable Apologetics, and *could appeal directly to conscience in man* over against the Moderns also.[172]

Herein, Bavinck unveiled his own appreciation for the emphasis on the reality of conscience that helped break the tradition of what he called 'dead conservatism' built upon an 'unstable apologetic'. In his introduction, Bavinck proposes that his reason for writing a book on Chantepie de la Saussaye and the Ethical school is that amongst the 'normal/standard-reformed' (*geijkt-gereformeerde*), or the confessionalists, there exist 'strange images' (*vreemde voorstellingen*) of him which must be 'set clearly in the light'.[173]

Throughout Bavinck's dogmatic corpus, additionally, Chantepie de la Saussaye is used for constructive purposes on numerous occasions. Bavinck expresses the fact that Chantepie de la Saussaye was his teacher, especially as it pertains to reflection on religion in his *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*.[174] He, in addition to Adolf von Harnack, was one of Bavinck's chief sources for re-constructing the history of religion. In his reflections on revelation and world religions, for example, he borrows the following observations, which are more constructive assessment than historical fact. Regarding idolatry Bavinck adopts Chantepie de la Saussaye's definition: 'idolatry, taken in its broadest sense, is born of the human need for a God who is near'.[175] But,

---

[172] Bavinck, 'Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands', 222. Emphasis added.

[173] Bavinck, *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 1.

[174] Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1905).

[175] *RD* 1.326. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I, 54ff., 114ff.

apart from his historical work, in the most appreciative of quotes, Bavinck offers his gratitude for what Chantepie de la Saussaye and the Ethicals have reminded Dutch theology:

> This whole ethical trend in religion and theology deserves our appreciation to the degree that, over against all intellectualistic and mystical underestimation of the moral life, it again pointed out the intimate connection that exists between religion and morality. That connection is immediately evident from the fact that religion itself is a moral relationship. Religion is indeed based on a mystical union between God and humanity; however, it is not itself a substantial but an ethical union between human beings and their God.[176]

Nevertheless, while Bavinck was sympathetic to the mediatorial attempts by Chantepie de la Saussaye and the German mediation theologies in general at the reconciliation of orthodoxy and modernity, faith and science, confession and creativity, morality and religion, he situates himself in an alternative 'school' in his essay on 'Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands'. The 'Reformed Tendency', so-called, is found in those who remained steadfast to the 'spirit' of the Reformed faith of old. These include on the one hand the ministers and people of the secession and on the other Kuyper's *Doleantie* with whom he fought for a merger accomplished in 1892. He critiqued Chantepie de la Saussaye's attempts to do precisely what he perceived as common amongst attempts at mediation: to re-write dogmatic formulations under the guise of simplification, development, or update in such a way that undermines the power and catholicity of Christianity.

Bavinck, for example, argues that Chantepie de la Saussaye undermined the work of Scripture through his argument that biblical authority pertains to the moral-existential register alone against the historical and its status as unique means of grace. This however, Bavinck argued, separates being (Divine authorship) from action (its power to change the subject). Authority, Bavinck replies, cannot merely be asserted through the power of the text to move or awaken the consciousness toward action. It must precede such subjective-oriented power and reside in the authority of the being of the speaker. The first question is 'who is the Christ'?[177] Rather

---

[176] *RD* 1.262.
[177] Bavinck, *De Theologie van Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 53ff. Cf. *RD* 1.462.

than promoting Scripture, Chantepie de la Saussaye has contributed to what Bavinck called elsewhere the 'non-necessity of Scripture' that he first associates with Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Schleiermacher on the other.[178] But above all, theologically, Bavinck argues, the Ethical theology's reductionistic tendency forces an alternative definition of deity:

> Following in the footsteps of Schleiermacher and Rothe, they elevate morality—as the triumph of the human mind over nature—to the level of an absolute power and as a result base dogmatics on ethics. In the Netherlands de la Saussaye was the talented representative of this trend and in virtue of this principle posed the demand that Christian dogmas should not be further developed metaphysically but be revised and deepened ethically… [and later 'ethical theologians'] started to describe religion as dedication to the moral ideal, as pure morality. Here God was not just reduced to the good, but the good was elevated to the rank of deity so that there was not only talk of an ethical pantheism but also for a time of an atheistic nuance among the modernists.[179]

Chantepie de la Saussaye de-emphasized the dogmatic enterprise as propositional knowledge about God for the sake of expanding what might be called the practical-existential telos of religion. This resulted in, Bavinck argues, not an anti-metaphysical form of theologizing but a new metaphysic—yet a metaphysic at the expense of classical conceptions of God. With Schleiermacher, he shared the emphasis that the end of the disciplines of theology is to enable the practical.

The historical development, nevertheless, is here to prepare the reader for the demonstration that in his early career Bavinck's texts consistently exhibit an appropriation of the most salient themes of mediation theological trends. First, is Bavinck's idiosyncratic 'turn to the subject'. And in accompaniment is an emphasis on consciousness, feeling, conscience, and dependence. Such themes were first introduced to Bavinck through the works of German- (and Swiss) influenced Dutch theologians like Scholten and Chantepie de la Saussaye. By the time of his graduation from Leiden, Bavinck interacted most consistently with German sources from the mediation tradition directly and, therefore, the motifs of a Schleiermacherian lineage became

---

[178] Bavinck, *De Theologie van Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 49ff. Cf. *RD* 1.468.
[179] *RD* 1.261.

embedded in Bavinck's early texts (Ch. 3). Van Deursen also suggests that 'Bavinck was not averse to consulting ethicalist theology and garnering there whatever suited him… [He] had always had an aversion to that word [conservative], at times that must have made his life as a Reformed theologian difficult'.[180] In addition to his work on Schleiermacher at Leiden in both his doctoral *scriptie*, dissertation, and his interest in the mediation theology of the Ethicals, Bavinck's article in Kampen on the conscience was likely provoked by a course he took at Leiden that examined the theme of conscience, *De leer het van het geweten*, dated to 1878. He makes basic notes on the history of the concept, moving from its use in the canonical and apocryphal Old Testament, in Greek and Roman contexts, in the New Testament, from the church fathers to the scholastic theologies, in the Reformers, in modern philosophy, and in the 'science' of ethics. His essay follows a similar historical development pattern (see Ch. 3).[181]

2.2. Bavinck and Kuyper

One has yet to acquire a complete picture of the context of Bavinck's development and the context of his early encounters with modern thought without consideration of his relationship to Abraham Kuyper. A central argument of Eglinton's examination of Bavinck's organic motif is, in fact, to show that the relationship between Kuyper and Bavinck is the focal point of Bavinck's derivation and development of the motif.[182] One cannot speak of the neo-Calvinist context without naming both Kuyper and Bavinck, but Kuyper's name is to be spoken first. He was the personality of the neo-Confessional movement and the catalyst of the union of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and the *Doleantie* in 1892. He was the leader of the anti-Revolutionary party, the Dutch parliamentarian, the prime minister, and the public face of what came to be known as the neo-Calvinist movement. He was also seventeen years older than Bavinck and

---

[180] Arie Theodorus van Deursen, *The Distinctive Character of the Free University, 1880-2005: A Commemorative History*, trans. Herbert Morton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 96.
[181] H. Bavinck Archive, *De leer het van het geweten*, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum*, *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/29.
[182] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 72-78.

the founder of the institution in which Bavinck would finish his career, the *Vrije Universiteit*.

Yet, despite Mackay, who referred to Bavinck as 'Kuyper's loyal and learned henchman', their differences must not be ignored and have recently begun to gain attention.[183] The most considerable examination of Bavinck's independence from Kuyper is found in Bolt's published dissertation, *The Imitation of the Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck*, although Bolt's treatment is largely with regard to the subject matter of his study. Syd Hielema's conclusion from his 1998 dissertation remains true: 'no consensus exists concerning how Bavinck's theology differs from that of Kuyper… partly because careful, in-depth analysis remains to be done'.[184] Jon Stanley attempted to overcome the 'overshadowing' of Bavinck by addressing his and Kuyper's distinctive constructions of the relation between nature and grace, a reading that he drew from Hielema. The difference, he argues, is that Bavinck's idea of 'restoration' includes an eschatological element that is not present in the 'creational' accounts of Kuyper and later neo-Calvinists. The eschatological pertains to a 'spiral' upwards, the elevation of nature in its relationship to the vertical. Stanley's point, however, is not to give close attention to this reading but to recommend that one ask 'whose neo-Calvinism?' in stepping into the future of Bavinck, Kuyper, and neo-Calvinist studies.[185] The recognition of diversity has been inadequate thus far, he supposes.

And this study will not aid the project of assessing differences. The point here is that Kuyper and Bavinck both adopt the grammar of consciousness theologies and an emphasis on the fact of subjectivity from the German, romantic-idealistic philosophical motifs present in the nineteenth-century. Yet, Bavinck's early corpus exhibits little direct interaction with Kuyper's

---

[183] Mackay, *Religious Thought*, x-xi.

[184] Syd Heilema, 'Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption', (ThD Dissertation, Toronto School of Theology, 1998), 202. Cited in Jon Stanley, 'Restoration and Renewal: The Nature of Grace in the Theology of Herman Bavinck' in *The Kuyper Center Review*, vol 2, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 81-104, 93.

[185] Stanley, 'Restoration and Renewal', 96.

works in general and conclusions cannot be drawn regarding the extent that Kuyper himself was key for Bavinck's developments regarding this topic in his early career. As it pertains to the motifs surrounding the grammars of consciousness theologies, there is no published interaction with Kuyper until the mid to late 1890s after Bavinck's own concepts had been developed and expressed at least in initial forms. Bolt classifies Bavinck's early intellectual career as 'relatively independent of Kuyper' from 1880 until the merger in 1892.[186] However, this is not to say Bavinck had little interaction with Kuyper in general and the exact nature of their early relationship remains unclear. Bavinck did have a Kuyper poster on his wall as a student. Yet, regarding the current motif, Kuyper's most significant treatment of the relation of faith to self-consciousness appears in 1893-4 in his three-volume *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*.[187] This publication is a decade after Bavinck's earliest expressions of the relation between theology and subjectivity in the early 1880s.

Before examining Bavinck's corpus more closely, a brief foray into some of the most significant treatments of 'self-consciousness' in Kuyper is relevant. Much of Bavinck's later expression of the relation between thinking and feeling as a type of certainty arising from religious feeling in immediate self-consciousness is indeed like Kuyper's work in the *Encyclopedia*. While Bavinck does not make explicit dependence on Kuyper as his source on this point, it may simply be unstated. Kuyper and Bavinck consistently share frameworks and themes: the correspondence between subject and object, the search for the infinite, a radical emphasis on revelation as the key to unlocking the mysteries of existence, the 'inner-self', the ego (*Ik*), the 'I' of the 'I think', subjectivity and its relation to a general, inner revelation of God within the human consciousness. So, Kuyper:

> From the finite no conclusion can be drawn to the infinite, neither can a Divine reality be known from external or internal phenomena, unless that real God *reveals* Himself in my consciousness to my ego; reveals Himself as *God*; and

---

[186] Bolt, *Imitation of Christ*, 12.

[187] A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der heilige Godgeleerdheid.* I-III (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1893-4).

thereby moves and impels me to see in these finite phenomena a brightness of *His* glory. *Formaliter*, neither observation nor reasoning would ever have rendered service here as the *principium* of knowing. Without sin, this self-revelation of the Divine Ego to my personal ego would never have been, even in part, the fruit of Theophany, or of incarnation, but would have taken place normally in my personal being...[188]

Another way of expressing this idea is that God-consciousness and self-consciousness are one and the same in the prelapsarian life. Kuyper, Bavinck, and Johann Herman Bavinck (the nephew of H. Bavinck) regularly express an aspect of general revelation in the terms of a subjective, personal activity of God in the inner self that is, for the human agent, pre-cognitive, a 'knowledge' of God as feeling that arises 'in my personal being' or 'consciousness' by nature. A detailed explanation of Bavinck's account adapting both Calvin and Schleiermacher is found in Ch. 5. Regarding the human subject, it is only the concept 'faith' for Kuyper that can account for the union between the objective and immediate locales of consciousness. Only by faith, can one claim that the objective, daily experience of knowing oneself is based on a unity between 'my' mind and the world, including the body and its experiences. And it is noteworthy that neither God nor the 'I' in essence is approachable by observation. Thus, confidence in both God ans self is procured in a faith that arises naturally or according to a passive receptivity in relation to God's activity. In other words, for Kuyper, God-consciousness and self-consciousness are given as gifts.

Kuyper's relation between self and the theological locus of revelation is derivative of his study of the problems within modern philosophies. Self-consciousness, Kuyper argues, is the recognition of the who by whom we say 'I'. But the problem he perceived in modern epistemology is that a gap existed between the 'I am thinking' and the 'I' who thinks, between the representational life of the 'I' and the essence of the self. The perceived gap, in other words, is that there is no obvious mechanism for accounting for the fact that the *Ik* is not the

---

[188] Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, translated by J. Hendrick Devries (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 343–344. This translation includes aspects of all three volumes in one and is therefore a fragment.

same as the activity and contents of thinking. This is to say, the self is not equal in identity to its representations. His definition and polemical account of the 'inner ego', therefore, is pointed directly to his reading of Descartes: 'in the *cogito ergo sum* the logical fault has indeed long since been shown. The *ego*, which is to be proved in the *sum*, is already assumed in the premise by the *cogito*'.[189] Kuyper's central proposition is that one cannot account for the ego through any attempt at a logical discovery of its conditions, by discursive thinking, or in the desire to will the self—transcendental logic must give the bulwark of certainty to a simple faith in self. In other words, being precedes thinking; thinking does not produce being.

> Nothing but faith can ever give you certainty in your consciousness of the existence of your *ego*; and every proof to the *sum*, which you might endeavor to furnish by the exhibition of your *will*, or if need be by the revelation of your *ill will*, etc., will have no force of demonstration, except before all things else, on the ground of faith, the knowledge of your *ego* is established for yourself.[190]

The ego is the reality that allows us to differentiate 'ourselves' from all others and stands, therefore, as the ground of the possibility of all investigation. Yet, it remains an 'unaccountable' reality: 'Self-consciousness, therefore, is an entirely unaccountable phenomenon in the life of the soul… On this self-consciousness hangs the subject that investigates, and without that subject no investigation is conceivable'. Therefore, 'from this it also follows, that without faith you miss the starting-point of all knowledge'.[191] Self-consciousness here does not refer to an objective self-consciousness, wherein one objectifies the self as an object of knowledge. Rather, Kuyper is speaking of an immediate self-consciousness, an ever-present awareness of the '*Ik*' that grounds all action. Faith, as a natural disposition, offers certainty in the mysterious reality of selfhood. Without such differentiation of self from others the subject who investigates cannot proceed in the life of individuation, conceptualization, judgment, or basic conversation. Faith is the bridge from phenomena to the *noumenon*: 'This is even so true that we actually owe all our convictions of the reality of the

---

[189] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 131.
[190] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 131.
[191] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 130.

object exclusively to faith'.[192]

This faith is not 'acquired faith' according to inference and assent, akin to a knowledge of the history of redemption. It is, rather, a 'given'. It is always present because God has granted it so. It is, therefore, that from which 'we' live and move and have our being and the locale by which we first 'know' God as the Absolute Being in differentiation from all other egos:

> Since we did not manufacture this faith ourselves, but God created it in our human nature, this faith is but the opening of our spiritual eye and the consequent perception of another Being, excelling us in everything, that manifests itself in our own being. Thus it does not originate after the Cartesian style from an imprinted idea of God, but from the manifestation of God in our own being to that spiritual eye which has been formed in order, as soon as it opens, to perceive Him and in ecstasy of admiration to be bound to Him. By faith we perceive that an eternal Being manifests Himself in us, in order to place Himself over against our ego, in the same way in which we discover the presence of light by our eye; but what this eternal Being is and what it demands of us, is not told us by faith, but by the innate knowledge of God, presently enriched by the acquired.[193]

The faith or certainty of self is a gift of God arising in the immediate self-consciousness and with it, a correlate, faith arises in that which gives the self, an eternal Being. God is no object to be observed with respect to this type of faith, but there arises in self-consciousness an objectless certainty of the Absolute, which is an original work of God and a subjective aspect of God's general revelation.

Due to the association of self-consciousness and faith, Kuyper makes the perceptive distinction between self-knowledge and self-consciousness. One is supported in 'the self-knowledge of [their] own person by the self-consciousness of [their] *ego*'.[194] Notice that these two ways of knowing the self are distinct. Self-knowledge refers to a type of self-examination that objectifies the contents of the self to the self in a reflective process. Self-knowledge

---

[192] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 133.
[193] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 266-67.
[194] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 141.

examines the experiences and potentiality of self. But this is only possible because of a prior 'knowledge' (a given awareness) of the fact of being as ego in self-consciousness.

Further, self-consciousness of one's ego is the conceptualization of the subjective locale that is also immediately aware of God, in which one awakes to the non-autonomous starting point that conditions existence. And, in turn, self-consciousness of this conditional relation plays the primary role in the possibility of religion:

> The discovery, the perception of a mightier Ego, which is above and distinct from our own ego, is therefore the starting-point of all religion and of all knowledge of God. If we were not created after God's image, this manifestation would affect us strangely and cause us fear; but since in virtue of our creation there is an affinity between our own ego and that other Ego revealing itself to us, the manifestation of that mighty Ego affects us pleasantly, it fascinates and satisfies us with a feeling of infinite rest. *It appeals to us.* And as all revelation finds its completion only in this, this appeal becomes at length *a speaking to us.*[195]

Kuyper's logic of conditional self-consciousness as that awareness of being in relation with God, or of a 'mightier Ego', is strikingly similar to Schleiermacher's logic in *CF* §4 as explained previously in 2.1.a. Bavinck's development of the relation of general revelation, self-consciousness, and faith follows a similar logic. It is a logic that first appears however in the 1880s throughout several articles and then in the *RD* of the 90s. The earliest texts suggest that Kuyper and Bavinck developed their theological-philosophy of subjectivity and revelation largely independent of one another in the 1880s. This claim is, admittedly, speculative. At least, it is unclear that there is any definitive correspondence. There is rare interaction with Kuyper in Bavinck's early writing prior to the *RD*, which first appears in 1894, shortly after Kuyper's *Encyclopedia*. In the *RD*, Bavinck gives credence to this independent supposition in a footnote. The subject matter in this quote pertains to the relation of faith and the certainty of the unity of self and world that is present, Bavinck proclaims, consistently in philosophies of the 'modern times':

---

[195] Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, 267.

Since then, these same ideas keep recurring among Christian theologians, also in modern times. The term *faith* is then applied to immediate knowledge of the first principles: to reliance on self, our perception and our thinking; to the recognition of the objective existence of the external world; to the mutual trust on which all of human society is built; to all that is known and done by intuition. In such a faith Schiller saw the guarantee of the existence of the new world that Columbus sought: "If it didn't yet exist, it would now rise up from the waves."[196]

This quote is a brief example of a similar logic to that of Kuyper. But, the point regarding its origins is present in Bavinck's footnote ten, which was originally included in the quote above and is reproduced here:

> I. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Alfred Cave and J. S. Banks, rev. ed., 4 vols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), I, 3, 33–168. J. P. Lange, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: K. Winter, 1852), I, 342ff.; J. J. van Oosterzee, *Voor Kerk en Theologie* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1875–79), I, 94; A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1894), II, 71ff.

Bavinck, in referring to the presence of the logic of faith and self in 'modern times' provides citations of the writers to whom he is referring. They include Isaak Dorner (whose German publication date for *Glaubenslehre* is 1879), P. Lange, J.J. van Oosterzee, and Kuyper. Dorner, one of the most prominent of mediation theologians already treated in this chapter; Lange, a student of Schleiermacher and successor to Dorner as theologian at Bonn; Oosterzee, a Dutch professor at Utrecht and well-known preacher who studied Schleiermacher and, as Bavinck puts it, learned to include 'the Christian consciousness among the sources of dogmatics',[197] all published their works on theology, self, and faith decades prior to the 1893-4 publications of the *Encyclopaedie* and Bavinck's *Prolegomena*. The implication is that both Bavinck and Kuyper drew particularly from theologians in the tradition of Schleiermacher to develop the logic of faith, self, and revelation so-presented—a conclusion supportive of the previous claim that Bavinck especially learned Schleiermacher both indirectly and directly in his early career at Leiden.

---

[196] *RD* 1.567.
[197] *RD* 1.79.

Conclusion

What has the father of modern protestant theology in Berlin to do with the nineteenth-century codifier of *gereformeerd* theology in Kampen? The answer: much, in every way—at least per their relationship in the nineteenth-century Dutch academy. Schleiermacher's impact upon the Netherlands, while slow to start, was consistent. It is especially noteworthy that despite the multiple bifurcations of modernist-oriented *hervormde* schools, the thread that unites them is their relationship to at least one of the emphases first inaugurated by Schleiermacher (Groningen: the feeling of dependence; the Modern school: Christocentrism as *Zentraldogma*; the Ethical: piety and practical theology). The German mediation theologies were the medium of travel between Schleiermacher and the Netherlands. And, in turn, Leiden was the context where the crucible of mediation theologies (the Groningen influenced professor van Oordt, Scholten, and Chantepie de la Saussaye) forged distinct mediation theologies for the Netherlands. After writing on Schleiermacher for his doctoral *scriptie* and contextualizing ethics according to Schleiermacher's revitalization of the field in the modern era, Bavinck immediately turned to mediation theologians and the grammar of consciousness and conscience in his early career publications as lecturer in Kampen.

The Kingdom, Conscience, and Consciousness: The Early Years

According to the previous chapter, various modern theological schools in the Netherlands in the second half of the nineteenth-century mediated much of Bavinck's indirect interaction with Schleiermacher's motifs. Schleiermacher was a primary influence on both the Dutch Modern and Ethical schools after their interactions with the German mediation theologies. They became, in their own form, Dutch *Vermittlungstheologen*. Bavinck, while a committed student (and critic) of these schools, also became a student of Schleiermacher's texts directly. During his doctorate, he paid special attention to Schleiermacher's use of Scripture and his revitalization of theological ethics, and an openness to modern theologies is evidenced in Bavinck's prior home life through his father, Jan, and in his favorite lecturer in Kampen, Adriaan Steketee. Consequently, apparent throughout Bavinck's early career is the transmission of many of the emphases of the so-called 'consciousness theology' lineage into his own corpus.[1]

---

[1] Bavinck, it must be said, was critical of the general dogmatic method amongst the theologians of consciousness, as he understood them. This quote epitomizes his reading of this tradition containing both agreement and disagreement: 'Hence for dogmatic work personal faith is imperative. In that respect, the statement that every dogmatics is a confession of one's own faith is perfectly true. But this is something very different from what, since Schleiermacher, has been understood by the theology of consciousness. *For this theology denies that in nature or in Scripture there is a revelation that provides knowledge of God.* It thus severs theology, and particularly dogmatics, from all its objective connections, robs it of its own object, and then tries nevertheless to build up a kind of dogmatics from the material of one's own consciousness (mind, feelings, heart, conscience) without this being bound to anything objective'. *RD* 1.91. Emphasis added.

In consanguinity with the previous chapter's establishment of that historical relation between Schleiermacher and Bavinck, this chapter completes part I of this study by examining selections of the textual evidence of his early corpus regarding the adoption of the centralization of the subject in his theological-philosophical discourse. As expressed historically in chapter two, the evidence of Bavinck's early writings also suggests that Bavinck gave broad and consistent attention to the human subject, which is a tendency derived from the milieu of consciousness theologians first catalyzed in his time at Leiden and extended throughout the 1880s and 1890s. While interacting with the disciplines of dogmatics and theological ethics, his articles in the 1880s particularly are centered on the fact of self-consciousness, the concept of 'personality' applied to both God and humans, the relation between sin and God-consciousness, the conscience and the inner-self, self-knowledge, the empirical/transcendental ego relation, and the epistemic modesty or self-understanding of the culturally situated dogmatician. Also, a turn to the subject is manifest more generally in (i) Bavinck's categorizing the entirety of his thought-world into subjects and objects, (ii) emphatic proclamations of the subjectivity of each interpreter and the failure of 'presuppositionless' science,[2] (iii) and a corresponding emphasis on the 'whole person'.[3] This chapter, more specifically focuses on the adoption of consciousness-theological motifs,

---

[2] See *RD* 1.37-46, 49-51, 69-70, 170-4, 421-2, 541-5.

[3] For example, points (ii) and (iii) combined in *RD* 1.43: 'For it is impossible, just to mention an example, to base the sciences in general… on facts that are accepted as certain by all without distinction. It is precisely the facts about which there is immediately a difference of opinion; everyone observes them through his own eyes and his own pair of lenses. To the degree that the sciences lie closer to the center and cease to be merely formal, the subjectivity and personality of the scientific investigator play a larger role. It is totally futile to silence this subjectivity, to deny to faith, religious and moral convictions, to metaphysics and philosophy their influence on scientific study. One may attempt it but will never succeed because the scholar can never be separated from the human being. And therefore it is much better to see to it that the scientific investigator can be as much as possible a normal human being, that he not bring false presuppositions into his work but be a man of God completely equipped for every good work. To that end the knowledge that God has revealed of himself in his Word is serviceable; it does not hinder but rather advances scientific study and research'.

unfolding this fact in two movements to show only that Bavinck made his own, idiosyncratic 'turn to the subject' in his early career.[4]

(i) In interpreting the texts of his early corpus three specific claims arise pertaining to Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher (first delivered through Schleiermacher's progeny) and his adoption of consciousness emphases: (a) he consistently approaches Schleiermacher with an attitude of critical appreciation rather than mere demonization or exaltation; (b) his early theology adopts the conceptual grammar of modern theologies in its emphasis on the human subject; (c) his arguments betray an imprecise and more generalized adaptation of said conceptual framework of subjectivity rather than a precise interest in Schleiermacher's direct arguments in particular. The final point, derivative from the content in claim (b), is the ground for the argument previewed briefly at the end of chapter one: that Bavinck's early career, while influenced by Schleiermacher, contains a weaker degree of specific appropriation than does his later career corpus. His early corpus does indeed contain a 'turn to the subject' especially in the early 80s. It is not one, however, that offers an appropriation of Schleiermacher's arguments directly but discloses an atmosphere effected by Schleiermacher's progeny and his conceptual lineage.

(ii) In second place is a subsequent and brief examination of Bavinck's critique of Schleiermacher. And while launching from his early corpus, the critique need not remain limited to his early career due to the fact of its consistent form from the first to final editions of the *RD* amid his wider corpus. Entering into part II of this thesis, this brief elucidation will offer an interesting possibility achieved by way of negation—namely, that Bavinck's interest in Schleiermacher lay in the centralization of the subject in theology/philosophy far more than in

---

[4] The verb 'turn' does not indicate a reversal of a previous perspective but simply the development of an emphasis on subjectivity, as was the case in his broad philosophical milieu.

Schleiermacher's material dogmatics.[5] As previewed in the introduction, scientific theology arises when theological rationality develops a grammar derived from various philosophies. Bavinck appropriated Schleiermacher's philosophical grammar most especially in his later corpus, but his early corpus does indeed contain a prophetic voice unto that end.

3.1. The Subject and the Early Years

In June of 1880, Bavinck defended his thesis on Zwingli's ethics and remained in Kampen, where he had spent his final year as a student at home, to prepare for his theological examinations in the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. In the very same year, his early publications revealed a propensity for a vast engagement with modern theology and philosophy.

While preparing for ordination, he published his first periodicals in the *De Vrije Kerk* including '*Het Geweten*' (The Conscience, 1881) and '*Het Rijk Gods, het hoogste goed*' (The Kingdom of

---

[5] Bavinck's critique of Schleiermacher's dogmas is extensive (see section 3.2 for the fundamentals). Brief examples include his complaints that Schleiermacher determines dogma to be above all else a 'pronouncement and determination of the church' (*RD* 1.30) rather than true speech about God, that 'dogmas for him became accounts of subjective mental states' (1.35), that he separates 'dogmatics from apologetics' (1.47), treats angels like 'fairies and elves' (2.446), subjects 'the dogma of Trinity to severe criticism' (2.195), treats original sin very differently 'from what Scripture and the church says' (3.116), thinks that the doctrine of Christ's two natures 'has lost all religious value' (3.259), encourages the idea that 'Christianity is no longer dependent' on its founder (3.284), argues that 'Jesus only appeared to be dead' (3.440), confuses the Holy Spirit with a 'community spirit' (4.90), makes justification 'dependent on the new life in communion with Christ' turning the act of God into a work (4.199), claims atomistically and without reference to the means of grace that 'the church takes shape through "the coming together of regenerate individuals"' (*CF* §115, *RD* 4.331), denies the 'special calling to the apostolic office by Jesus' (4.333), and ambiguously leaves 'undecided what is primary and most important in the sacraments' (4.471). Further, Bavinck critiques Schleiermacher's concept of redemption here: 'though Schleiermacher adopted the terminology of the church's theology and also took over the doctrine of the three offices, it soon became clear that at many points he deviated from the teaching of Scripture and the church, did not do sufficient justice to sin and the sense of guilt, and viewed redemption too one-sidedly from the aesthetic perspective as harmony with the world' (3.354).

God, the Highest Good, 1881).[6] As constructive works, both engaged primarily with theologians like Rothe, Vinet, Chantepie de la Saussaye, and Dorner. These two essays, in addition to *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk* (The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church, 1888) and *De Algeemene Genade* (Common Grace, 1894), form the conceptual norms of Bavinck's theology that remained consistent throughout his career.[7] Those theological concepts include much of what is presented directly in the titles: The Kingdom of God, common grace, conscience, and catholicity. He regularly attends, amid his theological construction, to the epistemic and the metaphysical. His early theology gives primary place to exploring the subjective implications determined by the fact of the objective kingdom.

Accordingly, from the moment of his Leiden departure, he filters the logic of his constructive theology through the lens of a subject/object duality thereby consistently mapping his thoughts permitting the representational relation between self and world. He does so self-consciously seeking conceptual unity as a theologian post-Kant.[8] How does, for example, the Kingdom relate to the human self in its activity of unification? The logic of his argument is that a redeemed self is an organic microcosm and prime example of the objective, unified

---

[6] Bavinck, '*Het Geweten* I-II', *De Vrije Kerk* (Januari-Februari 1881), 1. 27-37; 2. 49-58. ET: 'Conscience', trans. Nelson Kloosterman, *TBR* 6 (2015), 113-126. '*Het Rijks Gods, het hoogste goed* I-V', *De Vrije Kerk* (April-Augustus 1881) 4.185-192; 5. 224-234; 6.271-277; 7.305-314; 8.353-360. The English translation will be cited normally except when the translation needs alteration. In these instances, the citation will include both the original and English.

[7] Bavinck, *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk: Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1888). ET: 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', trans. John Bolt, *CTJ* 27 (1992): 220-251. Bavinck, *De Algeemene Genade: Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 6 December 1894* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1894). ET: 'Common Grace', trans. Raymond C. van Leeuwen, *CTJ* 24, no. 1 (1989): 35–65.

[8] As he would later put it: 'All that is objective can be approached only from the vantage point of the subject: the "thing in itself" is unknowable and does not exist for us. The world of sounds has reality only to those who hear; the world of ideas is real only to the thinking mind. It is futile to attempt to prove the objective existence of colors to the blind. All life and all knowledge is based on a kind of agreement between subject and object'. *RD* 1.586. This comment previews his argument for the centrality of faith in any account of the unity of self and world, which is part of the argument of chapter four.

Kingdom to come. Where is common grace? Common grace is first found in the fact of consciousness, where the self is the substratum of the possibility of all knowing and willing, of science, art, and ethics. How is Christianity catholic in scope? The catholicity of Christianity first penetrates, he argues, the human personality in its power to affect everything it touches before moving out from self to world.

The persistent filtering of major theological concepts through the subject reflects the fact of his education in the idiosyncratic mediation theologies.[9] The argument is not that these essays betray a particular adoption of Schleiermacherian theology or any particular mediation theology *per se*, but an appropriation of the key emphases of modern theologies (as he interpreted it), which were transmitted especially from Schleiermacher to his Dutch theological context—namely, a centralization of the human subject in a world-view of subject and objects, self and world. And, accordingly, one finds a surprising (for his secessionist context) repetition of interaction with Schleiermacher particularly in addition to the theologians of the mediation tradition throughout his early corpus. This fact leads to the first claim of this section.

(a) *He esteems Schleiermacher with critical appreciation without mere demonization or exaltation.* The second periodical in his first year after the completion of his doctorate, 'The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good' was originally an oration to the Student Corps at Kampen in

---

[9] Other scholars have made this point yet in a more limited form: Cornelius van der Kooi, 'The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, Especially in H. Bavinck', 107-108. Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*, 294-8; 'Religion as Revelation? The Development of Herman Bavinck's View from a Reformed Orthodox to a Neo-Calvinist Approach', *TBR* 4 (2013): 9-31. See also George Harinck, 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion', 62. S. Meijers also argues that Bavinck's sensitivity to the role of the subject is distinct from other Reformed theologies in his tradition and derivative of the Ethical theology. S. Meijers, *Objectiviteit en Existentialiteit: Een onderzoek naar hun verhouding in de theologie van Herman Bavinck en in door hem beïnvloede concepties*, 440-1, 446-7.

February of 1881 and published in multiple editions of *De Vrije Kerk* that summer. There are two points to highlight from that article that provide a starting point for this claim.

The first is that Bavinck begins with the same observation regarding the discipline of ethics with which he began his dissertation on the ethics of Zwingli released just a year prior: 'It is undoubtedly a heartening phenomenon that the science identified as Ethics seems to be enjoying an unheralded resurgence of interest, compared to former times'.[10] In its earlier form in his dissertation, Bavinck adds an explanation for such resurgence: 'Schleiermacher, whose powerful influence on the whole field of theological science is remarkable, also gave moral theology a new direction and a higher path'.[11]

This 'higher path', refers to the very point that Bavinck is building upon in this later essay: that ethics cannot be merely an account of the *ought* of human action, a description of duties per authoritative command (divine-command), but must include law and duty within a framework that recognizes a final cause, an ultimate good, and a corresponding character of virtue. This ethic moves the subject above the register of statutory law. Virtue is virtuous in the light of a clear conception of the (ultimate) good, the *summum bonum*. To treat ethics as reflection on obligation, duty, and action is to miss the purpose of human action. One must understand 'moral goods' in their essence, he argues, and situate the science of thinking about right action within the given purpose of the moral—the realization of the Kingdom of God.[12] It is to Schleiermacher, again, in this essay that he turns to as the modern foundation for the recovery of 'moral goods' and a corresponding doctrine of virtues:

---

[10] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 133.

[11] In the second sentence of his dissertation on Zwingli he writes, 'En Schleiermacher, wiens machtige invloed op het gehele gebied der theologische wetenschap merkbaar is, gaf ook aan de theologische Moraal eene nieuwe richting en eene hoogere vlucht'. Bavinck, *De ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli*, 1.

[12] The thesis of 'KGHG' glimpses the conceptual motifs which remain consistent for Bavinck's theology throughout his career: 'I shall proceed to share with you a glimpse of the glory of our catholic, Christian faith, as I speak to you about the Kingdom of God as the highest good'. 'KGHG', 135.

Perhaps the most influential theologian of the nineteenth century was Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was both deeply misunderstood and too highly esteemed. Yet it was he who identified that above-mentioned flaw in the earlier view of Ethics and ensured a fixed place in this discipline for the "doctrine of virtues" (*Güterlehre*). In this way he contributed a complete revision and an enduring benefit to the discipline of Ethics.[13]

Yet even more important for the first claim is that Bavinck places Schleiermacher's deserved reception within a dialectic of worth ('deeply misunderstood and too highly esteemed') that seeks balance between the two nineteenth-century extremes: demonization and exaltation. His polarizing construal and choice of a third way is derivative of the second point to be drawn from this essay. He offers a precise account of his estimation of Schleiermacher's value through the citation of a secondary source. He writes: 'For evaluating our perspective regarding Schleiermacher, one might find the article written about him by Nesselmann in *Der Beweis des Glaubens* 5 to be helpful'.[14] Bavinck concedes basic agreement with R. Nesselmann, a German pastor at a St. Mary's Church in an undisclosed German locale, and his 'Schleiermachers Werthschätzung. Vorgetragen bei Schleiermachers Jubelfeier in der Aula des Elbinger Gymnasiums' (Schleiermacher's Appraisal/Valuation: Presented at Schleiermacher's

---

[13] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 134. Bavinck's perception of the significance of Schleiermacher's ethics anticipates contemporary scholarship. So, Hans-Joachim Birkner: 'without a doubt, Schleiermacher's philosophical ethics represents his most important achievement, and in the history of ethics constitutes a completely original project'. And Bavinck's own adaptation of the history of *summum bonum* in correspondence to the modern emphasis on duty and command is central in Schleiermacher's work: 'One of Schleiermacher's main goals as an ethical theorist is to integrate what he regards as the one-sided approaches of ancient and modern ethics—to bring together the teleological doctrines of good and virtue on the one hand with a deontological doctrine of duty on the other. As he notes in his Introduction to the *Brouillon zur Ethik* (1805/6): "With the ancients, the highest good and virtue; with the moderns, virtue and duty. These [latter] two are in opposition: if virtue is given, duty stops; as long as one must inculcate duty, virtue is not yet there" (WA II, 84; see also 256, 555)'. Birkner is cited in Robert Louden, 'Introduction', in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, ed. Robert Louden, trans. Louise Adey Huish (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), vii, ix.

[14] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 134, fn. 1.

Jubilee in the Auditorium of Elbinger Gymnasium), published in 1869.[15] Bavinck uses Nesselmann's article to affirm a third way beyond demonization or exaltation. Nesselmann argues first that Schleiermacher, 'a truly great man', has taught 'so much to so many'. Yet, 'because lesser people always assess a great man only in a small portion (because their horizon does not extend far enough) they judge the whole man subsequently per this small portion and, therefore, always judge him one-sidedly'. But, he argues, 'Schleiermacher was so rare a talent that he protruded off the procrustean bed of every theological party like King Saul above his people, namely, by the height of his whole head'.[16]

Nevertheless, he goes on, 'we find [today] on the one hand a blind worship [of Schleiermacher]; on the other hand a thoroughgoing disrespect and in the middle a level-headed, moderate appraisal'.[17] He is recognized as a 'gift from above' (*als Gabe von oben*), as positively Christian, and yet an overly subjectivist 'dowry of his age' (*Mitgift seines Zeitalters*).[18] There is indeed an 'excessive worship of him… [which] has gone too far, [in] that someone has proposed even a church service, a service of worship for him'.[19] So Nesselmann urges: 'I would like to allow myself to recall the words of Scripture: "You shall worship the Lord your

---

[15] R. Nesselmann, 'Schleiermachers Werthschätzung. Vorgetragen bei Schleiermachers Jubelfeier in der Aula des Elbinger Gymnasiums' in *Der Beweis des Glaubens: Monatsschrift zur Begründung und Verteidigung der Christlichen Wahrheit fur Gebildete* 5, eds. O. Andreae and C. Brachmann (January-December 1869), 103-115.

[16] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 104. Original: 'Denn von einem wirklich großen Mann übersehen kleine Leute immer nur ein klein Stück, weil ihr gesichtkreis nicht weit genug reicht; aus diesem kleinen Stück beurtheilen sie aber nachträglich den ganzen Mann, und beurtheilen ihn daher immer einseitig. Schleiermacher war von so seltner Begabung, daß er über das prokrustesbett einer theologischen parteistellung ebensomeit hervorragte wie König Saul über sein Volk, nämlich um seines ganzen Hauptes länge'. The comparison to King Saul is perhaps a pun pertaining to Schleiermacher's intellectual stature in juxtaposition to his actual height, which is thought to be less than that of Saul.

[17] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 110. Original: 'Wir finden auf der einen Seite eine blinde Verehrung, auf der entgegengesetzten vollständige Mißachtung und in der Mitte besonnene, maßvolle Werthschätzung'.

[18] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 110.

[19] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 111. Original: 'Die maßlose Verehrung für ihn ist in dieser letzten Zeit so weit gegangen, daß man sogar eine kirchliche Feier, einen Gottesdienst für ihn beantragt hat'.

God and Him only will you serve". The house of God opened to honor a man—this excitement must not be desired'.[20]

Yet, on the other hand: 'in addition to the blind worship of Schleiermacherian theology, we encounter, but in more recent times, a more thorough disregard'.[21] He characterizes F.C. Baur as the one with the grandest contempt for Schleiermacher. Nesselmann proclaims that both blind worship and the failure to see Schleiermacher's value are equally myopic: 'Baur is a biased historian who brings his preconceived opinion into the work of history… he speaks of all modern theologians contemptuously except for himself… this rejection of Schleiermacher has no sound, solid foundation'.[22]

But for Nesselmann, there was a third way, a *via media*, which he called 'moderate valuation'—a 'sober-minded prudence about Schleiermacher'. This agreement is found 'amongst nearly all believing theologians':

> That we are in grateful recognition of [Schleiermacher's] highest spiritual gifts, of his deep Christian sense, that with his theology a new epoch has arisen, that he defeated the vulgar rationalism, and added to the recent strengthening of the consciousness of faith giving the first great encouragement; except that we, however, regarding the full appreciation of the essence and work of Christ do not agree with him and, therefore, must leave his idea behind necessarily.[23]

---

[20] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 111. Original: 'Da möchte ich mir doch erlauben, an das Wort der Schrift zu erinnern: "Du sollst Gott deinen Herrn anbeten und ihm allein dienen"'.

[21] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermacher's Werthschätzung*', 111. Original: 'Neben der blinden Verehrung der Schleiermacher'schen Theologie begegnen wir aber in neuerer Zeit auch einer vollständigen Mißachtung'.

[22] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermacher's Werthschätzung*', 111-112. Original: 'Baur ist Tendenzhistoriker, der eine vorgefasste Meinung in die Geschichte hineinträgt… Hier spricht er von allen neueren Theologen verächtlich außer von sich… daß diese Verwerfung Schleiermachers keine gesunde, solide Basis hat'.

[23] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermacher's Werthschätzung*', 112. Original: '… die in dankbarer Anerkennung wie seiner hohen Geistesgaben, so seines tief christlichen Sinnes, eingeständig sind, daß in der Theologie mit ihm eine neue Epoche an hebt, daß er den vulgären Rationalismus besiegt und zu der neueren Kräftigung des Glaubensbewußtseins die erste große Anregung gegeben, daß wir jedoch die volle Würdigung des Wesens und Wirkens

Nevertheless, because of Schleiermacher's deep commitment to Christ, even that which departed from the faith 'has returned many to the faith'. 'Schleiermacher', he argues, 'enjoyed a rich spiritual posterity. But many have departed from him, who, after, follow a different direction'.[24] Even in finding a new route, however, they would 'rarely lament' his work and his deep piety because he led the people 'to piety'. Most of all: 'But this we may be permitted to say with full confidence: that no theology of such importance has arisen in recent decades. If he had not exercised his mental powers, then we would not have gotten from his studies such wide and expansive rays of hope'.[25]

From Nesselmann's comments and Bavinck's affirmation of them, one is reminded of Bavinck's fellow Reformed confessional dogmatician at Princeton, Charles Hodge (d. 1878), and his similar estimation of Schleiermacher's value. In the second volume of Hodge's *Systematic Theology* he comments on the 'man of piety':

> When in Berlin the writer often attended Schleiermacher's church. The hymns to be sung were printed on slips of paper and distributed at the doors. They were always evangelical and spiritual in an eminent degree, filled with praise and gratitude to our Redeemer. Tholuck said that Schleiermacher, when sitting in the evening with his family, would often say, "*Hush, children: let us sing a hymn of praise to Christ.*" Can we doubt that he is singing those praises now? To whomsoever Christ is God, St. John assures us, Christ is a Savior.[26]

Christi bei ihm noch nicht antreffen und daher über seine Anschauung nothwendig noch haben hinausgehen müssen'.

[24] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 113. Original: 'Schleiermacher erfreute sich geistig einer reichen Nachkommenschaft. Viele sind aber von ihm ausgegangen, die nachher einer andern Richtung folgten'.

[25] R. Nesselmann, '*Schleiermachers Werthschätzung*', 113. Original: 'Aber das dürfen wir wohl mit Zuversicht sagen, daß kein Theolog von Bedeutung in den letzten Jahrzehnten aufgetreten ist, der nicht seine Denkkraft an Schleiermacher geübt, nicht aus seinem Studium weite und große Lichtblicke gewonnen hätte'.

[26] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 440. His final comment intends to alleviate suspicion within his own context that Schleiermacher was not a Christian.

Schleiermacher, Hodge argues, was the most 'interesting' and 'important' theologian of the nineteenth-century and, yet, 'was not and could not be self-consistent… [but] reverence for Christ he maintained all his life'.[27] Bavinck's estimation of Schleiermacher in his all too brief comment 'deeply misunderstood and too highly esteemed', is an encapsulation of Nesselmann's third way. Schleiermacher is neither to be demonized nor disregarded nor wholly adopted but something else: esteemed, appreciated, and carefully examined—a requirement of a Reformed catholic methodology. Bavinck, the chief dogmatician of the modern Dutch Reformed context therein, shared the same opinion regarding Schleiermacher as Hodge, the chief dogmatician of the Princetonians.

Bavinck echoed this estimation throughout his early career. In 1883 in his address on the science of theology Bavinck offered a typical presentation of his appreciation for Schleiermacher's attack on what Bavinck calls the 'cold contemplative intellect' of rationalism and supernaturalism and his apt offer, in response, of an 'organic unity' in the theological endeavor: the re-discovery of the praxis of theology.[28] He spoke of Schleiermacher using referents like 'thankful' and 'original thinker', and, in addition, that 'we even want to gladly acknowledge' (*Wij willen zelfs gaarne erkennen*) the 'truth' (*waarheid*) of Schleiermacher. He praises him for re-awakening the necessity of the work of the Spirit on the heart of the dogmatician.[29] While critical of both Schleiermacher and Kant, Schleiermacher's 'feeling', Bavinck argued in

---

[27] Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II. 372.
[28] Bavinck, *De wetenschap der H. Godgeleerheid* (Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1883), 42: '… de koude verstandbeschouwing van Rationalisten en Supranaturalisten…'.
[29] Bavinck, *De wetenschap der H. Godgeleerheid*, 15. And a decade later, in addressing the attempt to suppress the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit by making it an argument of the intellect, Bavinck argues that 'various factors have contributed, however, to a partial rehabilitation of this doctrine. Kant's critique of rationalism, "the proof of the spirit and of power" to which Lessing appealed, the romanticism of Jacobi and Schleiermacher, plus the sterility of apologetics, generated the conviction that the validation of the Christian religion must be grounded in the faith of the church'. *RD* 1.585.

1887, understood better than Kant that religious life is not a 'cold moralism' (*koude moralisme*). Schleiermacher's 'feeling' transformed religion instead to a 'warm hearth' (*warmen haard*).[30]

In a journal entry during his studies at Leiden, in fact, Bavinck turns to the certainty of feeling (*gevoel*) on one occasion when he claims that while 'overcome by doubt' he maintained faith because of 'a *gevoel* of inner truth revealed through Christ'.[31] While there is no indication of a specific relation to Schleiermacher in this episode, his turn to a 'feeling of inner truth' amid doubts portends the explicit commendations he offers regarding Schleiermacher throughout the next decade.

Most striking amongst these later commendations is that Bavinck compared his estimation of Schleiermacher's value to his esteem for Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. Schleiermacher led, he wrote, to a 'reformation' by 'taking a stand in the living faith of the Redeemer' and, in doing so, 'revived the principle of reformation' by rising above 'the opposition of rationalism and supernaturalism'.[32] Even with Schleiermacher's errors, one is not to disregard but learn: '[Schleiermacher and the *Vermittlungstheologen*] have taught us by their example to avoid the errors' they committed. 'We come after them and stand upon their shoulders to see further than they could see'.[33] So, his method:

---

[30] Bavinck, 'Het dualisme in de Theologie', *De Vrije Kerk* 13 (Januari 1887) 1. 11-39, 17.

[31] H. Bavinck Archive, 'Dagboekjes', *Historisch Documentatiecentrum*, *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/16: '… een gevoel van de innige waarheid, door Christus geopenbaard'.

[32] Bavinck, 'De hedendaagsche wereldbeschouwing', *De Vrije Kerk* 9 (Oktober 1883) 10.435-461, 458. 'Dat was het reformatorische in Schleiermacher, dat hij, positie nemende in het levend geloof aan den Verlosser, weer het beginsel der Hervorming herleven deed en daarin ver boven de tegenstelling van rationalisme en supranaturalisme zich verhief'. His comments are also guarded. He, in the same section, suggests that Schleiermacher made 'grievous errors' and argues that his influence would have been greater if he had not set aside so much of the principles of Luther and Calvin's reformation. He evokes an attitude of lament over Schleiermacher. Bavinck is unable to stand as close to Schleiermacher's 'reformation' as he desires.

[33] Bavinck, 'De hedendaagsche wereldbeschouwing', 458.

With Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli we differentiate that which is essential and truly reformed, from that of the spirit of the age. We do not return to them after the fact, to repristinate them and their work as much as to respect their value in general… but through their teaching, better than even they, to hold fast to and speak out a reformation principle… not to return to them but to go forward from them is our motto.[34]

Encapsulated here is a precise example of Bavinck's Reformed irenic, historical methodology. For Schleiermacher has shoulders upon which the Reformed dogmatician must stand in order to see a further, clearer ('truly Reformed') path—but stand on his shoulders one must. Accordingly, it is with both the estimation of Schleiermacher's value as a fact in the nineteenth-century and a personal, critical esteem that Bavinck, in his *Prolegomena*, argues that Schleiermacher's influence upon theology is incalculable and unavoidable:

With [Schleiermacher's] three ideas—the immediate consciousness of the self as the source of religion, the community as the necessary form of its existence, and the person of Christ as the center of Christianity—Schleiermacher has exerted *incalculable* influence. All subsequent theology is *dependent* on him. 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.[35]

(b) *Bavinck's early theology especially adopts the grammar and emphasis derived from the modern philosophical and theological traditions he studied—namely, theology's centralization of the human subject.* Bavinck's early theology gives primary place to exploring the subjective implications of the fact of the objective Kingdom of God. As he puts it in *RD* 1, modern philosophy directs theologians to

---

[34] Bavinck, 'De hedendaagsche wereldbeschouwing', 458-459. Original: 'Zooals bij Calvijn en Luther en Zwingli, onderscheiden wij ook bij hen tusschen het wezenlijke, het eeuwige en dus reformatorische, en den tijdgeest, die door hen sprak. Niet dus om tot achter hen terug te gaan, te repristineeren en hen en hun arbeid als van geenerlei waarde te achten, maar integendeel, om door hen geleerd, beter dan zij nog, het reformatorisch beginsel uit te spreken en vast te houden en toe te passen dat is het wat ons van hen scheidt. Niet tot achter hen terug, maar boven hen vooruit is onze leuze'. Also, *RD* 4.560: 'Through Schleiermacher, who not only rejected the doctrine of Roman Catholics but also that of Socinians and so forth, and recognized the teachings of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin as all being orthodox, there sprang up a movement to maintain the Lord's Supper as an objective means of grace and to ascribe to it a strengthening of the believer's life-fellowship with Christ'.
[35] *RD* 1.165-66.

'view salvation more from the side of the subject'.[36] This emphasis segments throughout his work in the treatment of at least three relations: (1) the conscience and consciousness; (2) the Kingdom of God and self-consciousness; (3) and the relation between objective and subjective catholicity.

Before briefly exampling these three relations, it is worth saying more about Bavinck's view of the history of the turn to the subject in philosophy and religion to see precisely where his own adaptation lies. Before Schleiermacher and mediation theologies, Bavinck traces this turn first in historical order to rationalism and its simultaneous counterpart pietism: 'running along parallel lines with pietism was rationalism. Both—each in its own way—undermined the authority of orthodoxy, by transferring the point of gravity to the human subject'.[37] Bavinck argues, instead, for a balancing of perspectives in the unity of subject and object but even this is derivative of his modern philosophical milieu. In Bavinck's historiography, both rationalism and pietism are precursors to what he calls the 'triumph of philosophy' over dogmatics in the 'turn to the subject'.

Lutheran dogmatics, for example, 'had entirely fallen under' the influence of rational philosophy. Yet, it is Kant he suggests that 'totally undermined' rationalism and its use in dogmatics. After Kant, theology turns away from intellectualism (reason) and toward subjective 'feeling' and 'consciousness'—an alternative 'turn' to the subject than that of rationalism. He traces the origins of this fact to figures like Jacobi and Shaftesbury where immediate feeling is the path to a non-sensible world. But, in this same section, he asserts that Schleiermacher above all has 'exerted incalculable influence' and that 'his influence is felt in all theological orientations' including confessionalism.[38] The point, therefore, is not simply to

---

[36] *RD* 1.107.
[37] *RD* 1.162.
[38] *RD* 1.166.

highlight the presence of a turn to the subject in general in Bavinck's early corpus (which is also a fact of rationalism, pietism, romanticism, and modern philosophy, per Bavinck's historical interpretation). Rather, it is to highlight a more specific emphasis on feeling and the immediate consciousness derivative of Schleiermacher and his influence on the Dutch Ethical theologians. Bavinck defends this specific turn here in direct association to Schleiermacher:

> And through and after Schleiermacher most theologians have arrived at the insight that religion is unique and can be known only in a manner corresponding to that uniqueness. While epistemology is always the same, it is nevertheless adapted to the object that is being considered in every science, and so in religion as well. By making this statement Christian theology indeed takes its starting point in the human subject. The accusation of subjectivism immediately launched against this position, however, is unwarranted and in any case premature. For, in the first place, in no area of knowledge and science is there any other starting point.[39]

(1) *Conscience as an aspect of the consciousness of self as dependent self.* Bavinck's earliest constructive theological publication, *Het Geweten*, focuses on moral theology and specifically on the moral consciousness through interaction with the primary theme of the Ethical school, the conscience, adopted from Vinet and Chantepie de la Saussaye. This text includes interaction with texts like Rothe's *Theologische Ethik*.[40] Bavinck makes his argument by situating the moral consciousness in league with a larger, grander vision of the ultimate good, the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is the realization of the purpose of God's self-manifestation and a *telos* for the human moral consciousness.

Bavinck's publication of 'The Conscience' comes just before his first sustained reflection on the Ethical Theology. In an addition to the contents of the previous chapter, he describes *Ethisch* Theology accordingly:

> The foundation, the essence of church and theology both, of the whole of Christendom is, therefore, ethical. But what is that? What is the criterion and standard of what ethical is? The ethical movement answers: there is such a

---

[39] *RD* 1.563.
[40] Richard Rothe, *Theologische Ethik*, Vol. II, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Wittenberg: Zimmerman, 1867–71).

143

criterion in the possession of mankind. The human has an organ in order to know the truth, in order to distinguish what is and is not revealed… that organ is the human himself in his essence, in the conscience. *The conscience is the root of human personality, the self-consciousness in its inseparable dependence on the God-consciousness.* As the human self he belongs to another than this transitory world; the power, therefore, of eternal, metaphysical truths with the innate categories of good and evil, eternity and temporality, true and false, fact and shadow. The conscience is the supernatural become natural. Therefore, the human is connected to the supernatural. All revelation must, therefore, be tested not according to something alien… but according to something whereby the connection [to the supernatural] is [present]. The supernatural in humanity is connected to the supernatural outside of humanity. The conscience is, briefly and concisely "*le critère de la vérité*". Ethics is that which corresponds with, meets the demands, needs, and aspirations of the conscience.[41]

Much of this description is reflected precisely in his own constructive theology of the moral consciousness. Conscience, as a moral consciousness dependent upon being in relation with God, is the root of the human personality, the center, and the location of the revelation of both the self to the self and the developing God-consciousness, a conceptual derivative of general revelation. To establish this line, he begins with the literal 'knowing-with' definition of conscience. Conscience (from the Greek *suneidos*) first appeared in history as a terminological indicator of a communal awareness of the moral order (a becoming aware together), which the French language reflects in the fact that the term *conscience* continues to retain the broader meaning of general 'consciousness', he argues. In this wide connotation, conscience is yet to refer specifically to individual moral conscience (as an inner voice), and this latter use of the term is a late development. Reflecting on the idea of the conscience reveals a consistent reality of a mere moral awareness developing in the wider communal consciousness as creatures of a moral order interacting with one another in the world.[42] And further, knowing-with, is an indication of the relation by nature between Creator (God-consciousness) and creaturely self-consciousness.

---

[41] Bavinck, 'Gereformeerde Theologie' *De Vrije Kerk* 7 (November 1881): 497-509, 504.
[42] Bavinck, 'Conscience', 113-114.

Conscience, he argues, first emerged in the rupture of God-consciousness (*Godsbewustzijn*) and self-consciousness (*Zelfbewustzijn*).[43] Prior to the Fall, self-consciousness was not dissociated from God-consciousness, neither of which could dissociate from the corporate consciousness normed by the fact of creation. To be aware of self is to be aware of a created, dependent self in communion with the rest of creation as God's possession, a porous self. The reality of the primacy of the notion of an individualized conscience is the result of the power of sin rupturing the self-consciousness from a consciousness of God as creator and Lord. The space for conscience is opened in the crevice of the Creator-creature relation.

In this bifurcation, the primacy of individual, rebellious desire gives rise to its need for such individualized moral guidance through that 'inner voice', which had no presence prior as an agent of conviction. A tendency develops in time, therefore, toward a particular, personal conscience that would first find expression through a communal 'guilt-consciousness'.[44] In the

---

[43] Bavinck, *Het Geweten*, 30. 'Conscience', 115.

[44] Bavinck's emphasis on the communal nature of the development of moral consciousness has mild bearings on the recent debate regarding Bavinck's position in relation to the Reformed Two-Kingdoms thesis advocated especially by David VanDrunen. This debate has largely taken place amongst North American theologians and particularly between VanDrunen and Nelson Kloosterman. Bavinck questions the possibility of a static moral consciousness that corresponds clearly to a universal, natural law ('universal' refers to the scope of the content of the moral conscience as a consistent manifestation across all populations, places, and times in the human subject as rational, invariable understanding of an objective universal, God-given moral law). 'The content of our conscience', he writes, 'is derived mostly from outside and, therefore, *differs* amongst different peoples. And even if the conscience does contain something 'common' or universal 'by nature'… 'it is very difficult to identify which duties are specifically necessary pronouncements of the conscience entailed innately and not received from the outside'. He adds: 'We always know the conscience only concretely, as it is historically formed within the family, state, and society, through religion, art, and science by all the moral authorities of a people'. Bavinck, to be sure, affirms the fact of nature and its revelation of *the* moral order even as an intuition but limits (while not wholly excluding) the epistemic possibilities for the human conscience to receive said moral order correctly due to the complexity of the embodied self in distinct histories under the curse of God. This move is first set in antithesis to a Kantian-framed religion that appeals to a rational universal access to moral imperatives as duty. Per Bavinck, the moral consciousness develops more in the experience of cultures, in relation to the contemporary movements of science and art, in the generalized rules of discourse and language, and grows up within specific communities like the

prior pre-lapsarian state, he argues, 'no voice arose within the person, which as it were, stood over against the person and could accuse the person. The possibility of conscience thus coincides with the possibility of sin…. For conscience is a consciousness of having acted, not uprightly, but wrongly, and is thus first and foremost negative, presupposing sin'.[45] Conscience is, therefore, a '*Symptom der Erkrankung*' (symptom of the disease).[46]

Bavinck's description of the Fall as the rupture in 'God- and self-consciousness' (*Gods-en zelfbewustzijn*) is a grammar adapted from his interactions with Schleiermacher, Vinet, and Chantepie de la Saussaye, and localized in his understanding of a particularly historical Adam and Eve. This manner of describing the origination of conscience is directly present in his description of the Ethical theology above. And it is a grammar re-constituted to his confessionalist context. He also uses as a synonym of the moral consciousness, the term 'personality', which he expresses directly in *RD* 2 is derived from modern theology (see Ch. 1).[47]

---

church. Thus, it operates according to a plethora of situated logics. 'Conscience', 122. Also, troubling to VanDrunen's attempt to co-opt Bavinck for his version of 'Reformed Two Kingdoms' theology is Bavinck's synthetic desires for Christ and culture and consistent denouncement of a bifurcated ethic. For example: 'The hope is not unfounded that one day with Christianity and culture, however much they are at odds now, a synthesis is possible. If God has truly come to us through Christ and in this century is the Provider and ruler of all things, then it is not only possible but also inevitable and it will appear in due time'. Bavinck, *Het Christendom*, 60. Original: 'de hoop niet ongegrond, dat er van Christendom en cultuur, hoezeer ze thans veelszins vijandig tegenover elkander staan, eene synthèse mogelijk is. Als God in Christus waarachtig tot ons is gekomen en Hij ook in deze eeuw de Onderhouder en regeerder aller dingen is, is ze niet alleen mogelijk, maar ook noodwendig en zal ze te harer tijd zeker aan het licht treden'. See David VanDrunen, 'The Kingship of Christ is Twofold: Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck', *CTJ* 1:45 (April 2010): 147-64; N. Kloosterman, 'A Response to "The Kingdom of God is Twofold"', *CTJ* 1:45 (April 2010): 174-5.

[45] *Het Geweten*, 31. 'Conscience', 116.

[46] *Het Geweten*, 31. 'Conscience', 116.

[47] 'Or to put it in modern theological language, in Scripture the personality and the absoluteness of God go hand in hand'. *RD* 2.34.

He describes Chantepie de la Saussaye's position on the account of Genesis three in his book on Chantepie de la Saussaye's theology just two years later: 'In regard to the first man…the old dogmatics, thought de la Saussaye…could not explain the origin of sin. Already, the tree of knowledge in itself did [provide] this feeling as it were. Yet a consciousness of the shattering of God, world, and self, brought him to distinguish God and world, and awoke in him an infinite desire'.[48] Chantepie de la Saussaye's point is that the disruption of 'God- and self-consciousness' in the activity of the Fall provides a necessary rupture in the history of the movement of humanity toward perfection. In tandem, the rupture of the consciousness of self and God, God and self, is also the rupture of self- and world-consciousness. For it is only in consciousness of the world that one can have consciousness of self and God. A dismembering of one relation is true, derivatively, of all relations. Such disruption is necessary for the possibility of moral action. The possibility of moral consciousness unto perfection assumes the activity of free will in the reality of moral choice, a reality not possible when God-, world-, and self-consciousness are unified and the human consciousness is unable to clearly distinguish the holiness of God from the human personality in its world (finite) context.

Chantepie de la Saussaye's account echoes Schleiermacher's account of 'losing the might of the human God-consciousness'.[49] As he does here, Schleiermacher first argued against a classical conception of the Fall and that human sinful nature preceded any original act of sin.[50]

---

[48] Bavinck, *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 28. 'Bij den eersten mensch moet daarom onderscheiden worden tusschen onschuld en heiligheid; de oude dogmatiek, meende De la Saussaye, verwarde dit en kon daarom het ontstaan der zonde niet verklaren. Adam was wel onschuldig, maar niet heilig. Wat hem vooral ontbrak, was de kennis, de bewustheid zijner zaligheid. Reeds de boom der kennis op zichzelf deed bij den mensch de als 't ware in het gevoel nog ééne bewustheid uiteenvallen in Gods-, wereld- en zelfbewustzijn, bracht hem tot onderscheiding van God en wereld, en wekte in hem op eene oneindige begeerte'.

[49] *CF* §72.3.

[50] *CF* §72.3: 'However one might also think of the first sin, one would always have to presuppose something of a sinful nature to be sinful in advance… Hence, it is necessary to adhere to the following: the notion that an alteration of human nature that has arisen by

As Nimmo summarizes Schleiermacher's concept of redemption, 'redemption is a continuation of the act of creation' thereby necessitating a model where the original sinful nature is derivative of the fact of creaturliness.[51] And Schleiermacher also suggests in *OR* that the account of the first man and woman is representative of the movement of humanity into the state of human consciousness itself.[52] But most important is Schleiermacher's Christology for the expression of the Adamic Fall. If Christ is the expression of the full unity of God- and self-consciousness, then the first humans are also representative of a rupture in that consciousness, assuming something of an original perfection that cannot be demonstrated in a historical account.[53] Sin, therein, is the capacity of the sensual nature to subvert the original God-consciousness. Bavinck understood Schleiermacher in this way: '[for Schleiermacher] sensuality is… regarded as the occasion and stimulus to sin'.[54] Both, original God-consciousness and the sensual subversion, are universal realities of human nature. The fact of God-consciousness/forgetfulness, therefore, has always existed in relation to the fact of the lower nature. As the former develops so the latter subverts. Bavinck, while condemning Schleiermacher's treatment of original sin, also uses Schleiermacher, citing *CF* §71-72, for his account of the unity of a sinful realm: 'As people are interconnected, so also are their sinful inclinations and deeds. Penetrating the infinite riches of all creation, sin also forms a realm that, animated by a single life principle, organizes itself in multiple forms and appearances'.[55] The point, nevertheless, is that Bavinck's expression that the Fall as the event of the rupture of God and self-consciousness betrays a Schleiermacherian lineage while maintaining his tradition's commitment to the historical Fall.

---

means of a first sin committed by the first human beings does not belong in the series of those propositions, which are expressions of our Christian self-consciousness'.

[51] Paul Nimmo, 'The Mediation of Redemption in Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*', *IJST* 5:2 (2003): 187-199, 188.

[52] *OR,* 119-120. See Katherine Faull, 'Schleiermacher and Transcendentalist Truth-Telling' in *Schleiermacher's Influences on American Thought and Religious Life (1835-1920)*, eds. Jeffrey A. Wilcox, Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 293-321.

[53] *CF* §61.5.

[54] *RD* 3.51. Cf. 3.88.

[55] *RD* 3.175-76.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, returning to Bavinck's argument, this consciousness of the moral condition is the revelation of 'the heart' to the human consciousness. In which the text refers to the fact, he argues, that conscience (the heart) is 'that domain within the person where self-consciousness occurs', conceptually arrived at by 'self-reflection' (*zichzelven inkeer*).[56] Self-consciousness, in other words, is made a conceptual reality when the self is objectified in the activity of self-reflection, a cognitive judgment (*beoordeeling*) about the human essence. It is discovered in a reflection on the contents of the inner-self, its representations, virtues and vices, and its moral condition or law, conscience. But, self-consciousness also refers to an unknown essence, an unprocessed awareness of a self that stands at the back of all human action. And conscience is an aspect of that consciousness that governs the human self. One does not create it, nor reflect on it originally, but is governed by it as moral consciousness.

Conscience is more, therefore, than what is commonly meant by the 'inner voice'. It is a self-consciousness (conceptually known by cognitive objectification or representation) of the unifying center of self (the heart), unveiling the essence of the human personality in its moral inferiority against one's consciousness of God. This does, indeed, include moral reflection on the contents of the self, obtained in the activities of imagination, representation, and action (as objects giving rise to either purity or 'guilt-consciousness') but it is also reflection on the seat 'of the original knowledge of God', he argues.[57] It is a consciousness of subject and object—a self-reflection that uncovers the distinction between an awareness of the truly good essence (God-consciousness) and the character of 'my' ego.

The combination of Bavinck's early moral psychology with his brief reflection on self-consciousness as an act of 'judgment', therefore, suggests that in the act of self-reflection one can discover through inference grounded on the fact of self (the heart/conscience) the

---

[56] *Het Geweten*, 32. 'Conscience', 116.
[57] *Het Geweten*, 32, 'Conscience', 117.

revealed knowledge of God—a turn inward as objectification of self is a turn toward the subjective locale of the revelation of an objective, infinite reality. This assertion mimics his later description of the Ethical theology—that 'the supernatural in humanity is connected to the supernatural outside of humanity'—but is also filtered through the theology of Calvin in the opening claim of the *Institutes*.[58]

In order to make sense of Bavinck's idea that one discovers the 'original knowledge of God' in the self-consciousness attention must be paid to a second adoption of the grammar of the Schleiermacherian legacy: dependence. Bavinck argues that in the awakening of the moral consciousness as the center of self-consciousness, or the unity of the human personality, one realizes the fact of dependence. For example:

> With awareness [or consciousness, (*bewustzijn*)] spiteful sinning and thinking with premeditation, manifesting therein the person's greatest freedom, one learns thereby to know best one's deep dependence (*afhankelijkheid*) … In the conscience we learn that we are not *nostris juris* (a law unto ourselves) but are dependent (*afhankelijk*) on a higher authority. In this way it is not an awareness [or consciousness, (*bewustzijn*)] that is merely moral but also religious. The conscience is mine, my property, it is the most individual feature, indeed, it is the person within the person. And yet the conscience is not my fabrication.[59]

The activity of the conscience therefore is a revelation, he argues, of the divine through a consciousness of being dependent, which first arises as religious consciousness. Its existence reveals the 'absolute'. It is a subjective manifestation of the divine to 'my self' wherein the law of one's personality 'points back to the divine' as its condition. 'At its deepest core the

---

[58] With this argument that in self-consciousness one discovers the essence of the human personality and the original knowledge of God, Bavinck locates himself in the conversation of modern theology (Vinet, Suassaye) and simultaneously in the trajectory set forth by Augustine and Calvin in their reflection upon Scripture, and the knowledge of God and self. So, Bavinck summarizes them elsewhere: 'Augustine desired to know nothing other and more than God and himself. "I desire to know God and the soul. Nothing more? No: nothing at all." For that reason, too, Calvin began his *Institutes* with the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves, and for that reason the Genevan catechism, answering the first question, "What is the chief end of human life?" stated, "That human beings may know the God by whom they were created'. *RD* 2.29-30.

[59] *Het Geweten*, 55-56.

conscience is a knowledge shared not only with our selves but also with God; a consciousness that we live outside of him…'.[60] Conscience as consciousness of a unified self that is simultaneously moral, religious, and in relation with both God and world, therein, plays a transcendental role uncovering the fact of the higher law upon which the 'law of our personality' is dependent. This argument is strikingly like Schleiermacher's concept of the 'revelation' of God in *CF* §4 as an insight in the human consciousness of being in relation with God as *Whence*, or as the condition of self and world-consciousness. Yet, it is of note that Bavinck's presentation thus far is absent of the fundamental notion of *gevoel* (feeling) in direct relation to the revelation of the Absolute in the passivity of dependence. Bavinck describes a realization or a process of 'learning' and discovery about one's dependence here, rather than in the grammar of feeling that will arise and govern in 1902 (*Magnalia Dei*) and 1908. It is not so much that conceptually his early and later descriptions of the relation between self- and God-consciousness are opposed, but that the latter emphasizes feeling as a specific philosophical concept more so than the former.

A foray into Bavinck's psychology of the human psyche is necessary to parse his ever-developing terminology clearly. In this same article, he describes three capacities of the human mind or soul: 'thinking, feeling, and willing' (*denken, gevoelen, willen*). Later, in PoR in 1908/9 he will usually refer to thinking, feeling, and doing (*handelen*), which aligns well with Schleiermacer's trichotomy of consciousness. In this article, the conscience is neither within nor separate to any of these powers of consciousness, because one's consciousness is not a capacity, but an aspect of the unity of personality. Conscience is the natural standard of the human personality, given by God, that makes demands, governs, and critiques the use of the capacities. It enters as the law of the personality when the empirical self is not identical to the true person, when there is a rift between objective and essential self.[61] Yet, this rift is not merely derivative of human agency. Thinking, feeling, and willing are only under the control

---

[60] 'Conscience', 125.
[61] Bavinck, 'Conscience', 124-5.

of human agency in part. Bavinck, therefore, divides the faculties into an active and passive element in this article, by implication.

Later, in 1897, in the same year of the second volume of his dogmatics, he produces a book on the psyche itself, *Beginselen der Psychologie*.[62] Bavinck argues there that neither materialism nor pantheism can satisfy the inquirer regarding the nature of the psyche (*ziel*). Rather, the essence of the soul is the '*Ik*' as the gift of God, a spiritual principle (*geestelijke principe*), an impenetrable mystery, an unknowable nature. One has no knowledge (*kennis*) of the essence of self. The essence of self (the *Ik*) is only known mediately, being no object of perception.[63] In contrast to Descartes, as Bavinck describes him, as well as to the *Aufklärung*, the essence of the self is neither *denken* (thinking), or *verstand* (understanding). In God, knowing, thinking, understanding, desiring, willing, etc. are identical with God's essence. But for the human spirit, this is not so at least because the human capacities can grow, be disciplined, refined, and educated.

Among these faculties, in the modern world, Aristotle's taxonomy of the soul was discarded by Descartes who located the essence of the self in *denken*. Thereby, Bavinck argues, Descartes registerd human nature as a capacity. For the *Aufklärung*, in its rationalistic tendency, the 'understanding' was regarded as the essence of the human being (*het verstand dus het wezen van den mensch*). As a result, 'feeling, consciousness, intuition, imagination, heart, desire… [these were] suppressed and made anathema' for the sake of invididual, reasonable *Bildung* (formation).[64] The immediate, mystical, and contemplative aspects of the self were hated, he records.

---

[62] He offers an extended and edited second edition but only just before his death. The second edition is not published until after Bavinck dies, in 1923.

[63] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 31, 33.

[64] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 49. Original: 'Gevoel, besef, intuïtie, verbeelding, hart, gemoed, aandoening, hartstocht — het werd onderdrukt en in den ban gedaan'.

But then, the new age arose: *Retournons à la nature*. Kant, Jacobi, Hamann, Claudius, Schleiermacher and others, in distinct forms, returned to the practical, to the heart, to the 'immediate', to the feeling and warmth, allowing art to arise from innate genius. In this age, the doctrine of the faculty of feeling ascends and takes it place among the trichotomy of psychological powers sometimes expressed as *gevoel, verstand, en wil*;[65] other times expressed as *gevoel, denken, en handelen* (or *doen*). This trichotomy Bavinck associates with a late eighteenth century development, and it is precisely the one with some critique that he affirms.

Yet, this same age of feeling and sentimentality resulted in an emancipation of the flesh (citing Schlegel's *Lucinde* for example), and forced theology to retreat into a *gevoelsheerschappij* (mastery of feeling), referring to Schleiermacher.[66] After surveying the wide-ranging opinions on the *gevoelvermogen* (feeling faculty), Bavinck summarizes the two basic definitions: (1) feeling is an immediate consciousness of pleasure and unpleasure, occuring prior to reflection; (2) the states wherein the soul is wholly passive, being acted on by an external object. Bavinck largely rejects the latter definition as describing the totality of the feeling capacity. In regard to the former, it is apparent, Bavinck argues that 'feeling' is not actually its own distinct power but an aspect of the *kenvermogen* (knowing faculty). It is not a special ability but arises in relation to sensations, impressions, and observation, which all depend on the knowing faculty. Additionally, 'we' commonly use the term feeling, he argues, not only referring to an immediate consciousness of pleasure or pain, but also as a sensation or instict for the good, the true, and the beautiful, or, with Jacobi, 'as an organ for the supernatural'.[67] Before or distinct from the activity of thinking and reflection (as distinct aspects of the knowing faculty), Bavinck argues, we 'feel instinctively (*voelen wij instinctief*)' whether something is 'true or untrue (*waar of unwaar*)'.[68] Feeling, as it depends on sensation, is a particular aspect of the knowing faculty, distinct from thinking or the reasoning process, and in this particular way, can be 'pre-

---

[65] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 50-1.
[66] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 53.
[67] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 56.
[68] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 58.

cognitive' as pre-*denken*.

He divides the psyche therefore between two faculties, knowing and desiring. The most remarkable aspect of the knowing faculty is, he argues, self-consciousness. Self-consciousness arises within the activity of being a self in a world where the self makes the '*Ik*' known to the self. To speak of self-consciousness in relation to discursive judgment is to speak of mediate self-consciousness or self-knowledge. Another way to distinguish the different concepts, using Schleiermacher's language, is between objective self-consciousness (as self-knowledge) and immediate self-consciousness. Immediate self-consciousness is originally felt precisely because it is an object that stands outwith perception and is only reflected upon (self-knowledge) when one objectifies the contents of the imagination and understanding, its representations and history.

For Bavinck then, a most important distinction is that feeling is not the activity of thinking (feelings do not arise as the type of knowledge derived from judgment, reasoning, or reflection). Feeling does not produce objective knowledge. Yet, feeling is an aspect of the knowing capacity. Already in the 'Conscience', at its deepest core, the conscience 'is a knowledge' that both we and God share.[69] And while he does not associate this type of knowledge with the language of *gevoel*, he will come to do so. As he argues in 1897, in the feeling capacity, there is a type of knowing. In this form of knowing regarding the conscience, one feels the reality of a law that cannot be perceived as an object. One might call this a 'faith-knowledge', or merely a certainty. Feeling is distinguished, therefore, with *denken*, but is not set in opposition to *kennen*. And for Bavinck, the 'immediate', when associated with feeling refers to the unseen, to that which presents itself to the self. This feeling for the unseen is an aspect of a type of knowing which, Bavinck argues, is 'of paramount importance. It is distinguished from and antecedent to the process of reasoning or thinking. Regarding certainty, it is not less

---

[69] Bavinck, 'Conscience', 125.

than these but it rises far above them. But indeed [feeling] is less clear and percipient, precisely because it is not a knowledge in concepts and is not the product of purposeful reflection or reason'.[70]

Bavinck, therefore, uses the term feeling at times[71] in the same manner as the functions given it by Jacobi, Fichte, and Schleiermacher, who Bavinck himself describes: Jacobi regards feeling as 'an organ for the supernatural (or the unseen)'; for Fichte, 'as the junction-point of being and consciousness, subject and object'; 'with Schleiermacher (who agreed with Fichte), as immediate self-consciousness'. Here, in 1897, Bavinck directly defines his understanding of Schleiermacher's 'immediate self-consciousness' as a *gevoel*: where one 'before all thinking (*denken*) and willing (*willen*), is [conscious] of his own being, and therein at the same time is conscious of his absolute dependence on God'.[72]

In his earliest corpus however, Bavinck is yet to make a precise and consistent distinction between the objectification of the self in the activity of self-reflection and the awareness of self, world, and God in the immediate experience of being, or specifically as feeling. This distinction and emphasis on the immediate is at the core of Schleiermacher's discovery of *Gefühl*. What is clear is that Bavinck places the self in a primary role in his early theology, but

---

[70] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 57-8. Original: 'Deze wijze van kennisneming is van het hoogste belang; zij is onderscheiden van en voorafgaande aan die door redeneering en denken; zij is niet minder zeker dan deze, maar gaat ze in zekerheid ver te boven. Maar ze is wel minder helder en bewust, juist omdat zij geen kennis in begrippen is en geen vrucht van opzettelijk nadenken en redeneeren'.

[71] See especially *PoR*, Ch. 3.

[72] Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie* (1897), 53-4. Original: 'Schleiermacher sloot zich hierbij aan en omschreef het gevoel als het onmiddellijke zelfbewustzijn, waarin de mensch vóór alle denken en willen zichzelf, zijn eigen zijn, en daarin tegelijk zijne volstrekte afhankelijkheid van God bewust wordt'.

he does so in the 1880s without adoption of the emphasis on the immediacy of self-consciousness or the *feeling* of absolute dependence he would come to emphasize in time.[73]

(2) *The Kingdom of God and self-consciousness.* Another of Bavinck's important early articles is his constructive reflection on the self in relation to the Kingdom of God. 'KGHG' is the manifestation of the union of two central motifs that Bavinck would maintain through his entire corpus: self-consciousness and organism. Of interest here is the fact that, like many of his other early articles, the primary themes include the inner self, its organic essence, and the incorporation of psychological reflection into a theology of the reign of Christ.

The article argues that the realization of the moral good in human action (as both thinking and doing) requires more than the acquisition of the statutory law. One must, rather, 'understand the moral goods themselves according to their nature and essence, in their unity and interconnectedness' to become a wholly righteous agent—a highest good only possible within the Kingdom of God.[74]

The Kingdom of God is the fulfillment of the unity of all things in Christ. Unity, for Bavinck, is the original goal (*doel*) of creation and the activity of re-creation is the denial of all unnatural division between substances and their intended ends. Such unification forms a kingdom

---

[73] Schleiermacher, *CF* §3.2: 'In turn, when the qualifier "immediate" is to be attached to the expression "self-consciousness," no one would think of this as referring to anything but feeling. That is, if one were also to use "self-consciousness" for a consciousness of oneself, this phenomenon would be more like an objective consciousness, and it would be a notion regarding oneself, which, as such, would be mediated by observation of oneself. If such a notion of our-selves as we find ourselves at a particular element—thinking, for example, or choosing—were to come quite close to or even flash through the particular features of a given state, then this self-consciousness would actually appear as something that accompanies the state itself. In contrast, one would not ever consider that other, actually unmediated self-consciousness—which is not a notion but is feeling, in the proper sense—to be a mere accompaniment, in any way. Rather, in this regard a twofold experience is to be expected of each person.'
[74] 'KGHG', 134.

insofar as the disparate poles of various organisms are denied the power to be set at enmity any longer. The communal and individual are distinguished but inseparable. The flesh and spirit become unity in diversity. The head and heart can no longer war. A person becomes fully a person when everything within that person submits to its essential unity. There are two derivative arguments within this article that support the formative claim above, that Bavinck adopts the grammar of the traditions that developed from Schleiermacher and centralizes the subject in his early corpus through the relation between self-consciousness and Kingdom.

First, he argues, human consciousness is the premier location and analogous microcosm of the ideal Kingdom of God. Reality is not a 'world' without the fact of consciousness. Consciousness, or the human personality, is the 'spiritual' that 'rises above the world and bestows upon it the rays of enlightenment'.[75] And, this consciousness is embodied: 'he [a human] does not stand in relation to this world as a stranger', but is 'most intimately bound to the world…by means of his own organism'.[76] The organic unity of humanity is most present when all conflict between matter and spirit is undone. This realization is a fact of the Kingdom of God to come.

The establishment of the Kingdom of God in Christ from the outset of the Gospels is a catholicizing project. Jesus is the king and his kingdom extends first into the heart of his disciples. The catholicity of Christ's kingdom manifests itself, therefore, in its power of re-union in the various parts of the human personality. Its unity is established not at the expense of diversity but at the death and ever-so-slow decay of sin. 'A person is fully a person' when sin, which has torn everything apart, is denied its power within the human consciousness. The 'understanding and the heart, consciousness and will, feeling and imagination, flesh and spirit' were at enmity and, in Christ, are no more. The good, in other words, constitutes a unity

---

[75] 'KGHG', 140.
[76] 'KGHG', 140.

'automatically'.[77] By contrast, 'sin cannot. Sin dissolves. Sin moves from forged unity into diversity'.[78] Sin is without purpose and forms little more than a social contract (rather than a kingdom) in order to momentarily unite to destroy the good. Sin, for Bavinck, is the power that sets parts against each other first corrupting the human consciousness or personality.

But, the reverse is true in the activity of redemption. The human 'consciousness' is the first manifestation of the kingdom of God's activity, an awareness of the fact that in one's self 'there is no lifeless, petrified atomism'.[79] The unified (or 'full') self-consciousness is a temporal representation of the wider catholic structure of the Kingdom of God in its eschatological fullness: 'a unity that includes and harmoniously incorporates an infinite multitude. Exactly for that reason the Kingdom of God is the highest, the most perfect community, because it guarantees to each one's personality the most completely well-rounded and richest development'.[80]

Second, the fact of the redeemed human personality as the witness to the future ideal Kingdom is presupposed by the fact of the human consciousness in general as a *micro-cosmos* of the cosmos. Bavinck's clearest presentation of his point that the harmony of reality is first manifest in the microcosmic organism of the embodied consciousness is here:

> The entire world is recapitulated and represented within a human being. A human being is truly a microcosm. And yet that entire plethora of phenomena is harmoniously bound together and organically arranged in the personality, which itself is eternal and far surpasses that entire plethora, as it knows that wonderful organism by means of its consciousness and rules it by means of its Will…[Thus] the human being is for the world [and] that is what the Kingdom of God is for the human being.[81]

The human being is a microcosm of the whole *world* and the world is given to the human

---

[77] 'KGHG', 141.
[78] 'KGHG', 141.
[79] 'KGHG', 141.
[80] 'KGHG', 141.
[81] 'KGHG', 145.

being as a context of righteous rule. Analogously, as the world is given to the human being as a context of righteous rule (the human serves/stewards the world), so the Kingdom of God is *for* the human being. The Kingdom of God is not first for the service of the world but for the human (the *micro-cosmos*) and, subsequently because of the human being, the cosmos. And so, the Kingdom of God displays itself temporally in the activity of the redeemed consciousness. The human is the unifying agent for the world and the work of the Kingdom of God is the re-unifying agent for the human being before all else—the guarantee of the 'richest harmony' and the 'most glorious and perfect unity', which 'reigns among the most inscrutable wealth and the most incalculable diversity'.[82]

(3) *Objective and subjective catholicity*. Derivative of the first two points regarding the relation between self and Kingdom is Bavinck's later systematic expression of the relation between objective and subjective catholicity. Bavinck's concept of catholicity, first presented systematically in 1888, describes a powerful act of God to re-create and moves from the human subject outward in its application. This point is present in seed-form in 'KGHG' and needs only brief exposition as it relates to catholicity explicitly.

Catholicity, for Bavinck, is a descriptor of the scope of the application of the Kingdom of God, which first works on the human consciousness. This power of the catholic religion that is Christianity and its subjective emphasis is what he calls 'inner catholicity'.[83] Inner catholicity is the re-creation of the human consciousness as an act of redemption, creating in its work a subjective norm for theological activity through the presence of the Spirit of God and the

---

[82] 'KGHG', 144-45.

[83] 'In Israel itself revelation dominates everything. A separation between the cult (*godsdienst*) and the rest of life is altogether impossible. All dualism is eschewed in the unity of God's theocratic rule. The law of YHWH regulates everything even to the smallest minutiae. Not only the priests but also the kings; not only the cultic and the moral but 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'. Bavinck, 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,' 222.

unity of the human subject. As described already, this concept of the catholic work of redemption on the human subject is present in seed form from his earliest work. It merely describes what was presented in the previous points.

First, the catholicity of Christ's kingdom manifests itself in its power to re-unite the various parts of the human personality that have been divided by sin. Catholicity in general, to put it another way, describes the power of redemption in its movement to bring all things unto the state of organism, or perfect unity in diversity. The sub-concept of inner catholicity introduced above, like the sensibility of Reformed catholicity popular in contemporary Reformed theological method, is a narrower subjective aspect that exists within a vision of a broader objective catholicity.[84] While Reformed catholicity is primarily an active exercise in judgment, inner catholicity describes a passive (on the part of the human) work of God's objective revelation in the human consciousness that makes possible a particular way of cognizing (theological rationality). The dogmatic categories used to describe this subjective catholic work occur on opposite ends of the logic of the *ordo salutis*: regeneration and glorification.

Second, the application of the work of the Kingdom of God to the human consciousness forms a particular self-consciousness of freedom. 'Sin desires no self-consciousness and no freedom; sin hates both of these with a perfect hatred… For that reason sin hides us from ourselves… Knowing oneself is… the first step on the road to conversion'.[85] Full self-consciousness, in contrast, is the subjective aspect of living 'eternal life', as he puts it. Full self-consciousness is an ever-present awareness of the unity of the self under the law of the

---

[84] J. Todd Billings, 'Catholic and Reformed: Rediscovering a Tradition', *Pro Ecclesia* 23 (2014): 132-46; Idem., 'The Catholic Calvin', *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011): 120-34; Michael Allen and Scott Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015); Micahel Allen and Scott Swain, eds., *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).
[85] 'KGHG', 150.

personality. It is to do (think and act) according to an awareness of what one is (dependent on God). Thus, 'we all receive the demand that we always be fully self-conscious and genuinely free… in order that we be ruled by nothing else than the law of our own spiritual being which makes all the rest an instrument of our personality'.[86]

The language of reception and demand is particularly important and makes a direct connection to his previous article on the conscience. While the conscience itself is not an infallible law, its existence corresponds to an infallible law that has been *given* and *received*. Full self-consciousness is awareness of self in correspondence with the law that stands first without the self, but then becomes the law of the self in the reception of a gift. This is to say, Bavinck conceives of the law of the personality, which one realizes in reflective self-consciousness, as an act of grace. In turn, 'full self-consciousness', as he puts it, requires no statutory law, which is the realization of the logic of New Testament ethics.

The result of full self-consciousness is an enactment of eternal life—acting according to the rightness of actions that are fitting for living with God. In this realization, statutory law as an objectively given divine command is entirely unnecessary precisely because one's being is in full correspondence with its God-dependent nature. In this manifestation of the rule of the 'inner' kingdom, 'our entire being and essence [is] reflected in the mirror of our consciousness, and that we thus become like God, who is nothing but light and in whom is no darkness (1 John 1:5)'.[87] He summarizes the rule of self-consciousness accordingly alluding to the same trichotomy of consciousness as that of Schleiermacher: 'making our personality the only cause of all our thinking and doing. We are called to embed our entire personality in every deed, in every thought, in order to do nothing un-self-consciously and arbitrarily, but to do everything with full consciousness and will, freely and morally'.[88]

---

[86] 'KGHG', 150.
[87] 'KGHG', 150.
[88] 'KGHG', 150.

3.2. On the *Glaubenslehre*: Defining Appropriation through Critique

'Are you better able to conceive of God as a person than as *natura naturans*?... Anthropomorphism, or let me say rather, ideomorphism is… unavoidable in regard to the interpretation of the religious feeling… [but] we cannot form any real conception of the highest Being'.[89] 'For the entire span of his career, this was Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher's basic response to unrelenting charges that his doctrine of God was not Christian but Spinozistic and pantheistic'.[90] His superior Fr. S.G. Sack said after reading *OR*, 'I can acknowledge the book, now that I have read it through with deliberation, as nothing more than a spirited apology for pantheism, a rhetorical presentation of the Spinozistic system'.[91] And so it was the same for Schleiermacher's reputation in the world of Dutch neo-Calvinism. In summarizing Schleiermacher's *OR*, Bavinck writes 'one must open his faculty of feeling as widely as possible to the world as a whole, view all things in the One and the One in all things, regard all that is particular as a revelation of the infinite, etc'—in all this feeling is 'so pantheistically construed'.[92] Additionally: 'Schleiermacher displayed even greater resemblance to Spinoza. God and the universe are correlates'.[93] Bavinck regularly associates Schleiermacher's 'pantheism' with Schleiermacher's dogmatic method, constructing doctrines from an indirect view of the divine by a causal logic:

> In pantheism God has no distinct being, no life of his own apart from the world. His attributes are identical with the laws of the universe. Schleiermacher, accordingly, describes them in purely subjective terms as

---

[89] Schleiermacher to F.H. Jacobi, 30 March 1818, Rowan, *Letters*, II. 283. Cited in B.A. Gerrish, *Tradition and Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Ninteenth Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 104.

[90] Julia Lamm, *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza* (University Park: Penn State Univeristy Press, 1996), 1.

[91] *Briefen*, III.276. Cited in Lamm, *The Living God*, 1. Trans. in Albert L. Blackwell, 'The Antagonistic Correspondence of 1801 between Chaplin Sack and His Protégé Schleiermacher', *Harvard Theological Review* 74:1 (1981): 113.

[92] *RD* 1.267, 242.

[93] *RD* 2.114.

"something special in the way we relate the feeling of absolute dependence to God." Their origin lies in religious-poetic invention and are devoid of speculative content. They express neither God's essence (which is unknowable) nor his relations to the world, since this would imply that God sustained many different relations to the world. They are simply subjective ideas without any objective basis. Schleiermacher, therefore, did not deal with the doctrine of the attributes of God separately but interspersed it throughout his dogmatics.[94]

By pantheism, Bavinck does not mean to attribute a literal 'all-is-god' to Schleiermacher but something akin to panentheism. Schleiermacher, he argues, 'rejected the distinction between creation and providence and considered the question concerning whether the world was temporal or eternal a matter of indifference, provided the absolute dependence of all things on God was upheld'.[95] Bavinck's principal critique is that in Schleiermacher is a corruption of the Creator-creature distinction, but he gives attention to numerous others.

After documenting evidence of Bavinck's appreciation, dependence, and appropriation of the tradition derivative of Schleiermacher in the first part of this chapter, it is appropriate now to balance the scales. Bavinck's direct citations of Schleiermacher are, as stated previously, critical some ninety percent of the time.[96] One must understand precisely the object of these critiques to perceive the development of a more apparent and stronger appropriation in the second part of this study. That Bavinck enveloped something of the terminological and conceptual emphasis of Schleiermacher already in his early career is manifest in his adoption of the grammar of self-consciousness, God-consciousness, and dependence, amid others. That he treated Schleiermacher and the mediation theologies with appreciation and a willingness to learn at their feet in order to stand on their shoulders, wary of their mistakes and affirming of their 'reformation', is also apparent. What remains is to untie the material dogmatics from the adoption of the broadly philosophical and grammatical. This is to say, Bavinck is a consistent

---

[94] *RD* 2.125. Also, 2.129: 'Schleiermacher, disapproving of the way of negation and eminence, retained only the way of causality'. Cf. 2.132, 2.161.

[95] *RD* 2.411.

[96] This figure is derived from documenting each instance of Schleiermacher citation in the *Reformed Dogmatics* from the second edition forward.

and sharp critic of Schleiermacher's material dogmatics. He does not adopt Schleiermacher's doctrinal method or make consistent use of Schleiermacher's material dogmatic formulations, as he interprets them, from *CF*.

To suppose that the appropriation claimed is primarily derivative of dogmatic propositions in *CF* is to miss the point and risk conflation. To be sure, the adoption of Schleiermacher's philosophical framework has implications for the logic of Bavinck's dogmatic construction— to be explored in part II. Briefly, Bavinck does use Schleiermacher's doctrinal content at moments to construct, for example, a doctrine of sin, praises his return to the person of Christ as the center of Christianity,[97] suggests that Schleiermacher restored the doctrine of regeneration to theology,[98] and lists him among the Reformed theologians that uphold a doctrine of election providing an adequate assurance of faith.[99] Yet, Bavinck remained a steadfast critic, especially constructing his own doctrine of Christ and defense of Christ's two-natures in response to Schleiermacher.[100] There are three primary locales of critique, each derivative of a philosophical catalyst. The catalyst is Schleiermacher's reception (as perceived by Bavinck) of Kant's rigid epistemic separation between the illusory necessities of practical reason from synthetic knowledge, the latter of which comes only through the unity of experience and the categories of the understanding. Bavinck summarizes the epistemology accordingly:

> In the sensuous world, science is possible; with respect to the super-sensuous, we have to be satisfied with faith. So in Kant dogma was given the status of a personal conviction of faith grounded in moral motives. On the basis of other

---

[97] *RD* 3.265. After Schleiermacher, the Christology of the nineteenth century 'was generally characterized by the fact that, in reaction to rationalism and moralism, it returned to the person of Christ and attempted to assign to his appearance in history permanent significance for the religious life'.

[98] *RD* 4.60.

[99] *RD* 4.266-67.

[100] *RD* 3.406ff. *RD* 3.454. Aspects of Schleiermacher's Christology are, he writes, 'certainly true'. But, Schleiermacher's Christology *in toto* 'is certainly not in harmony with the teaching of Holy Scripture. It is a misconstrual of the person of Christ and a diminution of his work. Christ is not just a divinely inspired human being (ἀνθρωπος ἐνθεος) …'.

considerations, Schleiermacher arrived at a similar conclusion. It is true that he opposed Kant when he defined religion not as knowing or doing but as a certain kind of feeling. Nevertheless, precisely for that reason dogmas became for him accounts of subjective mental states, formulations of religious emotions, reflections in the mind of subjective piety.[101]

The three locales of Bavinck's critique include Schleiermacher's failure to identify the proper object of dogmatics, the failure to identify the source of dogmatics, and the failure to maintain a robust Creator-creature distinction (i.e. pantheism). These critiques are interdependent. What the reader will find in Bavinck's critique is a well-rehearsed litany, a common set of mistakes attributed to Schleiermacher. These critiques result in part from a view of Schleiermacher's dogmatic structure: that the introduction is a philosophical foundation for the material dogmatic theology of parts I and II in *CF*, fueling an improper method.[102]

However, like Barth, Bavinck could not elude Schleiermacher into Bavinck's later career. A brief exposition of these critiques will prepare the entryway for the central thesis of part II, that Bavinck learned from Schleiermacher a particular logic for conceptualizing the principle of subjectivity in order to overcome the duality of being and thinking and to describe the subjective aspect of religion in general. In turn, this logic lead to his development of the fact of the self as a gift of grace, immediate self-consciousness as an organon of general revelation, and to conceiving the reality of the absolutely dependent self as the essence of religion in general.

Prior to Enlightenment, Romanticism, and especially Schleiermacher, dogmatic theology in the Reformed tradition functioned largely as propositional deductions derived by good and

---

[101] *RD* 1.35.

[102] Christine Helmer places the relation between the introduction and parts I and II as an interpretative choice between two options: 'Is [the status of the introduction] that of a philosophical foundation for the theology contained in parts I and II? Or is it a preliminary contextualization of theology's task and method in the non-theological disciplines that Schleiermacher outlines in the introduction as ethics, philosophy of religion, and apologetics'? Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', 33.

necessary consequence from Scripture with the application of philosophical grammar. To review, Schleiermacher takes a different approach. By starting with the religious self-consciousness and especially Christian consciousness, which arises in relation to the experience of Jesus of Nazareth the Redeemer, Schleiermacher developed doctrine according to the good consequences of experience within a community of believers. Dogmatic theology is critical reflection on the experience of the Christian consciousness as expressed in the church. It unveils the unity of the consciousness of the Christian community at any 'given time'.[103] It is scientific insofar as its statements are 'descriptively didactic' and systematized offering a religious self-understanding of the Christian community in relation to God, the *Woher* (Whence) of absolute dependence.[104]

Bavinck, like many nineteenth-century critics, argued that Schleiermacher's centralizing of religious self-consciousness in its affections for the Redeemer as a descriptive, positive enterprise undermined dogmatic theology's ability to set forth cognitive content, or knowledge of God. For Bavinck, more specifically, Schleiermacher's problem was not emphasis on the religious self-consciousness as a starting point (*principium*) or norm, but its perceived isolation from the external, objective grounds of dogmatic authority. Schleiermacher's descriptive use of other disciplines in the introduction of the *CF*, he argues, established philosophy as the starting point of dogmatics—thereby undermining the true foundation of dogmatics, inscripturated revelation, and its material content derived from exegetical reflection. In one instance Bavinck reveals his *ja* but *nee* regarding Schleiermacher's method: 'against [the] rationalization of theology [as natural theology] one has to maintain (alongside Schleiermacher, Rothe, Frank, Ritschl, etc.) the positive character of dogmatics... Dogmatics

---

[103] *CF* §19: 'Dogmatic theology is the science concerned with the interconnection of whatever doctrine has currency in a given social organization called a Christian church at a given time'.
[104] *CF* §16.1, §4.

is from start to finish the work of a believer who is confessing and giving an account of the ground and content of his faith'. The final sentence suggests an affinity with Schleiermacher's positive dogmatics as an account of Christian belief through history. Yet, in between and after these two affirmations, he adds: 'The foundations of faith (*principia fidei*) are themselves articles of faith (*articuli fidei*), based not on human arguments and proofs but on divine authority. The recognition of revelation, of Scripture as the Word of God, is an act of faith as well as its fruit… In the introductory section of dogmatics, therefore, only the foundations of faith are set forth and developed'.[105] In other words, while he agrees with Schleiermacher that dogmatics must be positive (pursuing an historical object toward a practical end), the object of dogmatics is God in his self-revelation rather than the historical-cultural Christian affections of a church community of the present-day with practical theology as its primary purpose. As Theodore Vial describes Schleiermacher's positive method, 'worship is theology's *raison d'être*', by which he is referring to the 'minister's role' in public church leadership.[106] More specifically, dogmatics in Schleiermacher's theological taxonomy is, with exegetical theology and church history, a historical-theological enterprise situated in a three-fold study of the contents of original Christian faith, the faith of the centuries, and present-day faith. Dogmatics, for Bavinck, is *Wissenschaft* because God has revealed God in history and its end is supremely the knowledge of God that is eternal life (John 17:3). Bavinck's conclusion in response to Schleiermacher is that the contents of faith must be derived from the ground of faith, objective revelation, and not from the self that has faith, because the end of dogma as an

---

[105] *RD* 1.109.
[106] Theodore Vial, 'Friedrich Schleiermacher on the Central Place of Worship in Theology', *Harvard Theological Review* 91:1 (January 1998): 59-73, 60.

enterprise is the glory of the Triune God, not church leadership.[107] Thereby, revelation is distinctly and primarily an event of the past, preserved as written Word, and applied by the Spirit making alive the human consciousness.

Bavinck's critical remarks about Schleiermacher are exceedingly repetitive along these same paths. This is especially the case in the *Prolegomena*. He describes Schleiermacher's theological method on numerous occasions using nearly the same syntax. These arguments begin with Schleiermacher's philosophical commitments, which developed Bavinck argues prior to *CF* and deprived Schleiermacher of the true object of dogmatics, God himself:

> The philosophical viewpoint [Schleiermacher] assumed, as is evident from his *Dialektik*, prevented him from conceiving theology as a "science concerning God" (*scientia de Deo*) and naturally had to lead him into asserting a rigorous separation between theology and philosophy (a science). God, as the unity of the ideal and the real, is still unknowable to the intellect (which always thinks in terms of opposites) and can be experienced only in the heart; religion, therefore, is not cognition or action but a certain [state of affection].[108]

Because Schleiermacher's theology transferred the object of dogmatics to the religious mind directly and God only indirectly, it replaced God with the self-understanding of the Christian community.[109] The derivative, Bavinck argues, is that Scripture became a non-necessity. Bavinck presents a distinction, therein, between what he calls the 'norm' and 'source' of science to explain Schleiermacher's method. Scripture becomes a non-necessity when it is only a norm and not a source of dogmatic content, speech about God. The reconstitution of an alternative source for dogmatic theology is derivative, Bavinck argues, of Schleiermacher's epistemic modesty concerning the possibility of knowledge about God in the fact of trans-

---

[107] Derivatively, Bavinck disagrees then with Schleiermacher's statement in *CF* §1.1 as it relates to dogmatics: 'After all, since what precedes a science by way of defining it cannot belong to the science itself'.

[108] *RD* 1.47.

[109] For example, Schleiermacher writes in *OR*, 108: 'it can rightly be said that in religion everything is immediately true, since nothing at all is expressed in its individual moments except the religious person's own state of mind'.

phenomenal being. This, in turn, led to a reconstruction of the idea of revelation away from God's self-manifestation of himself.

> For Schleiermacher Scripture and confession could no longer carry authority on the ground that they contained divine revelation but were entitled to a measure of authority only insofar as they were more or less accurate accounts of religious experience or of Christian piety. Theology and dogmatics could therefore retain a kind of scientific authority only if they found their content in a given object, viz., the church, and their purpose in serving the leadership of that church. Both disciplines were thus given a subjective starting point and a practical aim.[110]

The turn to religious experience in contrast to reliance on the 'authority' of Scripture and confession is derivative of Schleiermacher's alternative definition of revelation from that of his tradition: that revelation consists in imparting new, unique life to the human consciousness, not knowledge of God. Bavinck records: 'this is the definition Schleiermacher gave of revelation in his *Speeches on Religion:* just as for the religious person everything is a miracle, so for that person also "every original and new communication of the universe and of that person's inmost life" is a revelation'. And this is also the case for *CF*:

> [For Schleiermacher] the uniqueness of a revelation does not consist in its natural or supernatural character but in the newness or originality with which it appears in history, in "the originality of a fact which underlies a religious community." But in the *Christian Faith*, more clearly than in the *Speeches*, it emerged that in Christianity the person of Christ has such original significance… So, while revelation is typically marked by its own inherent originality, its effect and aim consist in the new life it imparts. *By these assertions, Schleiermacher paved the way for the view of revelation that defined it in terms of the communication not of doctrine but of life.*[111]

Bavinck indeed places value in Schleiermacher's concept of revelation and its communication of 'life' instead of a mere propositional knowing. However, the outcome, Bavinck argues, is that Schleiermacher's dogmatics, in an ironic turn, fails to satisfy fully the religious needs of human nature: the need for the truth about God. Its mode of description and fixation on the community consciousness 'at a given time' precludes prescription. The dogmatic task, for

---

[110] *RD* 1.48.
[111] *RD* 1.289–290. Cf. Schleiermacher's discussion in *CF* §10.

Schleiermacher, 'was not and could not be to mark this Christian piety as the only true and correct one but was limited to the obligation of making this Christian piety known in its essential elements. Therefore, according to Schleiermacher, the scientific nature of dogmatics lay solely in the didactic character of its language and in its systematic arrangement, i.e., in something purely formal'.[112] Material dogmatics could no longer claim to be speech about God, but only reflection on the causal relation between God and the Christian consciousness at any given moment in space-time. 'The question of whether Christianity was the true religion lay outside the reach of dogmatics; its sole task was to set forth positively the elements of Christian piety'.[113] And Bavinck reflects on the consequences for modern theology after: 'So, the separation Schleiermacher intended ended in a complete fusion [of philosophy and theology]... there is a tendency [now] to replace all transcendent-metaphysical statements about God, his essence and attributes, his words and works, with descriptions of Christian experience and its content'.[114]

Bavinck, accordingly, offers an alternative solution in direct response to his reflections on Schleiermacher:

> For theology, as an independent scientific enterprise, has its own first principles and does not borrow them from philosophy. Placing apologetics at the head of all the other theological disciplines, as this occurs in Schleiermacher and others, is explicable only from the fact that these theologians no longer recognized theology's own principles and were forced to look elsewhere for a foundation on which the building of theology could rest. If, however, theology is deduced from its own source, i.e., from revelation, it has its own certainty and does not need the corroboration of philosophical reasoning. Accordingly, apologetics cannot and may not precede dogmatics but presupposes dogma and now gets the modest but still splendid task of maintaining and defending this dogma against all opposition.[115]

---

[112] *RD* 1.48.
[113] *RD* 1.48.
[114] *RD* 1.47–48.
[115] *RD* 1.55–56.

However, Schleiermacher's response to this all too common charge was that it is necessary to consider the religious self-consciousness first because of the universal fact that it arises in human nature.[116] It presents itself to the consciousness and is not given as a philosophical foundation for the substance of theology—he was not trying to argue for such. The philosophical foundations of the introduction are not grounds for material dogmatics but an attempt to uncover piety descriptively, and particularly its Christian instantiation in history. The editor's note in *CF* §1.3, note 11, helpfully explains: 'lemmas [the initial propositions in the early portions of *CF*] do not belong to the substance of dogmatics itself. They simply serve… to carve out what the territory of dogmatics is'. Religious self-consciousness as the feeling of absolute dependence is a fact for both the philosopher and theologian.[117]

By 1908, Bavinck will come to agree with Schleiermacher on precisely this point, that religious self-consciousness as the feeling of absolute dependence is a given of a universal human nature. This aspect of what Bavinck calls 'subjective religion' is what he especially learned from Schleiermacher.[118] Additionally by 1908, Schleiermacher's exposition and grammar of the human personality according to the fact of religious self-consciousness in *CF* §4 becomes central to Bavinck's epistemic and anthropological musings, and is the grammar Bavinck uses to express his doctrine of general revelation in relation to religion. To say it another way, Bavinck learns from Schleiermacher that fundamental to human nature is the consciousness of God, revealed in a feeling of absolute dependence on the infinite essence. To be a human self is to be given a consciousness of both self and God arising in the dialectic of activity and receptivity with and in the world (finite) relating to the Absolute (infinite), a relation which is

---

[116] James Duke and Francis Fiorenza, 'Translator's Introduction', *On the Glaubenslehre*, 5.
[117] James Duke and Francis Fiorenza, 'Translator's Introduction', *On the Glaubenslehre*, 5.
[118] This aspect of Schleiermacher's 'reformation' was in consanguinity with the history of Reformed theology and Augustinian theology before it: 'The Reformation', already, Bavinck argues 'deliberately and freely took its position in the religious subject, in the faith of the Christian, in the testimony of the Holy Spirit'. *RD* 1.583.

felt, not discursively known. Bavinck's concepts of self-consciousness and world-consciousness, therefore, are correlates.

Consequently, Bavinck's critique of Schleiermacher pertains not to Schleiermacher's centralization of the religious subject *per se*, but to what Bavinck considered to be an absolutizing of the religious subject at the expense of the proper object of dogmatic construction:

> The distance between God and us is the gulf between the Infinite and the finite, between eternity and time, between being and becoming, between the All and the nothing. However little we know of God, even the faintest notion implies that he is a being who is infinitely exalted above every creature. While Holy Scripture affirms this truth in the strongest terms, it nevertheless sets forth a doctrine of God that fully upholds his knowability.[119]

Bavinck affirms in theory a Kantian modesty regarding knowledge of the trans-phenomenal. The gulf is real and the bridge is impossible to build from below. Reason will not make its way across the chasm of being and becoming. Yet, this short passage presented at the beginning of *RD* 2 unfolds the key distinction, which is encapsulated in the word 'nevertheless'. The knowability of God is derivative not of the possibility of humanity laying a bridge across the gulf but through God's decision to set forth a witness to himself, and this unfolding witness is to be regarded as both event and text. Bavinck's solution is to maintain with his predecessors that the text of Scripture is the Word of God set forth as revelation of God—a revelation *pro nobis*. If the text of Scripture is regarded in faith as the Word, and if God himself in the inspiration of that Word speaks of himself as he is, then theology's task is defined by the fact of the Word set forth. It is knowledge of God by the fact of his self-manifestation received by the organon of the Christian consciousness.

Dogmatics, in this case, need not set forth Christian religious affections in speech through the paradigm of causal logic. Rather, it ought to adjust its reasoning to the logic of the Scriptures

---

[119] *RD* 2.30.

as primary authority discerning the material content of its science and doing so with respect to the catholic hermeneutic derived from the commonality of the saints.

To be sure, he argues, while this is a 'reliable knowledge of God, [it is] not a knowledge that exhaustively corresponds to his being'.[120] One may apprehend God in his self-revelation, but can never comprehend God. Bavinck too, with Schleiermacher, is deeply suspicious of natural theology (when, for Bavinck, it is introduced logically prior to the speech of revealed theology). But Bavinck's faith in the Scriptures as the objective, authoritative revelation of God is the distinguishing mark that he considered undercut Schleiermacher's methodology and places Bavinck firmly within the bounds of his own Reformed, post-Reformation orthodox tradition.[121] Taking the Scripture as God's Word at God's word (affirming the circularity in the doctrine of the *autopistos* as he does) distinguishes Schleiermacher's theological methodology from his own.[122]

---

[120] *RD* 2.33. He also affirms the inadequacy, the impossibility even, of speech about God as he is in himself: 'Although [God] reveals himself in his names, no name is adequate to the purpose. He is nameless'. Also: 'It is the incontrovertible teaching of Scripture, however, that in God's secret being he is unknowable and unnamable, and that all God's names presuppose his self-revelation, that is, his creation. Of God's being and life apart from creation we know nothing for the simple reason that we ourselves are creatures and therefore always bound to creation'. *RD* 2.133.

[121] Central to Bavinck's affirmation of both Kant and Schleiermacher's epistemic modesty is the shared emphasis on 'certainty', as Bavinck interprets them. He affirms with Kant, he writes, that 'concerning invisible things we have a very different certainty than concerning the things we can perceive with our senses or prove with our logical faculties'. And this faith in things unseen does not function 'apart from our will, moral disposition, or spiritual experience'. With this, he combines the distinction he wants to make between he and Kant: 'still, it is not advisable for us to exchange the religious certainty of Holy Scripture, the church, and Christian theology for Kant's brand of moral certainty'. *RD* 1.576. Faith, given by God through the means of the Word of God, is a particular faith-knowledge.

[122] 'Scripture brings with it its own authority; it is self-based and self-attested as trustworthy (αὐτόπιστος). Just as light is distinguished from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter, so Scripture is recognized by its own truth'. *RD* 1.583. Bavinck does, however, suggest that Schleiermacher has contributed to a rehabilitation of this doctrine: 'Various factors have contributed, however, to a partial rehabilitation of this doctrine. Kant's critique of rationalism, "the proof of the spirit and of power" to which Lessing appealed, the romanticism of Jacobi and Schleiermacher, plus the sterility of apologetics, generated the conviction that the

Conclusion

This foray into Bavinck's critique of Schleiermacher offers, therefore, a more precise account of appropriation by way of negation. This is to say, Bavinck neither affirms Schleiermacher's dogmatic method nor much of the material content of his theology due to the perceived failure of that method to listen to God's Word as *the* Word of authority. In turn, Schleiermacher, Bavinck supposes, confused the distinction between source and norm by taking the believing consciousness as a source to derive statements about what must be true of God's being and action as given in the consciousness of the contemporary Christian community. Bavinck's counterproposal is that God has already set forth his attributes and actions in the witness of revelation in history. Such witness, the Scriptures, is also Revelation in the fact of its origin as the breath of God. The Word on paper is indeed divine discourse. Therefore: 'here too the activity of the human spirit consists in nothing else than in bearing witness to the truth, in thinking God's thoughts after him'.[123]

Nevertheless, the ongoing nature of Bavinck's claim that Schleiermacher is a 'reformation' theologian is striking. It is evident in his early writings and then restated a decade later in the *Dogmatics*. While Bavinck was critical of Schleiermacher in the broadest of ways for 'departing from the church's confession and even from Scripture',[124] he also acknowledged that Schleiermacher 'in the name of the authentic Luther…opposed the doctrine and practice generally in vogue'.[125] Although he dismissed Schleiermacher's dogmatic content,

---

validation of the Christian religion must be grounded in the faith of the church. Religious truth must be proven in a way that differs from proving a proposition in mathematics'. *RD* 1.585.

[123] *RD* 1.588.

[124] *RD* 1. 171.

[125]*RD* 1.171. Also: 'Against this mistaken direction in apologetics, the criticism of Kant and Schleiermacher was appropriate. For, in the first place, inherent in this approach was a denial

Schleiermacher was, Bavinck argued, 'reformationally minded… and sought to restore the *original gospel* as well as relating it to the entire culture'.[126]

Amid Bavinck's criticism, it is his affirmation that Schleiermacher was a figure of reformation, a restorer of the original gospel,[127] that one finds a peculiar esteem (a middle way).[128] As he moves into the second half of his career, Bavinck's appropriation does not submit to Schleiermacher's dogmatic theology in method or content. However, he does appropriate Schleiermacher's philosophic-religious taxonomy of the human subject in its immediate awareness of self, world, and God. It is to this appropriation that the study turns in part II. It is the case already in his early career that Bavinck turned toward the subject insofar as an emphasis on the subjective aspect of the objective kingdom plays a prominent role in his corpus of the 1880s and 1890s. This conclusion offered in the introduction is worth restating: because, for Bavinck, the essential principles of contemporary theology cannot be understood without knowledge of philosophical movements, the fact of subjectivity became a locus in his work even in his earliest career. It was after facing the 'challenges posed by modernity' in his

---

of the essence of religion, objectively of the character and content of religious truth, subjectively of religious faith'. *RD* 1.516.

[126] *RD* 1.171. Emphasis added. He includes also the *Vermittlungstheologen* as the subject of this sentence.

[127] In antithesis to his affirmation of Schleiermacher's original gospel, he later argues Ritschl and Harnack's gospels to be the opposite: 'Yet, Harnack and Ritschl did oppose the original Gospel by making dogmatic statements nothing but religious-ethical value judgments: What the essence of Christianity is, in what things the revelation or word of God consists, who the person of Christ is, is not decided by the apostles; everyone settles these matters in accordance with his or her own insights. The result is that all these schools not only have to oppose the church, the confession, and theology but even the apostles to Jesus and the original gospel'. *RD* 1.606.

[128] He especially praised Schleiermacher, amongst others, for his fight against rationalism: 'It took real courage to go back to the church and its dogmas, as Schleiermacher and Hegel did, and to discover there, be it only in a certain sense, deep religious truth. It was a manifestation of moral strength to break with the rationalistic demand for lucidity, to take up the cudgels for the despised religion of the church and again to assert the validity and value of the Christian faith'. *RD* 1.520.

Leiden context, as it has been put, that his own constructive efforts reflected precisely the subject matter of those challenges.

Part II

_____

Appropriation: Knowing and Depending

Concerning the Unity of Being and Thinking

Within the corpus of his early years through both the modern Dutch theological schools and direct interaction with the texts of Schleiermacher, Bavinck adopted an emphasis on the human subject and its place in theology. He did so with attention to theological ethics and specifically to human moral agency in relation to the fact of the Kingdom of God. His work included an emphasis on the conscience, accompanied by the deduction of the original knowledge of God. Such a path to knowledge of the Divine through the moral consciousness is a necessary derivative after the rupture between God- and self-consciousness.

His later corpus marks not deviation but development on these emphases and, specifically, a robust adoption of the grammar of Schleiermacher's account of human subjectivity. And this is the case most clearly in his Stone lectures at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1908, the *Philosophy of Revelation*. Within, he delivers an argument that situates the 'reality' of both the human self and world within a subjective certainty revealed as *gevoel* (feeling)—doing so within a 'world-view' of subjects and objects made intelligible by theism. *PoR* is Bavinck's adjustment of modern accounts of the relation between self and world to the fact of God's revelation.

It participates partly in what now has become common in contemporary scholarship: competing origination narratives for the 'invention' of the modern self.[1] For most of these

---

[1] In view is less the aspect of modern selfhood that pertains to an investigation of modern cultural identity (expressive individualism, consumerism, etc.). Rather, the term refers to modern philosophical expressions of the 'inner-self', its psychology, and its relation to questions of epistemology and metaphysics. One might say, the modern self here is referring to the context of Kant more than Weber. Yet, these aspects of 'modern selfhood' are

theses, the constitution of a unique, modern inner-self began with the early ruminations of Enlightenment in Descartes.[2] As Bavinck puts it in 1908 as he had done before, Descartes mistakenly associated the essence of the soul with thinking.[3] But the catalyst that led to the Enlightenment terminus point of modern selfhood is highly contested.[4] Such contests, which locate the early beginnings of a modern obsession with subjectivity in as diverse figures as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Scotus, and Descartes have created a particular field of research regarding the 'saga of selfhood'.[5]

Despite the disagreements, Bavinck agrees with many that the saga of inner-self was birthed long before Descartes, albeit in an entirely different expression. In Augustine, one finds a turn to an inner-self that is a theologically fresh expansion of the philosophical motifs of inwardness in the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Plotinian philosophies. Augustine is the first to offer a robust Christian theological conception of personal subjectivity.[6] But conceptions of self, modern or otherwise, were birthed he supposes from a reality of an essential selfhood that the Scriptures call the 'heart' or 'spirit', the totality of consciousness consisting of the organic unity between the temporal affections, knowledge, and desires with the individual

---

interrelated. The social trajectories of a communal consciousness of identity are not independent of philosophical theories of the constitution of the thinking 'I' in modern philosophy. This unity is central to Charles Taylor's work in *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989).

[2] Bavinck argued as much in 1903: 'After the middle of the eighteenth century this situation [regarding pre-modern certainty] gradually changed. The subject came into its own. It became aware of its true or presumed rights and slowly broke all the ties binding it to the past. In an unlimited sense of freedom, it emancipated itself from everything the past held sacred'. *The Certainty of Faith*, 8.

[3] *PoR*, 63.

[4] Cary tells one version of the narrative which begins with Plato's invention of inwardness leading to Augustine's invention (*inventio*) of the inner-self. Invention does not signify the making of something new but the discovery and problem-solving assertion related to what is. Philip Cary, *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford: OUP, 2000).

[5] This phrase is from Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 34.

[6] See Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

essence, the ego—this fact of unified individuality expresses itself already in the event of Ancient Near Eastern re-naming ceremonies concerning the relation between name (as an identity) and a vocation.[7]

A name designates the boundary of a person or thing distinct from any other object. 'To be a self is to possess and be possessed by a name'.[8] And that name signifies the unity of the *Ik* (I) with its temporal identity formed within its representational life. Also, to use Schleiermacher's grammar, the identification that occurs in the activity of naming points to the consistent and necessary relation between the sensible, mediate self-consciousness (arising from the *Anschauungen*, or intuitions, and *Gefühle*, or feelings, that are due to direct relation with the objective world) and the immediate (the feeling related to an original unity of self, and that which exists across all states of temporal experience).[9] In the experience of the sensible or lower self-consciousness the givenness of the immediate self stands before (or even behind) 'us' as both distinct from the world and as a presupposition of all relations in the world. The immediate self-consciousness which accompanies and retreats behind the feelings of co-determinate freedom and dependence offers 'us' a unity that is outwith all discursive cognition.

---

[7] *RD* 2.97: 'A name is a sign of the person bearing it, a designation referring to some characteristic in which a person reveals himself or herself and becomes knowable. There is a connection between a name and its bearer, and that connection, so far from being arbitrary, is rooted in that bearer. Even among us [moderns], now that names have for the most part become mere sounds without meaning, that connection is still felt. A name is something personal and very different from a number or a member of a species. It always feels more or less unpleasant when others misspell or garble our name: it stands for our honor, our worth, our person and individuality. But that linkage was much more vital in earlier times when names still had a transparent meaning and actually revealed the identity of a person or thing'.
[8] Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology*, 34.
[9] *CF* §4.1-2, 5.1. Bavinck critiques pragmatism for absolutizing chaos and taming it with an interposed assertion of human autonomy consequently losing claim to the realities of God, humanity, and world. Pragmatism sacrifices 'not only God, but all ideas and names'. *PoR*, 68.

Schleiermacher's philosophical anthropology presented briefly in *CF* §2-5 contains a significant aspect of the grammar Bavinck adopted to describe the unity of the self-world relation as *given* (*gegeven*) or dependent, emphasizing the faith that undergirds all living, moving, and being. Because the finite is dependent even its spontaneous activity (freedom), being in the world requires absolute dependence on something outwith the finite world. After Schleiermacher, Bavinck argues that the self as well as the world cannot be accounted for or its essence discovered by the activity of *denken* (thinking). Rather, by the fact of the feeling of absolute dependence, all knowing and doing begins from a certainty of faith in a given, dependent self and world. By 'given' therefore, he means that which one accepts with certainty by the fact of its apparent reality—that unity between self and world (an organism) is a gift. In other words, 'given' does not refer to the epistemological theory that the self-world relation is un-interpreted and non-representational. Rather, 'given', for Bavinck, simply means an immediate consciousness of finitude, a certainty of self and world, which is felt. Everyone, he supposes, is fully secure in their consciousness of the self-world unity even within representational life. Such unity is certain not because of an account derived from 'thinking or willing' but simply because one 'feels assured'—which is only accounted for by means of faith (theism) alone.[10]

In the previous unit, chapter two traced the history of Schleiermacher (and his progeny) in Bavinck's Netherlands establishing the fact that Bavinck especially learned Schleiermacher through mediation-theological movements. In chapter three, Bavinck's early texts displayed a clear pattern of consistent rumination on the major motifs of what he called 'consciousness-theology'. In this chapter, one turns now to Bavinck's later career from 1902 but with special focus on 1908-9. It is in his lectures on the *PoR* that evidences Bavinck's strongest conceptual appropriation of Schleiermacher directly. He turns here to the adoption of Schleiermacher's

---

[10] *PoR*, 69.

grammar to answer two questions: (i) how does one account for the certainty of reality; (ii) what is religion?

At the methodological center of both of these questions is self-consciousness and immediate certainty: 'the only possible way of demonstrating the [fact of reality] is by briefly inquiring how we discover its content… [and] the only path by which we are able to attain reality is that of self-consciousness'.[11] Later in his argument, he directly relates the concept and experience of self-consciousness to the feelings of relative and absolute dependence. Bavinck's assertion delivers the reader at the doorstep of this question: how did Bavinck appropriate Schleiermacher's *Selbstbewusstsein* (self-consciousness) and *Abhängigkeitsgefühl* (feeling of dependence) into his *zelfbewustzijn* and *afhankelijkheidsgevoel*?[12] In broader query then is the balance between the modern and orthodox in Bavinck's writings per the definitions offered in the introduction. Is the concept of immediate self-consciousness in *PoR* an appropriation of a modern (Schleiermacher) philosophical and religious emphasis under the conditions of Bavinck's confessional Dutch Reformed heritage? The same proposition that Crouter imposes on Schleiermacher interpreters is appropriate here: 'an interpreter must decide whether a Calvin or a Tillich is the proper model to have in mind when reading Schleiermacher'.[13] For Bavinck, in a similar way, must one decide between Calvin and Schleiermacher? The answer in this chapter is 'no' insofar as the fact of Bavinck's reading of Schleiermacher determines a significant aspect of Bavinck's account of the unity of self as well as its religious element. Immediate self-consciousness as the feeling of absolute dependence is the linchpin for Bavinck's construction of the relationships within the synonymous pairs self/world, subject/object, ideal/real, and thinking/being. To be sure, Bavinck's presentation is idiosyncratic. Yet, he uses Schleiermacher's basic, introductory grammar from *CF* in his own

---

[11] *PoR*, 55-56.

[12] Bavinck's use of *afhankelijkheidsgevoel* as a German translation is a secondary argument for dependence on Schleiermacher.

[13] Richard Crouter, *Between Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 226.

construction as an expression of the lineage of Augustine in his reflection on God and the soul, re-framed and made precise within the modern philosophical milieu.

In demonstration of the significance of Schleiermacher's concepts and arguments for Bavinck's *PoR*, this chapter focuses on the philosophical question Bavinck posed—that between reality and self—before turning in chapter five to the question of religion. His conclusion per his philosophical account is that, despite the distinction between representation and idea, the certainty of reality is established pre-discursively in the given unity of thinking (self) and being (world) as an aspect of the *feeling* of dependence in immediate self-consciousness. This organic unity is the gift of God, a common grace.

To prove this appropriation the chapter works in four steps: (i) it first offers an overview of the argument of *PoR* to set Bavinck's adoption in context; (ii) section two narrows in on this context through his dichotomization of Kant and Schleiermacher; (iii) section three outlines Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacherian concepts in his own argument for the certainty of reality; (iv) section four nuances Bavinck's argument by setting it between Augustine and Schleiermacher.

4.1. Understanding the *Philosophy of Revelation*

Every human being, Bavinck suggests, is confronted in life with a specific set of questions. 'The problems that confront the human mind always return to these: what is the relation between thinking and being, between being and becoming, and between becoming and acting? What am I? What is the world and what is my place and task within this world'?[14] These are the questions of both philosophy and theology. And at the head of these questions is the

---

[14] Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 11. 'De problemen, waarvoor de menschelijke geest altijd weer te staan komt, zijn deze: wat is de verhouding van denken en zijn, van zijn en worden, van worden en handelen? Wat ben ik, wat is de wereld en wat is in die wereldmijne plaats en mijn taak'?

relation between human consciousness/essential identity as well as thinking/embodied real. Here begins the questions of a world and life orientation.[15] Both philosophy and theology offer answers to this series using different and, for Bavinck, interdependent systems of classification.[16]

Hence, he delivers in 1908 at the same time, a philosophy of *revelation* and a *philosophy* of revelation.[17] One can understand the genitive in either subjective or objective form.[18] In the former, a philosophy of revelation is a 'revelational philosophy' where the affirmation of revelation, the theism of Scripture, controls the method and contents of philosophical investigation. The latter is a philosophical study of revelation. The *PoR* is something of both. It is from the perspective of the fact of revelation (treated in dogmatics) from which Bavinck embarks on a philosophical investigation of the 'how' of revelation in its relation to the human subject and nature. As he investigates aspects of reality, he explains why the reality of the theism of Scripture is necessary to give an adequate account. Any philosophy of revelation, for

---

[15] *PoR*, 1. Bavinck situates *PoR* as a determination of world-view according to the answers one gives to these questions.

[16] This language is original to Nick Adams, 'Hegel', *Theology and Philosophy*, eds. Oliver Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, Mervyn Davies, and Peter Hampson (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark), 129-142.

[17] The activity of the philosophy of revelation in general is a modern enterprise. Bavinck associates the development of the field to a post-Kantian need for philosophical treatments of revelation in antithesis to rationalism: 'yet it soon became evident that the theorists [of Enlightenment] had too swiftly dismissed revelation. Upon deeper historical and philosophical investigation, religion and revelation evinced a much closer kinship than they had thought under the sway of rationalism. Thus, in more modern theology and philosophy, the concept of revelation again regained some respectability, and various attempts at reconstruction were made. The critical philosophy of Kant led Fichte to undertake an inquiry into all revelation, which, though it modified the concept, nevertheless maintained its possibility'. *RD* 1.288.

[18] Although a peculiar distinction in Dutch, Bavinck makes it himself in his 1918 essay '*Philosophie des Geloofs*'. He describes the possible distinctions present within the title based on how one 'understands the genitive' as 'subjective' or 'objective'. ET: 'Philosophy of Religion (Faith)', in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 25-32, 25.

Bavinck, must be to some degree a 'revelational philosophy' due to the necessity of assuming revelation when embarking.[19]

PoR is also an apologetic but its task is not to set forth a detailed defense of the 'secret' of existence (revelation). Apologetics for Bavinck can also take form in assuming faith and accepting the fact of revelation in the activity of disciplined thinking. Such an attempt is a pronouncement that 'with their faith [Christians] do not stand as isolated aliens in the midst of the world but find support for it in nature and history, in science and art, in society and state, in the heart and conscience of every human being. The Christian worldview alone', Bavinck argues, 'is one that fits the reality of the world and of life'.[20] The basic point is this: thinking disciplined by attention to revelation makes intelligible many of the answers philosophy seeks. *PoR* is participation in an assumed God-ward reality insofar as it examines revelation in and through its relation to the various arenas of human life. Those areas include the basic questions of philosophy, nature, history, religion, religious experience, and time.

Revelation here, in review, refers first to the act of God *ad extra* to create and, in time, redeem. Such action is God's Word or speech set forth, *Deus dixit*. It is the concept that God has 'come forward out of his hiddenness'.[21] Revelation includes, for Bavinck, both the Scriptures (*principium cognoscendi externum*) and God's self-manifestation in the created order, in nature and conscience. But *PoR* is written for the sake of a two-fold task that includes first the conceptual expansion of the domain of revelation. This project stems, he suggests, from the fact that 'the

---

[19] The fact that Bavinck engaged in the project of *PoR* is a testimony to his relation to modern theology, as glimpsed in the previous footnote. Philosophies of revelation were an enterprise in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and, in contradistinction to pre-modern theology, such a focus on revelation as a locus of philosophy was novel. Such justification for revelation and its relation to philosophical investigation is absent from the earlier Reformed tradition.
[20] *RD* 1.515.
[21] *RD* 1.286.

old theology construed revelation after a quite external and mechanical fashion'.[22] They too readily associated revelation solely with the written text or with an object in general. An expansion, rather, includes the recognition of 'revelation as a disclosure of the *musterion tou theou*. What neither nature nor history, neither mind nor heart, neither science nor art can teach us, [revelation] makes known to us (the fixed, unalterable will of God) … a will at variance with well-nigh the whole appearance of things'.[23] It is, in other words, that 'the secret of the universe' lays beyond the self-evident (as appearances) in 'the secret of revelation', the will of God made manifest to the human consciousness.[24] Revelation, in other words, is the key to a significant query of the whole nineteenth-century: is there a unity to existence, an organism to be found, and how can one justify such a claim?

Yet, Bavinck also unveils the fact of the *self*-evidence of revelation. At the center of *PoR* is his argument that the self is given by God as a gift, arising as immediate consciousness, which is simultaneously a revelation of God as the *Whence* of absolute dependence. The unity of the human agent (organism) is a grace that makes possible the 'world' or 'universe' because only consciousness beholds such unity called 'world'. His first intention though is to universalize the search for revelation as the fulcrum of unity—to take it up to the monstrosity of the universe in all its diversity and bring it down into the primacy of the inner-self. Modern natural sciences and psychology have offered the opportunity of expanding the dimensions of existence and so the theologian must coordinate this expansion to the concept of God's immanent presence. The basic premise is this: 'the world itself rests on revelation; revelation is the presupposition, the foundation, [and] secret of all that exists in all its forms. The deeper

---

[22] *PoR*, 22.

[23] *PoR*, 25.

[24] For Bavinck, the self-evident is not simply self-evident: 'there are few things we comprehend ... I comprehend, or think I comprehend, the things that are self-evident and perfectly natural. Often comprehension ceases to the degree that a person digs deeper into a subject. That which seemed self-evident proves to be absolutely extraordinary and amazing. The farther a science penetrates its object, the more it approaches mystery. Even if on its journey it encountered no other object it would still always be faced with the mystery of being'. *RD* 1.619.

science pushes its investigations, the more clearly will it discover that revelation underlies all created being. In every moment of time beats the pulse of eternity; every point in space is filled with the omnipresence of God'.[25] Revelation is the answer to the 'how' of all unified relations.

Revelation comes 'to us', from everywhere to consciousness, shining by its own light and 'tells us' both its content and form. It is the 'how' of revelation's movement that occupies the second purpose of *PoR*. He 'trace[s] the idea of revelation both in its form and content and correlate[s] it with the rest of our knowledge and life'.[26] The task is to associate the wisdom gained in the various fields of philosophy and science with the wisdom unveiled in revelation within those arenas of being. How does revelation matter in all 'our' knowing, feeling, and doing? It is an investigation of both how it comes 'to us' (awakening the consciousness) and how it relates to all of human existence. But first, how does revelation speak to the relation between consciousness and world, thinking and being? The answer to this question is found at the crossroads of the activity of revelation and the fact of the self.

This path to an account of the real begins through consideration of the many problems of modern philosophy. He polemicizes against all philosophies that fail to satisfy the needs represented by the human heart in both its affective and intellectual demands.[27] These include all philosophies that set themselves against religion and, by co-extension, revelation.

> The history of philosophy has been a history of systems that broke each other down and ended among the Greeks, in skepticism, in the Middle Ages in nominalism, and today among many in agnosticism. The truths most necessary to religion (the existence and essence of God; the origin and destiny of humanity and the world; sin and forgiveness; reward and punishment) have alternately been taught and combated. On all these issues no adequate certainty

---

[25] *PoR*, 27.

[26] *PoR*, 24.

[27] Per its Scriptural use and as shown in chapter three, Bavinck regularly uses the heart and subsequently both personality and consciousness as synonyms to describe the entire faculty range of the human 'mind'.

can be obtained in philosophy. Cicero, therefore, correctly asks the question: "Does not every eminently competent and serious philosopher confess himself to be ignorant of many things and that—even more—there are still many things to be learned by him"?[28]

While there had been a day where philosophy and science had blunted the sword of revelation with the rock of reason and scientism seemed to have prophesied the future fall of religion, at the turn of the twentieth century Bavinck saw a renewed interest in things unseen.[29] Both the academic and social imaginary were recovering from the materialisms of the late nineteenth-century and they were, he supposed, re-discovering revelation and Hegel. Revelation holds a central place in the world. This the ancients knew and this was the content of the awakening from the disenchanted death of the post-Darwinian nineteenth-century as Bavinck read his times.

After the in-breaking of autonomy as a social order in the tenets of Enlightenment, revolution, and the Darwinian turn, the expanding search for both the fact of revelation and *how* it comes to 'us' is a mark of the spirit of a renewed religious curiosity. The romantic recovery of the inexhaustible 'fullness of life' in Goethe and Herder was followed by a romantic evolution in Hegel that proved 'too organic and teleological for the nineteenth-century'.[30] After Marx and Darwin 'revelation could no longer be a possibility'.[31] Nevertheless, the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century witnessed an important change in this respect. The

---

[28] *RD* 1.313.

[29] In 1904, he wrote: 'a new generation has appeared, which has exchanged the insight that we have become so glorious with the insight that the unknowable and unrecognizable surrounds us on all sides. Besides, on the one hand, the pursued idolization of science and culture, there is on the other hand a reaching out to return to mystical idealism, to a vague belief in things unseen, which is influential in every field'. Original: 'Er is eene nieuwe generatie opgetreden, die het inzicht, dat wij het zoo heerlijk ver gebracht hebben, heeft ingeruild voor de erkentenis, dat het ongekende en onkenbare ons van alle zijden omringt. Naast het aan den eenen kant voortgezette dweepen met wetenschap en cultuur, valt er aan de andere zijde een terugkeer waar te nemen tot een mystiek idealisme, tot een vaag geloof aan onzienlijke dingen, dat op ieder terrein zijn invloed doet gelden'. Bavinck, *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing*, 7.

[30] *PoR*, 10-11.

[31] *PoR*, 13.

foremost investigators in the field of science have abandoned the attempt to explain all phenomena and events by mechanico-chemico causes'.[32] Modern theology has even helped 'us' see, he argues, that one can no longer draw from Scripture in a mechanical fashion without recognizing the historical and psychological mediation of its authors in their own *milieu*. The twentieth century is awoken to the God-world relation: 'God is not far from everyone of us'.[33] There is, therefore, an ever-blossoming emphasis on the immanence of God.

It is in this precise biblical concept of God's closeness to his creation in the reality of revelation that Bavinck proceeds in his task to 'trace the idea of revelation…to several spheres of the created universe'. He begins, accordingly, with the relations of God, humanity, and revelation by reflecting on the human awareness of self as a self. Other commentators have suggested that this turn to self is a movement that started as early as 1892 on his first *reis naar Amerika* (trip to America). The second half of Bavinck's life consisted of, Harinck suggests, a movement '*van buiten naar binnen*' (from without to within).[34] For Bavinck, *PoR* 'registers the maturation of that approach', argues Bratt, 'and documents its time in that "from without to within" was the trademark of a revolution in elite culture that was underway across the North Atlantic world in the first decade of the twentieth century'.[35] In Bavinck's second *reis* at Princeton, his turn to self participates in what Bratt calls the 'new modernism'. This modernism stood in relative antithesis to the modernities of positivism and efficient industrial

---

[32] *PoR*, 15.

[33] *PoR*, 21.

[34] George Harinck, *Bavinck's Mijne reis naar Amerika* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998). English translation: 'My Journey to America', trans. James Eglinton, George Harinck, *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Country Studies* (2017), 1-14. See also George Harinck, '"Land dat ons verwondert en ons betoove": *Bavinck en Amerika*', in George Harinck & Gerrit Neven, eds., *Ontmoetingen met Herman Bavinck* (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006).

[35] James Bratt, 'The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures: Culture and Politics in 1908', *TBR* 1 (2010), 4-24, 4.

development. These people of the 'old modernism', Bavinck suggests, were 'professionals without spirit'.[36]

New modernism, however, fragmented itself from the accepted trajectories and developed various fields in creative fashion. Beginning in 1900 examples include Picasso, T.S. Elliot, the invisible world of Planck, the death of metaphysics at the hands of Bertrand Russell in 1901, Husserl's idealism in 1903, and Einstein's discovery of the relativity of time in 1905.[37] The spirit of this age was a participant in the creative sense of the romantic movements of the previous century. Bavinck enjoined aspects of this creative movement in repudiation of materialistic evolutionism, forms of monism, and scientific positivism that engendered an alternate romanticism of the early twentieth century. He, nevertheless, wrote *PoR* to point the intellectual imagination toward a different origin and *telos* than the fragmented ends of the new moderns could offer. As Bratt summarizes:

> Bavinck's typical cultural-modernist turn away from the masses toward peer professionals, fellow *cognoscenti*, gave him some margin for open exploration. But he would not stay open all the way. At the end, no matter how fragmented reality seemed to be, and how illuminating it could be to explore it as such in this vale of human relativity, *Bavinck was sure that it all cohered in God's absolute unity—and that human life could proceed only under that assurance*.[38]

The changing social milieu, therefore, allowed Bavinck to mount a polemic on all mechanistic and positivistic conceptions of science and philosophy to offer the intellectual imagination a solution to the problems philosophy had suffered throughout the nineteenth-century—not simply a new *telos*, but an eschatology. He began with the hermeneutical re-assertion in the

---

[36] *PoR,* 348. Bavinck quotes Max Weber here. Also, cited in Bratt, 'The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures', 14. He concludes his important survey by asking whether culture is to issue in this, that men become 'professionals without spirit, pleasure-seekers without heart; non-entities of this sort pride themselves on having mounted to a previously unattained stage of culture'.

[37] Bratt offers a broader list from 1900 to 1915, 'The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures', 14-16.

[38] Bratt, 'The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures', 21. Emphasis added.

face of all positivistic methods that cognition includes representation as well as contextualized interpretation:

> The directions in which it is possible for our thinking to move are not nearly so numerous as we suppose or imagine. We are all determined in our thought and action by the peculiarity of our human nature, and then again by each one's own past and present, his character and environment. And it is not rare that those who seem to lead others are rather themselves led by them.[39]

All humans, accordingly, view the horizon of reality from one of three basic dispositions, he argued: materialism, humanism, or theism. And in the modern philosophies these are reflected in movements like evolutionary monism (materialism), idealism/pragmatism (humanism), and the philosophy of revelation (theism). As he describes in *RD* 1 per theism: 'the worldview of Scripture and of all of Christian theology is a very different one. Its name is theism, not monism; its orientation is supernatural, not naturalistic'.[40] Any 'world-view' outside of theism fails to account for 'the unity of thinking and being' (the relation between representation and other) and, therefore, loses access to the real. The myopic inwardness of especially Fichte, for example, 'is like the she-bear which draws all her nourishment from her own breasts and thus eats herself up, *ipsa alimenta sibi*'.[41]

In chapter three of *PoR*, Bavinck turns specifically to a re-conception of a solution to the problem of reality and in doing so, an explicit turn to the self. One might suppose that Bavinck's own solution would fall within his reductionist taxonomy as a form of 'humanism'. Self-consciousness, Bavinck argues, is the only path to reality. It is the solution to the problem of the self's relation to world after Descartes—namely, that the thinking self and the embodied self, the mind and the sensible consciousness, are manifest as inexplicable duality.

The question of the relation between mind and body only exacerbates the duality of subject and object and the possibility of a certain knowledge of nature. If such a dualism exists

---

[39] *PoR*, 33.
[40] *RD* 1.368.
[41] *PoR,* 60.

between the two selves, the self as intellect and as extension, then by what mechanism can 'I' become *certain* that the sensate objects and the object of representation are unified? For Bavinck, that accounting mechanism is an immediate self-consciousness of unity, which he argues is the ground[42] for positing both 'the unity of real and ideal being' and 'the unity of thinking and being'.[43] Self-consciousness is, therefore, the principle of a two-fold unity and, correspondingly, a two-fold problem. Yet, it is precisely in the turn to self-consciousness as a method for answering the question of the real that Bavinck turns away from Descartes and Kant and toward Schleiermacher.

As displayed above, the concept self-consciousness is, for Bavinck, when associated with theism, a starting point for the path to reality within an epistemic account or justification for knowledge. To explain this connection, one must revisit one of the controlling quotes of this study that has had an important presence since chapter one and is found at the climax of chapter three in *PoR*. It unveils for the reader the specific nature of Bavinck's idea of self-consciousness amid a conversation dominated by various and competing conceptions of self: 'the core (*kern*) of our self-consciousness is, as Schleiermacher perceived much more clearly than Kant, not autonomy but a feeling of dependence'. Before examining the details of the text, it is important to recall the fact that the Vos and company translation of *PoR* renders *afhankelijkheidsgevoel* as 'sense of dependence'. Yet, 'sense' doesn't connote the relation between Schleiermacher and this phrase as usually rendered in English. 'Feeling' most closely captures Bavinck's use of *gevoel* regarding its association to *Gefühl.* Once more, English translation choices mask the identity of Bavinck's terms.[44]

---

[42] The term ground must not be understood here as the same thing as *principium* as it appears in *RD* 1.

[43] *PoR,* 61, 68.

[44] *PoR,* 66. 'De kern van ons zelfbesef is, gelijk Schleiermacher veel beter dan Kant inzag, geen autonomie maar afhankelijkheidsgevoel', *WO*, 54.

In the extensive epoch of selfhood amid the broader saga of competing philosophies, from Augustine forward, Bavinck draws the reader into an investigation of a Kant-Schleiermacher dichotomy as it pertains to how self-consciousness provides a solution to the problem of 'being and thinking, the real and ideal'. It is in this dichotomization that Bavinck's appropriation is so apparent. Manfred Frank describes Schleiermacher's philosophy of identity as a theory of the conditions of knowledge turned into a doctrine of faith.[45] And Bavinck's argument follows exactly this relation of epistemology and faith. A doctrine of faith is essential for a theory of the conditions of knowledge. Faith in the fact of self is faith in the fact of the world and their unified relation. Amid this consistent *gevoel* one is conscious of their dependent, derived reality on the infinite, Absolute *wezen*.

4.2. Kant's Autonomy and Schleiermacher's Dependence

In *PoR*, Bavinck invites the reader into his distinction between Kant's autonomous and Schleiermacher's dependent selves. He does so, however, without ever offering any details of its history or its texts. Thandeka describes one way of reading this history: Kant lost the self and Schleiermacher found it.[46] Thandeka argues that Kant's method for accounting for the self according to the inference of the transcendental unity of apperception (self-consciousness) left a rupture between the empirical self that is embodied and the *I* that thinks (pure self-consciousness) in similar manner to Descartes' dualism. As Bavinck expressed more simply, Kant's account left the possibility of a thinking self that stands in isolation both from God and the world, an autonomous agent: 'Kant made human beings not only epistemologically but also morally autonomous'.[47] To say it another way, Kant lost the self that is 'an inextricable part of the natural world because of a gap… between the *noumenal* and

---

[45] Manfred Frank, 'Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 33.
[46] Thandeka, *The Embodied Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1.
[47] *RD* 1.57.

empirical self in Kant's theory of self-consciousness'.[48] The consequence of this is a failure to account for the continuity of identity across time as an identity developed in relation to the material, embodied world.[49]

Despite Schleiermacher's adoption of Kant's epistemic reservations about God from the first *Critique*, Bavinck nonetheless believed that Schleiermacher had identified a problematic rupture between self, world and God, and had located a solution to this in feeling. Thandeka also argues that Schleiermacher 'rejected intellectual intuition as the absolute principle of philosophy because he had discovered something reason could not grasp: feeling (*Gefühl*)'.[50] Bavinck offers his conclusion in simple form: with Schleiermacher 'the *kern* of self-consciousness' is not autonomy, but dependence—a feeling of dependence on both the world of objects and their ultimate cause. As a result, the necessary conditions in accounting for the possibility of knowledge, or a sure relation to the world, are not discovered in thinking but only accounted for in the immediate consciousness of a *given* self and world. This latter way of accounting for the real is a matter of faith, not inference.

The dichotomy that Bavinck cites between Kant and Schleiermacher was first built upon a longstanding esteem that Schleiermacher maintained for Kant. It was, 'in Kant', Dilthey suggests, that 'Schleiermacher learned how to think'.[51] After Schleiermacher went to the Moravian school at Barby in 1785, he illegally smuggled in Goethe's *Werther* and Kant's *Prolegomena* for his small circle of friends. He was sixteen years old and reading Kant four years after the publication of the first *Critique*. At Halle, Schleiermacher especially attached himself to Kant through the lectures of Eberhard, a student of Christian Wolff.[52] Schleiermacher

---

[48] Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 1.
[49] The purpose here is not to defend such a reading of Kant. Rather, Bavinck in presenting this reading chose to adopt Schleiermacher instead of Kant regarding the self-world relation.
[50] Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 2.
[51] Cited by Richard Crouter, 'Introduction', in *OR* (C), 19.
[52] Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 12-13, 15ff.

loved Kant's philosophy because 'it return[ed] reason from the metaphysical wasteland back to the fields that properly belong to it'.[53] During his studies at Halle he wrote to a friend, Gustav von Brinkmann, that his 'belief in [Kant's] philosophy increases day by day, and this all the more, the more I compare it with that of Leibniz'.[54]

Schleiermacher, while a student of Kant, nevertheless, grew to become a sharp critic even in his earliest writings including *On the Highest Good* (1789), *On What Gives Value to Life* (1792-3) and *On Freedom* (1790-3). These works critiqued Kant's ethics especially and gave rise, in part, to Schleiermacher's *Outlines of a Critique of Previous Ethical Theory* in 1803. It was, nevertheless, a critique of Kant forged amid his intellectual dependence on Kant above all other philosophers. So Mariña comments:

> It took many years for Schleiermacher to arrive at the contours of his own system. Crucial to his philosophical development was his encounter with Spinoza, Kant, Leibniz, Jacobi, and Fichte. Kant's influence was the most decisive; even as he moved beyond him to develop his own original system, the ideas he took from Kant continued to shape his philosophical outlook.[55]

Bavinck's reading of Kant is a somewhat commonplace analysis. His sharp, terse commentary on Kant's works reduce to his criticism of Kant's dualisms: between knowing and believing, and knowing and thinking. In his first *Critique*, Kant argues that things as they exist in themselves are distant and inapproachable. One's experience of the manifold of things is mediated by the human consciousness, the intuition and understanding, which excludes direct perception.[56] The result is that because of the activity of the human mind in discursive cognition, although things in themselves are the source of objects of knowledge they are not direct objects of knowledge. Kant, therefore, offers a sharp distinction between knowing and

---

[53] Schleiermacher, *Briefe*, I.66, in Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought*, 15.
[54] KGA V/1, no. 134, 191.
[55] Mariña, *Transformation of Self*, 8. Mariña offers a detailed presentation of Schleiermacher's reception and critique of Kant throughout this work.
[56] Immanuel Kant, *CPR*, A67-8/B92-3. Concepts of the understanding are functions: 'by a function... I understand the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one'.

thinking. Knowing involves judgment where intuition is combined with the categories of the understanding to provide a coherence of manifold perceptions.[57] Knowledge requires a unity of both sensible content and *a priori* concepts. Knowledge is synthetic. As he famously states: 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'.[58] Knowledge demands both content from without and concepts from within.

Thinking, in contrast, is an activity that pertains solely to concepts without content—that is, pure reason. His most famous examples of objects of thinking without content include God, the world, freedom, and the essence of self, all of which are illusory postulates of pure reason. Effectively, the possibility of knowledge does not extend beyond the field of sensible experience. The activity by which one brings together the given representations under 'one apperception' or self-consciousness, 'is the logical function of judgment'.[59] The result is that 'I' make knowledge possible, the end of which Bavinck calls the autonomous self-consciousness.

The self as *noumenon* in Kant's account is a necessary inference (as he would go on to develop in his second *Critique*) one must make when accounting for the possibility of experience— although outside the possibility of knowledge. He writes that the concept of the self

> [comes] about by my accompanying each representation with consciousness, but rather by my adding one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis. Therefore, it is only because I can combine a manifold of given representations in one consciousness that it is possible for me to represent the identity of the consciousness in these representations itself...[60]

The possibility, therefore, of consistent self-identity across the manifold of representations (in the empirical consciousness) depends on the ability to *represent the self to the self*. The essential

---

[57] For example: '[time and space] both taken together are, namely, the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and thereby make possible synthetic *a priori* propositions. But these *a priori* sources of cognition determine their own boundaries by that very fact (that they are merely conditions of sensibility), namely that they apply to objects only so far as they are considered as appearances, but do not present things in themselves. *CPR*, A38-39/B46.

[58] *CPR*, A51/B76.

[59] *CPR*, B 143.

[60] *CPR*, B 133.

consciousness, the 'I' that thinks, is a postulate based on inference from the fact of the representative or empirical consciousness. The self is a discovery of thinking.[61]

In the second *Critique*, these transcendental postulates are necessary because they make possible 'our' moral experience. The postulates God, infinity, and freedom are necessary if one is to act for the sake of a *summum bonum*, in a moral order. Additionally, without the supposition of the *noumenal* self, human beings would have no claim on identity and, therefore, there would be no possibility for consistent moral action. Bavinck expresses the result in brief form as he reflected upon the relation between the first and second *Critiques* as that between knowing and believing:

> In his critical examination of the human faculty of cognition this philosopher came to the conclusion that the supernatural is unattainable for us human beings, since our capacity for knowledge is bound to its innate forms and therefore limited to the circle of experience. But next to this form of knowing there is room for a faith that, based on moral freedom and under warrant of the categorical imperative, postulates the existence of God, and the soul and its immortality. However, these postulates are not scientific theses capable of rigorous proof but rest on personal, practical motives. Accordingly, believing and knowing are separated in principle, each having its own domain.[62]

Bavinck's conclusion is that the first *Critique* creates an autonomous agent that makes knowledge possible only through its own constructive faculties and cannot account for human certainty of the natural, embodied world because the *noumenal* self remains gapped from the world by the representations of the empirical consciousness. Kant's subsequent works, while trying to recover religion through moral experience, create an autonomous agent that legislates morality by reason and subsequently legitimates religion only through thinking—failing therein to move beyond Descartes' mistake: 'Kant', Bavinck concludes, 'made human beings not only epistemologically but also morally autonomous'.[63] Further, this autonomy not only led to a duality of thinking (as subject) and being (as object) but to a duality of pure self-consciousness

---

[61] This is a conclusion in Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness*, 45-53.
[62] *RD* 1.35.
[63] *RD* 1.57.

and the empirical self, the representational consciousness. Michalson, likewise, suggests that a 'rigid dualism' as a derivative of 'the absence of any principle of integration between the noumenal-moral world and the phenomenal-temporal' explains how Kant split the self into selves: 'empirical', 'noumenal', and 'transcendental ego'.[64]

Bavinck used Schleiermacher's mature work on religion and human experience because he understood its emphasis to be, in antithesis, on the fact of human experience as a struggle between freedom and dependence and, therefore, a real, certain relationship of organism with the external.[65] Schleiermacher himself argues that Kant's work is 'not anthropology but the negation of all anthropology…a proof that something of this sort is not possible according to the idea set forth by Kant and in his manner of thinking'.[66] It is not the intent here to analyze Schleiermacher's critiques of Kant. Yet, in summarizing Schleiermacher's position in contrast to Kant, Crouter writes: 'A concurrent polemical view of Kant's anthropology argues that by considering the "practical" and rational dimensions of human experience apart from the realm of desire and human sensuality, Kant neglected the very possibility of attaining an adequate understanding of human nature'.[67] And Bavinck argues similarly:

> In [Kant's] critique of practical reason, he sought to regain what he lost as a result of pure reason. The categorical imperative—our moral consciousness— gives us the right to postulate the existence of God, freedom, and immortality. Dogmatics is built on a foundation of morality; religion becomes a means of achieving virtue, and God an emergency relief worker for human beings. The content of religion and dogmatics, as Kant develops it in his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, is purely rationalistic. Kant is still situated completely in the eighteenth century. The historical and positive has no value for him, *and he isolates human beings from all [external] influences*. For Kant, only the religion of autonomous reason is the true religion.[68]

---

[64] Gordon Michalson, Jr., *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 78-79. Cited in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 120-121.

[65] For a full discussion of Schleiermacher's critiques of Kant see Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 8-25.

[66] In Schleiermacher's *Soliloquies*, KGA I/2, 366. Cited in Crouter, 'Introduction', in *OR* (C), 16, fn. 50.

[67] Crouter, 'Introduction', in *OR* (C), 16.

[68] *RD* 1.164.

Kant's religious foundation also, Schleiermacher argues, postulated the concept of God in the activity of the will. And this religious foundation is a product of reason, which offers an 'appearance of atheism'.[69] The idea of God is always, Schleiermacher argued, a human idea, an idea developed in the standpoint of finitude, in the human consciousness. Yet, Kant's 'idea of God' became 'associated with that to which the idea refers'.[70] Kant's religious claims are nothing but speculative postulates built on trying to justify the experience of a moral identity that cannot be justified with respect to the first *Critique*, Schleiermacher suggests in the *Sittenlehre*.[71]

Bavinck's juxtaposition of Kant and Schleiermacher in *PoR* is determined by his interpretation of Kant's agent as one freed from 'external influences' while Schleiermacher's agent, discovered particularly in *CF* §4, is determined by its relation with God *and* the world. For Bavinck, the former chose a rigorous autonomy, and the latter (while not free from Kant's mistakes) chose a dependent agent.

This brief elucidation of Bavinck's critique of Kant is only cursory and necessarily so. Between Kant and Schleiermacher is, Bavinck supposes, the simple distinction of emphasis on an autonomous and dependent self.[72] The former fails to account for the certainty of the real. It is, for Bavinck, Schleiermacher's philosophical grammar of self, situated within a robust doctrine of faith in revelation, that he adopts to his own account of the certainty of reality.

---

[69] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Dialektik, aus Schleiermachers handschriftlichem Nachlasse herausgegeben von Ludwig Jonas*, in *sämmtliche Werke* (1852), III. 4, 428. Original publication: (Berlin: Reimer, 1839). Translated in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 3.

[70] Schleiermacher, *Dialektik, von Ludwig Jonas*, 436. Translated in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 22.

[71] Schleiermacher, *Grundlinien einer Kritik der bisherigen Sittenlehre*, *Friedrich Schleiermacher's Sämmtliche Werke*, III, 1. Translated in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 18.

[72] Kant's critique of the Enlightenment, Bavinck writes, 'was discouraging, even devastating, for the rationalism and eudemonism of the Enlightenment'. *RD* 1.164.

That it is a Schleiermacherian adoption is evidenced in three ways in addition to the content of the argument itself (section 4.3).

First, Bavinck's definitions of immediate self-consciousness stand on both sides of the Schleiermacher/Kant dichotomy: (i) self-consciousness is a consciousness of our own being, (ii) of 'being something definite', and (iii) 'feel[ing] totally dependent on some absolute power who is the one, infinite essence (*wezen*)'. [73] Like Schleiermacher, the immediate self-consciousness is the feeling of absolute dependence. In context, Bavinck refers not to the temporal or objective self-consciousness but to the *Ik* that persists in all states, the immediate self-consciousness. Clear references to Schleiermacher's *CF* (particularly §3-4) are evident in Bavinck's construction of 'being aware' as a consciousness of a being, a self, beyond the determining self and the 'total [absolute] feeling of dependence'. The third element of Bavinck's aforementioned definition, which regards a revelation of human nature as dependent, is nearly identical to Schleiermacher's concept of universal piety, which is also regarded as a fact of human nature: 'that we are conscious of ourselves as being absolutely dependent, or, which intends the same meaning, as being in relation with God'—and God who is 'one, supreme infinite being'.[74] This appropriation is especially clear when considering its location next to the explicit dichotomization of Kant and Schleiermacher and Bavinck's resolute choice of the latter. This point alone is a definitive, self-proclaimed appropriation.

Second, nevertheless, is noteworthy proof that indeed Schleiermacher's *CF* was a primary source for Bavinck's grammar in the argument for reality in *PoR*. Amid his argument, while

---

[73] *PoR*, 66; '*voelen wij ons met alle schepselen volstrekt afhankelijk van eene absolute macht, die het eeuwige, oneindige wezen is*'. *WO*, 55.
[74] *CF* §4, 8. Also, in *OR*, 77: 'The contemplation of religious persons is simply the immediate consciousness of the universal being of all finite things in and through the infinite, of all temporal things in and through the eternal. To seek and to find this infinite and eternal factor in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all action and passion, and to have and to know life itself only in immediate feeling—that is religion'.

describing 'dependence', Bavinck inserts the German modifier *schlechthinige*:[75] '[Consciousness of dependence] becomes a felt, conscious, voluntary dependence, a dependence of man as a rational and moral being, and for this very reason it becomes a sense of absolute dependence, *schlechthinige* dependence'.[76] The term, which translates as 'absolute' in German, is a definitive marker pointing to a single source. It is, according to Schleiermacher, a relatively rare word. Again, in §4 of *CF* Schleiermacher writes: 'I am indebted to Professor Delbrück for the word *schlechthinig*, which often appears in explanations that follow. At first, I was not inclined to use it, and I have no knowledge of its already having been employed elsewhere, but now that he has offered this adjective, I am very pleased to follow him in its use'.[77] The point is that Bavinck's appropriation of the philosophical exposition of self, particularly in *CF* §4, is clearly marked by his adoption of *schlechthinig*, an adoption of an exclusively Schleiermacherian use. Schleiermacher there elucidates *das Gefühl schlechtinninger Abhängigkeit* (the feeling of absolute dependence).

Third, while a speculative connection, Bavinck's most common expression for his own goal in his account of self-consciousness and the real in *PoR* chapter three is the 'unity of being and thinking', which he elsewhere associates directly with Schleiermacher and particularly with the *Dialektik*. *CF* does not apply self-consciousness or the feeling of dependence directly to the epistemic quandaries of the conditions of approaching reality in any detail, which is the primary way Bavinck is using them in *PoR*. In *CF*, this is assumed. Schleiermacher previews the necessity of the awareness of the questions of the knowing self for his dogmatic readers in §4.1. There he maps the terrain of the elements of the self.[78] There is that aspect of the self, he suggests, that expresses a condition of receptivity and that element that expresses sheer activity. 'To these propositions, assent can be unconditionally demanded; and no one will deny

---

[75] Bavinck's reference is spelled with a slight difference in Bavinck's original text than Schleiermacher's.
[76] *PoR*, 78.
[77] *CF* §4.
[78] This point was first made in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 11.

[these two elements of the self] who is capable of a little introspection and can find interest in the real subject of our present inquiries'.[79] Schleiermacher's present inquiry, being dogmatics, would require the reader interested in the activity and receptivity of the self (or, freedom and dependence) in relative relation to the world to turn either to psychological examination or to Schleiermacher's previous writings. One must be aware at least that in the self-consciousness there are two elements: 'the one expresses the existence of the subject for itself, the other its co-existence with another'.[80] The point is that the development of self-consciousness in relation to the problem of reality is present only by implication in *CF*. Attention is paid to the relation between self-consciousness and reality or for the conditions of knowing things, however, in Schleiermacher's other writings, especially in the *Dialektik* and also in *OR*.

Dialektik is a posthumous publication of Schleiermacher's lectures on philosophy given in 1811,[81] 1814, 1818, 1822, 1828 and 1831, which has seen various publications. Bavinck too was familiar with these lectures (although he uses them rarely, only six citations in the whole corpus), and read the edition by Ludwig Jonas, Schleiermacher's student. Schleiermacher commissioned Jonas to prepare both his and Jonas' lecture notes for publication after Schleiermacher had prepared only part of the introduction and realized his health was failing.[82] The Jonas' edition was later published in *Friedrich Schleiermacher's sämmtliche Werke* in 1839.[83]

---

[79] *CF* §4.1, 13.
[80] *CF* §4.1, 13.
[81] Andreas Arndt, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Dialektik (1811)* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986).
[82] See John Thiel, *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre: Criticism and the Methodology of Dogmatics. Basler und Berner Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, Band 43* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981), 10.
[83] Schleiermacher, *Dialektik, von Ludwig Jonas*, in *sämmtliche Werke* (1852), III. 4. Bavinck cites the 1839 edition. The 1814 and 1818 lectures are the foundation of Jonas' text and include the other lectures as appendices and notes. He also supplies Schleiermacher's original introduction as Appendix F. Schleiermacher summarized the form of the *Dialektik* best in his address to Jonas before his death: 'as you know, I wanted to give my *Dialektik* and my *Christian Morals* the form that the dogmatics has. But I have abandoned that project. I will hasten to bring them somewhat into the form that the *Theological Encyclopedia* possesses'. Quoted in Bruno Weiss,

Central to *Dialektik* is the modern philosophical dilemma, how can one justify the relation between reality and the concepts of human cognition as knowledge? For the purpose here, while Bavinck never quotes from the *Dialektik*, he did adopt Schleiermacher's recurring way of expressing the problem of reality: between *Sein und Denken* (Being and Thinking).[84] Although this binary is common in the philosophical milieu, Bavinck directly associates this phrase with Schleiermacher's *Dialektik* in *RD* 1 and then uses it commonly throughout his corpus and especially in *PoR*.

The purpose of Schleiermacher's *Dialektik* is, in part, to unfold the conditions for knowledge. First, he argues, knowledge requires 'correspondence with reality'. Yet, because one cannot determine in the intellect whether such correspondence has been successful, he provides two other conditions that serve as proofs. The second: any aspect of knowledge of a thing requires coherence with all knowledge. The third: that there is a general universal agreement about a determination amongst other people. There is a realist conception of knowing behind these conditions that is alternative to the idealisms of Kant and especially Fichte. But, for Schleiermacher, 'genuine knowledge' always remains just beyond the grasp.[85] His realism is an ethic to strive for rather than a consistent determination to be achieved.[86] It is, in other words, a critical account searching for a transcendental, which Schleiermacher calls the 'transcendent'.

Untersuchungen über Friedrich Schleiermachers Dialektik (Halle: Heynemann, 1878), 13. Cited in Theil, *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre*, 11.

[84] For example, in *Dialektik, Aufzeichnungen zum Kolleg* 1831, KGA II/10, 321: Of the question where and how is our being and thinking given as one, we answer… 'Die Frage Wo und Wie uns Sein und Denken als eins gegeben ist beantworten wir daß uns das Wissenwollen vor dem Denken nicht als Denken sondern als Sein gegeben ist, daß uns ab er dasselbe in unserem Verfahren Denken wird'.

[85] Schleiermacher, *Dialectic, Or, The Art of Doing Philosophy: A Study Edition of the 1811 Notes*, translated and introduced by Terrence Tice (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 1, fn.6. This point is made in Mariña, 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty: A Reply to my Critics', 122.

[86] Mariña, 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty', 122.

Anticipating Schleiermacher's work in the *Dialektik* are brief presentations of realist philosophy that are subtle critiques of transcendental and Fichtean idealisms. In *OR* already a subtle epistemology is attached jointly with a doctrine of faith:

> If man is not one with the Eternal in the unity of intuition and feeling which is immediate, he remains, in the unity of consciousness, which is derived, forever apart. What then shall become of the highest utterance of the speculation of our days, complete rounded idealism, if it does not sink again into this unity, if the humility of religion does not suggest to its pride another realism…[87]

Such an arrogant idealism, he suggests, 'annihilates the Universe while it seems to aim at constructing it'.[88]

Fichte had rid his philosophy of Kant's thing-in-itself and relegated all being (the non-ego) to the self.[89] In knowledge, the self knows only itself in positing the object in its own subject. Bavinck picked up Schleiermacher's commitment to dependence and freedom at work in the conditions of knowledge because at the highest level of self-consciousness it posits the converse: dependence on that which is not the self. The Absolute, the Eternal, is transcendent in relation to the finite subject. While the Absolute is present in Fichte's 'I', for Bavinck's Schleiermacher the original unity of consciousness is an unapproachable fact of faith in that which is not finite as the ground of the unity of being.[90] Accordingly, when Schleiermacher first began his lectures on *Dialektik* in 1811, he did so at the precise time Fichte was also lecturing in display of opposition. Students, Purvis notes, sometimes had to choose between the two lecturers.[91] Schleiermacher subtly referenced his lack of esteem for the 'circle of a certain school' or Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in his second lecture: 'the term "dialectic" is chosen in part because use of another term could easily have inspired the opinion that this presentation belongs within the circle of a certain school that would have selected this term,

---

[87] *OR*, 39.
[88] *OR*, 39.
[89] Mariña, 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty', 122.
[90] See Mariña, 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty'.
[91] Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 158-9.

and in part to designate what is distinctive about this presentation'.[92] The conditions of knowledge are presented more as an art, a way of understanding, in the mode of a dialogical-dialectic.

The point for this thesis is that Bavinck at least understood the project of the *Dialektik* as an epistemic one in some unity with Schleiermacher's thought in *CF*, the religious and theological. It has already been established that *PoR* shows Bavinck adopting the conceptual grammar provided by Schleiermacher in *CF*. Bavinck's reading of the *Dialektik* alongside *CF* shows that in *PoR*, he also subtly adopted Schleiermacher's way of construing the 'problem of reality' via the immediate self-consciousness. While the evidence in *PoR* points resolutely to the early pages of *CF* as his primary tool per the use of the 'feeling of absolute dependence' in association with the 'immediate self-consciousness', the untranslated '*schlechthinig*', and the logic of the argument by comparison to *CF* §4, Bavinck's broader corpus does convey a cursory familiarity with Schleiermacher's philosophy and its importance for Schleiermacher's dogmatics. If this is the case, Bavinck saw something of what Schleiermacher scholars have especially emphasized in the twentieth century. Mariña describes this hermeneutical key accordingly: 'Behind Schleiermacher's theological achievement lay a rigorous grappling with fundamental metaphysical problems. As such his theology cannot be adequately understood aside from his philosophy'.[93] Hans-Richard Reuter claimed that any attempt to understand *CF* is incomplete without the basic assertions of the *Dialektik* in hindsight.[94] The same conclusion was reached by Paul Frederick Mehl in 1961, and John Thiel in 1981.[95] Thandeka's work on Schleiermacher's unity of self agrees and extends this argument to suggest that 'our ongoing

---

[92] Schleiermacher, *Dialectic, or the Art of Doing Philosophy*, 3.

[93] Jacqueline Mariña, *Transformation of the Self*, 4.

[94] Hans-Richard Reuter, *Die Einheit der Dialektik Friedrich Schleiermachers: Eine systematische Interpretation* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1979). Cited in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 15.

[95] Paul Frederick Mehl, *Schleiermacher's Mature Doctrine of God as Found in the Dialektik of 1822 and Second Edition of the Christian Faith* (1830-31), (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1961); John Thiel, *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981), 10.

failure to understand Schleiermacher's own solution [to Kant's philosophy] has resulted in the reduction of his insights to the confines of modernity and turned him merely into the progenitor of and enigmatic father figure of modern protestant theology'.[96] Mariña, Reuter, Thiel, Mehl, and Thandeka's claims agree in theory, as well, with Hirsch's contention that Schleiermacher's doctrine of God is based on 'new principles' that are found outwith *CF*.[97]

It is not important here to defend these claims by entering a historical-philosophical study of Schleiermacher's major texts in relation. That is neither the point nor a claim of this study. Rather, it is to say that Bavinck did recognize the importance of the two texts together to the degree that he at least read the obscure *Dialektik* and established a relation of 'basic assertions' between the *Dialektik* and the introduction to *CF*. While there is no evidence in Bavinck's writings that he adopted any of the major arguments of the *Dialektik per se*,[98] especially considering its sparse appearance in Bavinck's works, he did adopt Schleiermacher's grammar of immediate self-consciousness, feeling, and dependence (relative and absolute) from *CF* alongside the problem of the 'unity of being and thinking' to combine the conditions of knowledge with a doctrine of faith—and he did so in his own, idiosyncratic way. In other words, while the question of the *Dialektik* concerned the human desire for knowledge (*das Wissenwollen*) and its transcendental ground, *CF* unveiled the ground of religion in the feeling of absolute dependence. Bavinck's project in *PoR*, is to take the question of the former (the modern question) and answer it using the grammar of the latter: the revelation of self, world, and God in the immediate self-consciousness and feelings of relative and absolute dependence are the ground that provides the certainty for a correspondence between the real (being) and

---

[96] Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 4.

[97] Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der Neuern Evangelischen Theologie*, vol. 5 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949), 298-99. Cited in Thandeka, *The Embodied Self*, 5.

[98] For example, Bavinck's philosophy is framed, in distinction from Schleiermacher, with the Christian concept of revelation derived from his dogmatics as that which makes intelligible the unity of real and ideal, self and world. Bavinck's work in *PoR* is only possible after reflecting on Jesus Christ because by revelation, he means a Christian concept. See *PoR* and especially Ch. 7, 170.

the ideal (thinking). Again, as Manfred Frank suggests of Schleiermacher, there was 'a turning point' in his philosophy of identity 'at which a theory of the conditions of knowledge turn[ed] into a doctrine of faith'.[99] Bavinck did something similar using Schleiermacher's concepts.

Bavinck's citations of the *Dialektik*, while very occasional, are insightful and help secure the point that Bavinck, while not dependent on *Dialektik*, supposed the early portions of *CF* to be in consanguinity with Schleiermacher's basic philosophy. In the first edition of volume II of Bavinck's *RD* published in 1897 as well as the subsequent editions (which remain nearly the same) Bavinck does, as typical, charge Schleiermacher with a tendency toward pantheism. He summarizes his reading of Schleiermacher's *Dialektik*: 'God and world are correlates; they give expression to the same being, first as unity and then as totality'.[100] But he adds this qualifier to his assessment of the *Dialektik* as well as to Hegel's *Logic* and collected works: 'this remains pantheism… but, [it should be remembered] the underlying explanation is difficult to grasp'.[101] A more important reference, however, is found in Bavinck's reflections on the incomprehensibility of God and its relation to modern philosophy:

> Also Schleiermacher, though diverging in many respects from Kant and Fichte and aligning himself more closely with Spinoza, agreed with the former in the doctrine of the unknowability of God. While the idea of *the unity of being and thinking, of the real and the ideal, that is, the idea of God, is the assumption of all our knowledge, the ground of our thinking, this idea cannot be captured in thought* and remains hidden "behind an [epistemological] curtain" (*Dialektik*, 60ff). The moment we try to bring the Absolute closer to us, it is finitized in our thinking and we begin to speak in images. In a word, the Absolute is not accessible to human knowledge. In his *Christian Faith, Schleiermacher proposed the same ideas,*

---

[99] Manfred Frank, 'Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*', 33.

[100] Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* II (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1897), 154. Original: *God en wereld zijn correlate, zij drukken hetzelfde zijn uit, eerst als eenheid dan als totaliteit.* From Schleiermacher, *Dialektik* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1839), 162. Bavinck typically misunderstands Schleiermacher's use of the concepts 'God' and 'world' as correlates. He takes the correlate to be an ontological claim rather than establishing a merely epistemic relation. Schleiermacher's intention, it seems, is to suggest that it is impossible to think of 'God' without the 'world' precisely because of the embodied situation. This is not meant to assert an ontological unity between God and world. The claim that Schleiermacher is a pantheist is a common mistake, Bavinck included.

[101] 'Wel blijft dit pantheisme…Maar wat daaronder te verstaan zij, is moeilijk te begrijpen'. *GD* II.154.

though in a more religious and less elaborate form. God is the "whence" of our existence; and as such an absolute causality, he cannot be the object of our knowing but only the content of the feeling of absolute dependence.[102]

The important point here is that as early as 1897 Bavinck grasped from both the *Dialektik* and *CF* that the central tenets of Schleiermacher's concept of self-consciousness pertained to God as the ground of 'the unity of being and thought, of the real and ideal' and that *the* idea is the 'assumption of all of our knowledge'. This idea possesses no content and it, accordingly, *is neit in gedachte te vaten* (is not found in thinking). Notice especially that in the above quote Bavinck read *CF* in the continuum of the *Dialektik*. *CF* provides an exposition on the religious element building upon the 'same' ideas of the *Dialektik*, Bavinck recognizes, and it does so in a 'less elaborate way'. Thus, it is from *CF* (based on the adoption of *schlechtinnig* dependence and the focus on the feeling of absolute dependence) but as a brief distillation of an epistemological query in the *Dialektik* that Bavinck argues immediate self-consciousness and *gevoel* are crucial in any account of the certainty of the unity of real and ideal, the conditions of giving an account of how one knows. Helmer's summary of *Dialektik* makes this distinction clear: '*Dialektik* is not a metaphysic that grounds claims of correspondence, but is a progressive teasing out of the processes by which thinking—oriented to knowing—occurs'.[103] The 'transcendent ground' of the *Dialektik* is 'cast exclusively in metaphysical, not religious terms'.[104] Bavinck's *PoR* does ground claims of correspondence and the certainty of correspondence but does so by appealing to Schleiermacher's religious element rather than teasing out the process of knowing in detail or in merely metaphysical terms. Excluded from Bavinck's account is detail. In Schleiermacher's philosophical account in contrast, he considers by example the relations between thinking and hermeneutics, author, text, and language in detail.

---

[102] *RD* 2.43.
[103] Christine Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', 37.
[104] Christine Helmer, 'Schleiermacher', 37.

Additionally, Bavinck later identifies the epistemic problem of *Dialektik* in the second edition of volume I (1906), which was not present in the first edition of 1895. He writes:

> The philosophical viewpoint [Schleiermacher] assumed, as is evident from his *Dialektik*, prevented him from conceiving theology as a "science concerning God" (*scientia de Deo*) and naturally had to lead him into asserting a rigorous separation between theology and philosophy (a science). God, as the *unity of the ideal and the real*, is still unknowable to the intellect (which always thinks in terms of opposites) and can be experienced only in the heart; religion, therefore, is not cognition or action but a certain emotional state.[105]

While Bavinck does not want to collapse philosophy into theology, the point of *PoR* is that only theism, by which he means a doctrine of Christian revelation, satisfies modern philosophical dilemmas. Thereby, Bavinck adopts the conclusions of *CF* §2-5 into his account of the correspondence of self and world. Additionally, in the 1897 publication, he offers direct citations from the 1839 Jonas edition of the *Dialektik*.[106] Bavinck, consequently, adopts the epistemic question between real and ideal, being and thinking, as well as the method of 'self-consciousness' in the third chapter of *PoR*. 'In self-consciousness we have not to deal with a mere phenomenon but with a *noumenon*… self-consciousness is the *unity of real and ideal being*'. And here:

> The world of perception is given to us in our consciousness, not as dream or hallucination, but as phenomenon and representation, involving, according to universal belief, the existence of an objective world. This empirical and undeniable fact is recognized, and to some degree explained, only when self-consciousness is conceived in the sense above defined *as the unity of real and ideal being*… for in this case the gulf between reality and representation, being and thinking, is bridged over.[107]

And lastly, he ties it directly to his Schleiermacher citation:

> Although the attempt to recover after this fashion [of idealism's use of the Absolute] *the lost unity of thought and being* deserves appreciation, it is impossible to regard it as a true solution to the problem. Here it is again the testimony of self-consciousness that enters a protest. It has already been observed that Schleiermacher better than Kant apprehended the essence of self-

---

[105] *RD* 1.47–48.

[106] This includes pages 397, 60, 163, 78, 79, 69, 78, 87, and in that order.

[107] *PoR*, 68.

consciousness when he defined it as an absolute sense [feeling] of dependence.[108]

Kant postulated the transcendental ego per a necessary deduction of pure reason, thereby cutting the ego off from the thing, creating an autonomous agent. Autonomy, unlike dependence, is a pronouncement of self-determination and self-governance. Kant, in other words, separated the human individual from God and the world, Bavinck argues.[109] And while a turn to the self is indeed Bavinck's solution, he uses Schleiermacher's dependent agent revealed to the self in the fact of the lower and higher aspects of self-consciousness. In other words, Bavinck turns to the self to explain God's agency in the activity of human knowing. Only in the affirmation of dependence can one describe a revelational philosophy. It is now appropriate to turn to the details of Bavinck's account of the unity of being and thinking given to the immediate self-consciousness as the feeling of absolute dependence.

4.3. Self, World, and God

Bavinck's argument in short begins from the middle or the human consciousness yet also takes its stand in a committed supernatural world-view.[110] Theism, Bavinck argues, is the only 'philosophy' that can provide an adequate account of the conditions of knowledge with respect to the fact of subjectivity because the certainty of reality requires a doctrine of faith, a felt dependence on the infinite, Absolute essence (*wezen*). The religious experience of 'dependence' therein is directly connected to an account of the conditions of knowledge: on the 'given' self, on the 'given' world, and on the *giving* God. Reflection on the certainty of

---

[108] *PoR*, 61, 68, 76.

[109] 'Kant, "the philosopher of Protestantism," [has] taught us that it is only the moral will whose activity unlocks the way to God and the knowledge of him. The intellect, after all, is confined to the world of the senses and does not extend to the origin, essence, and end of things'. *RD* 1.52.

[110] Aspects of the next two sections were argued for in brief in Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, 'Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicty, Consciousness, and Theological Epistemology', *SJT* no. 3 (2017), 310-32

immediate experience unveils nothing other than the 'fact' of belief present in human nature—namely, that the concept of God, as the transcendent object of dependence, makes intelligible the unifed experience of self and world. His argument for reality, accordingly, is one of analogy: the unity of the ego with the embodied self of which each human feels certain in immediate self-consciousness is analogous to and reveals the unity of the finite world with the human agent (the unity of subject and object) even within representational life. Self-consciousness in this schema is rendered an organism, combining two aspects of consciousness, the immediate and the temporal. In other words, the dissolution of subject/object in immediate self-consciousness, as that between one's mind and body, is the presupposition of all self-world relations. Self-consciousness reveals the organic unity of self and world. As Bavinck puts it, in self-consciousness 'our own being is revealed to us', and that being is the unity of one's identity, of the determined aspects of self standing upon the essence of self.[111] Likewise, as 'our own being is revealed to us in self-consciousness' as an immediate unity of subject and object, so similarly the unity of representation and idea is revealed to us as a certainty in thinking. In another place, he describes it accordingly: 'in the phenomena of consciousness [or temporal consciousness] our own ego [*Ik*] always presents itself to us'. Similarly, 'our perception does not have for its object the representation, but in and through the representation the things themselves.'[112] This finite unity of subject and object, additionally, being upheld by God offers a faint analogy (a vestige) to the Absolute unity of God given in the fact of creaturely dependence on the infinite.

The argument begins by commending idealism in part. The 'mind of man', Bavinck writes, 'is the basis and principle of all knowing. If there be an objective reality, a world of matter and force…it can only reach me through my consciousness alone... Apart from consciousness, I know nothing of myself or of reality'.[113] And it is this, he argues, that idealism generally

---

[111] *PoR*, 61.
[112] *PoR*, 60.
[113] *PoR*, 56.

considered got right in comparison with naïve realisms that miss the 'middle' or the representative nature of one's relation to the world. This claim alone is sufficient to separate Bavinck from common sense realisms.

Yet, the gap, he argued, between being and thinking persists in modern accounts of the real that begin from an orientation of humanism. That is, humanism is a reductionist term for describing an epistemological over-emphasis on the conceptual categories provided by the intellect for the sake of perceiving the sensible. He associates this mistake with idealism and pragmatism. Both, he suggests, lack attention to the given. They prioritize chaos and human autonomy over faith in what is.

And on each side of these twin pillars one fails to satisfy 'the needs of the intellect' and the 'needs of the heart'.[114] It is peculiar to Bavinck's conception of right philosophy, that any world orientation requires attention to the 'needs' of the whole human. He expresses this view in the tired point: that 'only theism…[or] revelation alone is capable of solving the problem [of reality]. The only path by which we are able to attain reality is that of self-consciousness'.[115] And so he enters into an exposition of this truth with a critique of modern rationalisms.[116]

Being (the thing) precedes thinking (the representation).[117] This dictum was critical, Bavinck argued, for accounting for the formation of knowledge.

---

[114] *PoR*, 53.
[115] *PoR*, 56.
[116] While using Schleiermacher to develop his argument, he also, at times, suggests that Schleiermacher's philosophy succumbed to the same problem as Hegel, according to his reading of Hegel. He is rather inconsistent in that way. In some instances, he appears to understand just the realist Schleiermacher was, and at others, supposes that Schleiermacher lost 'being' in 'thinking': 'But Hegel and Schleiermacher were not content with the thesis that thinking and being correspond to each other; they equated the two. This equation of thinking and being is the basic error of speculative philosophy'. *RD* 1.521.
[117] *RD* 1.217.

A thing does not arise in me like a dream and does not follow logically from antecedent impressions but often comes to me abruptly from without, breaking down the train of earlier impressions. Such things are not dependent on me but have existence apart from me and possess properties that cannot be attributed to the representation I have of them.[118]

Such correspondence with the real was lost in modern rationalism (including idealism), he argued. The unity of being and thinking is realized only within the recognition that being is not collapsed into thinking.

In more recent philosophy this rationalistic trend again surfaced in Descartes who, casting all tradition aside, finally found his fixed starting point in thought and from it inferred being: *cogito ergo sum*. With that move logical necessity and coherence, the mathematical order of ground and consequence in the work of Spinoza, became the standard of truth. The world of sense perception is at most the occasion for, not the source of, our knowledge; the human mind is able to produce all knowledge from within itself, with its own means, by means of thought. Said Leibniz: "Our ideas, even those of perceptible things, come from within ourselves.[119]

Idealism, in turn, also 'lost the unity of thinking and being'.[120] 'To this end [of idealism], thinking brings with it from within itself the origins (*principia*), the seeds (*semina*) of all knowledge. Thinking creates the form of our conceptual world (Kant), and also its matter and content (Fichte); indeed, it creates and constructs the entire world, not only the world of thought, but also the being itself'.[121] It was both Schleiermacher and Hegel, he writes, who recovered something of the true nature of humanity:

Inherent in Hegel's and Schleiermacher's starting point, there was a splendid truth. *Thinking and being are most intimately related and correspond to each other.* Rationalism attempts to justify religion before the unqualified court of common sense. But Hegel and Schleiermacher both understood that religion occupies a place of its own in human life, that it is a unique phenomenon and therefore also requires a uniquely appropriate organ in human nature… both rose above the vulgar rationalism of the day, and both pointed to the harmony between subject and object… The objective [world], after all, exists for us only to the extent that it comes to our consciousness. It can be approached in no other way than through our consciousness. Similarly, religion is not a reality

---

[118] *RD* 1.217.
[119] *RD* 1.215.
[120] *PoR*, 76.
[121] *RD* 1.215.

for me except insofar as I have absorbed it in feeling or reason, or whatever its organ may be.[122]

But between the two, in his association of the conditions of knowledge with a concept of religion, Bavinck in *PoR* chooses the organon *gevoel* as the path for approaching reality with certainty. His argument proceeds in four primary movements. First, that the certainty of self in self-consciousness is immediate, given, and pre-thinking (*denken*), or pre-cognitive (as is commonly used in Schleiermacher discourse). Second, he argues that self-consciousness reveals a definite, essential self that has a peculiar nature in the feeling of dependence. Third, in immediate self-consciousness is a two-fold dependence in relation to the finite and infinite. Fourth, in immediate self-consciousness is also revealed a freedom that is not only in antithesis to dependence but inclusive of dependence.

(i) Self-consciousness is immediately given and always present. Instead of proceeding in an account of the unity of thought and being from the activity of thinking, Bavinck proposes that one start from *cogito* (*I* think). He argues, in a rather enigmatic way, for an emphasis on the first-person subject contained in the Latin verb. When starting from the activity of *cogitare* (or reflecting on the activity of thinking), one is forced to either infer the unity of being and thought or recognize the real to be a derivative of an act of the will (which he supposes is the consequence of Kant's first *Critique* presented in the argument of the second *Critique*).[123] Beginning with thinking to account for unity, one is stuck in a web of representations, being forced to perpetually think about what one can only think about and never know. One therefore cannot approach reality due to the incitement of perpetual representations of the mere *noumenal*. He concludes: 'Satan cannot cast out Satan'—an allusion to Matthew's Gospel translatable to: 'there is no escape from representations by means of representations'.[124] Using,

---

[122] *RD* 1.520–521.
[123] *PoR*, 60.
[124] *PoR*, 59.

he supposes, the activity of thinking to account for the unity of reality and the essence of things, as did Descartes, leaves one without any justification for the experience of reality.

In contrast, he draws an analogy: 'as self-consciousness presupposes the self not outside but in the content of consciousness, so by the same law and with the same certainty the representation, which does not operate outside of self-consciousness but is the product and content of it, points back to an object'. [125] He also states the point accordingly: 'in consciousness, our own being, and the being of the world, are disclosed to us antecedently to our thought or volition; that is, they are revealed to us in the strictest sense of the word'.[126] For Bavinck, there is a distinction between representation and the thing in itself. Yet, his point is that in and through the representation is offered the thing, an organic unity of thing and representation in the life of the mind, which can only be accounted for in a certainty of faith rather than in account that begins its justification from reason. It is by faith that everyone approaches reality, the existence of other minds, and even their own identity. Immediate self-consciousness is certain of the self in the activity of consciousness as a presupposition and accepts the pre-conceptual certainty of all unity. Likewise, the thing is given to 'us' with certainty in the representation prior to any discursive reasoning. In other words, the self and world and the unity of self and world are a gift to the consciousness and ought be approached according to a certainty of faith rather than a critique of reason. To operate in the spirit of the latter is to suppose oneself judge rather than creature.

In the activity of thinking, therefore, one presupposes being and does not attempt to account for being from the activity of thinking. In the activity of thinking, there is an antecedent 'revelation' of self and world without which, thinking would not be possible. His conclusion, therefore, is that thinking is no guarantor of being. It is, rather, that being (both self and world) is revealed, 'given for nothing (*geschonken om niet*)', to the consciousness before all

---

[125] *PoR*, 71.
[126] *PoR*, 75.

reason, desire, or will.[127] 'Belief in the objective world is a fact' no one can deny.[128] Thereby, he associates the givenness of the self in the ever-accompanying immediate self-consciousness with the concept of grace or gift. This unity of self is 'known' in feeling. Notice, already, the language of grace and faith is the key to epistemic certainty.

And this pre-cognitive awareness of the self to the self is the foundation, he argues, for all other knowledge. The ego is not established in the activity of thinking but it is simply 'given' in 'feeling' (*gevoel*) and as 'belief'.[129] He suggests similarly in *RD*: 'Even now [in modernity] human originality is greater to the degree that human beings live by intuition rather than reflection… They have in common with religious faith that knowledge is acquired immediately, not by reflection, and that in degree of certainty they are in no way inferior to that which is based on proofs'.[130]

(ii) *Immediate self-consciousness also reveals to the self a peculiar, definite nature in the feeling of dependence.* When one pulls back the curtain of the contents of representational life in self-reflection, one finds a more definite being in the consciousness of self. Ego is not, as he just suggested, approached in a mode of comprehension or a discovery of essence through investigation, but makes itself known in and through the contents and activities of consciousness. This is to say, Bavinck recognizes the basic distinction and inter-relation of immediate and objective self-consciousness. But the self that is revealed to 'us', rather than a bald substance or monad is 'full of life', likely an allusion to Goethe.[131] This life is more clearly expressed in being 'for' and from another. In other words, the unity of self is felt in relation to both the finite and infinite as soon as one is awoken to their own existence. When reflecting on the 'core' of self-consciousness, he suggests, its nature is dependence, which describes the subjective-feeling

---

[127] *PoR*, 62.
[128] *PoR*, 67.
[129] *PoR*, 66-7.
[130] *RD* 1.568.
[131] *PoR*, 63.

aspect of the fact of religiosity, a feeling of absolute dependence. This dependence oscillates, Bavinck argues, between the absolute and relative, adopting Schleiermacher's distinction in *CF* §4.3.

In general, the consciousness of being 'what we are' is a consciousness of finitude, and, therefore, necessarily a 'feeling of dependence'.[132] Or, as he also describes it: 'in our self-consciousness we are not only conscious of being, but also of being something definite, of being the very thing we are. And this definite mode of being, most generally described, consists in a dependent, limited, finite, created being'.[133] For Bavinck, this consciousness is the revelation of creaturliness—a universal intuition or feeling peculiar to humanity and at the core of its selfhood. And at the *kern* of what it means to have religiosity (which is, to be human) is the core of our self-consciousness: as Schleiermacher perceived much more clearly than Kant, not autonomy, but a *feeling* of dependence.[134]

Gevoel, for Bavinck, is coordinate with immediate self-consciousness as an awareness of unity between the active states of thinking and willing.[135] This is to say, feeling is not another faculty alongside knowing and willing, but part of the essence of human understanding, a knowing making identity and cognizance possible. Immediate feeling depends not upon a representation of a given object but arises as a mode of intuition in the activities of representation for an unseen reality. As Schleiermacher puts it, pious feeling is 'the original

---

[132] *PoR*, 66.

[133] *PoR*, 66.

[134] *PoR*, 66. It is important to remember again the fact that Vos translates *gevoel* (feeling) as 'sense' possibly connoting the idea of 'perception', which while possible with respect to relative dependence is not conceptually present in Bavinck's quote regarding the feeling of dependence in relation to God, who is Absolute.

[135] He makes this clear in *Beginselen der Psychologie*. For example, 'this way of taking cognizance [in feeling] is of the highest significance… it is not less certain than [reasoning and thinking], but exceeds far above them in certainty. But it is indeed less clear and conscious, precisely because *it is not a knowledge in concepts*, and is not the fruit of deliberate reflection and reasoning'. Also, the term 'feeling' can be easily used to signify 'immediate perception'. 57-8. Emphasis added.

expression of an immediate existential relationship' and 'is not derived from a representation'.[136]

The feeling of relative and absolute dependency arises in relation to the sensible consciousness in the necessary dialectic of freedom and dependence. And for Bavinck, this two-fold feeling of dependence is no optional account amongst others (he does not set Kant and Schleiermacher alongside each other to offer an arbitrary choice). Rather, the feeling of dependence is a fact of human life spoken out of necessity. For Schleiermacher, 'human experience involves a struggle between freedom and necessity'.[137] And for Bavinck,

> To ignore this fact of self-consciousness, this primary fact, this foundation of all knowledge and activity, to make it dependent on our own affirmation, to undermine it by doubt, is to commit against ourselves and against others not merely a logical but also an ethical sin. It is to shake not only the foundation of science, but also the indispensable basis of all human conduct to weaken all confidence, spontaneity, volitional energy and courage. And no effort of the will can repair afterwards the injury, which has been wrought by thought.[138]

(iii) *In immediate self-consciousness is a two-fold dependence in relation to the finite and infinite which gives rise to a religious feeling.* First, 'we feel ourselves dependent on everything around us'. Second, 'we feel ourselves with all creatures totally dependent on some Absolute… on a being which is cause and ground of all being'.[139] In this fact of a two-fold dependence between the finite and infinite is the certainty of both the world and God. It is here, in other words, that the concepts are given to us—both concepts that cannot be, in the domain of self-consciousness, sensibly experienced. The world, as the unity of all finitude, is a reality beyond sensible experience—no creature can experience the *world*. And the Absolute, as the infinite, cannot be perceived by the finite. Yet, both are given in the feeling of relative and absolute dependence as necessarily revealed universals, a feeling that arises in co-extension with sensible consciousness. This relation between freedom and dependency gives rise to belief. And this 'belief' in 'God and

---

[136] Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre*, 40.
[137] Crouter, 'Introduction', *OR* (C), 16.
[138] *PoR*, 62.
[139] *PoR*, 66.

the world is a fact that no one can deny'.[140] It is a certainty as sure as any of natural science, Bavinck argues, albeit one of a different genus—of feeling rather than discursive cognition. One must train oneself to deny absolute dependence as one must 'learn to be an atheist'. Intuitively, by the universal nature of *gevoel*, no one supposes themselves autonomous except through the slow development of a self-absorbed philosophy.

(iv) *In immediate self-consciousness is also revealed a freedom that is not in antithesis to dependence but inclusive of dependence.* Here, Bavinck makes specific reference that he is going beyond Schleiermacher by addressing what Schleiermacher 'overlooked'—which is more proof of his prior dependence on Schleiermacher. Self-consciousness, he argues, reveals even more than the unity of the finite, relative and absolute dependence (on an infinite essence), the unity of thinking and being, and the being of self and world. The attainment of 'true unity' depends upon another aspect of the revelation given to feeling as immediate self-consciousness: that God is personal and that freedom is dependence.

After idealism 'felt the seriousness of the objection(s)' listed, he suggests, it had to 'seek in some way or another in the Absolute the ground for the reality and objectivity of our knowledge'.[141] After idealism(s) 'broke down the bridge between thinking and being' it became necessary that 'the absolute guarantee the truth of human thought', even if the claim remain illusion.[142] Yet, he argues, the testimony of self-consciousness protests. Schleiermacher rightly conceived that the 'essence' of self-consciousness (as Bavinck interprets him) in its religious element is the feeling of absolute dependence on an infinite other. And now it must be added that self-consciousness posits also the freedom of humanity in addition to dependence and that 'these two testimonies of self-consciousness are not exclusive but inclusive'.[143] Given in

---

[140] *PoR*, 67.
[141] *PoR*, 75.
[142] *PoR*, 76.
[143] *PoR*, 77.

self-consciousness with the reality of a self that depends is the self that chooses/judges, exercises freedom, a temporal self: 'we draw conclusions… we deliberate… we act.'[144]

Schleiermacher perceived the relation between self-consciousness, dependence, and freedom (or activity). Nevertheless, Bavinck argues, Schleiermacher overlooked a more important point and it is here that Bavinck is adding to/constructing upon the base that Schleiermacher had laid for him in two ways. First, it is not merely the *Whence* of our dependence that is given in the reality of absolute dependence but that our relative freedom which suggests to 'us' the being of our own personalities, also indicates that this *Whence* is nothing other than a personal God by analogy. In other words, he draws again on an analogy between finite/infinite pertaining now to human and Absolute personality—an argument however that, Bavinck thinks, is not an aspect of reflection on the nature of God, but revealed in the feeling of absolute dependence. The personality of God for Schleiermacher would only be a conclusion per the causal logic of Christian experience.

'Just as confidently as man is convinced in his self-consciousness of his own existence and of the reality of the world, does he believe also in the reality *and personality* of God'.[145] Bavinck proposes that Schleiermacher's presentation of freedom/dependence in a relation of antithesis failed to perceive the 'double testimony' that the Absolute is given to self-consciousness, particularly in feeling, indeed but also as a personality.[146] It is a personal self that is absolutely dependent on the personal Absolute.

---

[144] *PoR*, 77.

[145] *PoR*, 77.

[146] Bavinck is responding, perhaps, to statements like this from Schleiermacher: 'religion does not depend upon whether or not in abstract thought a person attributes to the infinite, supersensual Cause of the world the predicate of personality'. Jonas and Dilthey, 3:283. Cited in Paul Capetz, *Christian Faith as Religion: A Study in the Theologies of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Oxford: University Press of America, 1998), 122. From Albert Blackwell, 'The Antagonistic Correspondence of 1801 between Chaplain Sack and His Protégé Schleiermacher', *HTR* 74 (1981), 118.

Second, while the 'feeling of dependence is the core of our self-consciousness and the essence of religion… it is not a mere *de facto* dependence as the unconscious and irrational creation is dependent on God'.[147] His point is that the guarantee of the reality of human freedom testified in self-consciousness is a freedom that includes choice in relation to its dependent nature. As soon as the feeling of absolute dependence is reflected upon, the feeling of absolute dependence (a fact of human nature) becomes conscious and voluntary, 'a dependence of man as a rational and moral being'.[148] And it is here that he especially qualifies Schleiermacher's point regarding *schlechthinnige* dependence. For Bavinck, the dependence does not become fully Absolute until the point of reflection on the feeling of dependence. That is, in the voluntary consciousness of choice, of assent and action toward that Absolute, infinite, personal essence, one turns toward a dependence that is not just feeling but truly absolute in its embrace of the whole human personality. 'If the feeling of dependence did not include this element, if it did not *know itself* as a conscious and voluntary dependence, it would cease to be absolute, because the most important factors in man, consciousness [or intellect] and will would fall outside of it or stand opposed to it'.[149]

Bavinck, at the same time, recognizes the reality that even in a voluntary rejection of one's dependence on the Absolute, no one becomes non-dependent. It is merely that their consciousness and will have resolutely declared themselves to be so—a declaration in opposition to reality but one that disqualifies the term absolute by nature of its exclusion of a particular aspect of one's being, the will.[150] Therefore, he concludes, the feeling of dependence

---

[147] *PoR*, 77.

[148] *PoR*, 78.

[149] *PoR*, 78. It is not the intention of this study to evaluate Bavinck's argument here that Schleiermacher fails to understand the true sense of 'absolute' or that God's personality is a direct conclusion derivative of the feeling of absolute dependence. There are aspects of the 'adding to' what Schleiermacher 'failed to see' that may be, in fact, misunderstandings of Schleiermacher.

[150] However, Bavinck's logic here moves outside of Schleiermacher's purpose in the term 'Absolute' as a referent to causality. The denial of dependence upon God still requires a reality where intellect and will are entirely dependent upon God even in their resolute denial of the

includes the freedom of human consciousness. Its moral character depends upon a concept of choice and in such freedom is the choice to be less than absolutely dependent. One of the few scholars to comment on Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher, van den Belt, offers a conclusion regarding this final point that requires a response:

> [Bavinck] develops his apologetic argument for revelation from self-consciousness apprehended as an absolute sense of dependence. That self-consciousness, paradoxically, at the same time posits human independence and freedom. *Bavinck thus combines Schleiermacher's concept of religion with Kant's concept of human autonomy.* Bavinck seeks the solution for the seeming antinomy of dependence and autonomy in the fact that of all creatures only human beings are aware of their dependence. This testimony of self-consciousness is the basis of religion and morality.[151]

Yet, Bavinck's point is that the unity of freedom and dependence is a freedom set within the bounds of absolute dependence. Admittedly, Bavinck himself does use the unity of Schleiermacher and Kant as a shorthand in relation to the doctrine of the covenant of works: 'The covenant of works, accordingly, does justice to both the sovereignty of God… and to the grace and generosity of God… It maintains both the dependence as well as the freedom of mankind. It combines Schleiermacher [dependence] and Kant [freedom]'.[152] And perhaps, like Bavinck, van den Belt is using the pairing as a pithy short-hand for the unity of freedom and dependence. Bavinck's dependence in this instance, however, re-registers the concept of freedom not as autonomy at all but as a freedom that is imprisoned and false unless it denies all autonomy. Bavinck's point is that Kant's autonomous agent is the opposite of true freedom and that Schleiermacher's agent of absolute dependence on the infinite other better captures (although not entirely) the reality revealed in *gevoel*. Related is one instance where Bavinck, quoting from *OR* (pg. 101, Oman) and *CF* §158.1, affirms Schleiermacher's concept of agency against rationalism: 'Over against the self-centered wishes of rationalism,

---

fact. Yet, Bavinck has in view here the idea of obedience rather than causal being. This point reflects the fact that much of this discussion is derivative of his reading of Romans 1:18-32.

[151] Henk van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation: The Development of Herman Bavinck's View from a Reformed Orthodox to a Neo-Calvinist Approach', *TBR* 4 (2013): 9-31, 23. Emphasis added.

[152] *RD* 2.572.

Schleiermacher made the statement "Whosoever has learned to be more than himself knows that he loses little when he loses himself" and knew no other and higher immortality than "in the midst of finitude to be one with the Infinite and in every moment to be eternal in the immortality of religion.'"[153]

In review, it is a fact, Bavinck argues, that both the moral (human action) and scientific (natural sciences, empirical investigations) assume the *givenness* of self and world (the unity of reality) revealed in immediate self-consciousness insofar as the unveiled unity of the self provides the possibility of knowing (between the 'I' and world), the context of action (world), and the freedom of the human personality (the possibility of moral reason and action). And it is only in theism, particularly the fact of dependence upon the personal God, that one may find satisfaction in the true unity between self and world.

To be sure, this account of the relation of the unity of being and thinking, which is grounded in the experience of self and God in immediate self-consciousness as a gift of God is not identical to Schleiermacher's brief exposition in *CF*. It also has no precise, cited correspondence with any of Schleiermacher's philosophical texts throughout. His brief reference to the victory of Schleiermacher over Kant at the climax of his account is suggestive of just how he used Schleiermacher as modern theologian/philosopher. Bavinck, after Schleiermacher and the turn to the subject in general,[154] understood that Christian theology and a philosophy of revelation derivative of dogmatics required detailed attention to the fact of subjectivity. The fact of subjectivity demanded treatment for the sake of the resolution of the dualism he recognized flowing from the rationalisms of Descartes and Kant, between self and world. He saw an alternative in Schleiermacher. The embrace of such a goal could only exist within a vision of existence divided between consciousness and objective realities and the

---

[153] *RD* 4.592.

[154] Recall that the use of heuristics like 'the turn to the subject' is derivative of Bavinck's own categorization of the relation between modern philosophy and theology.

overcoming of any harsh division between them. That is, he wanted to provide an account of reality that gave an answer to modern philosophy and it was to one contour of modern philosophy that he turned to do so, a philosophy that was also a doctrine of faith.

Bavinck, however, as displayed in his critiques of Schleiermacher, draws resolute distinctions between the conclusions he and Schleiermacher come to as it pertains to knowing. Bavinck's interpretation of Schleiermacher is that Schleiermacher turned to self-consciousness and to the believing Christian consciousness in response to his assumption of Kant's basic distinction between knowing and thinking, the necessity of antinomy in any attempt to 'know' the *Whence* of absolute dependence. It is the feeling of dependence that provides an alternative to an epistemic quandary that assumes the impossibility of knowledge of the transcendent.[155] It was in 'Kant and Schleiermacher's own teaching', Bavinck writes, that one learns 'to see the limitations of our cognitive powers and [to] consign all invisible things, scientifically speaking, to an unknowable world'.[156] Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher's basic construction of immediate self-consciousness and feeling, however, provides a grammar for what Bavinck takes to be the surety of one's knowledge of the transcendent by coupling the concept of immediate self-consciousness *with revelation*, a most sure form of knowledge guaranteed in the certainty of faith even in the derivative formation of *dogma quoad nos*. In doing so, faith as the certainty of the real becomes the guarantee of the real insofar as that certainty is the product of a universal revelation which is an active self-manifestation of God to the self. This 'revelation' finds its home in Bavinck's concept of 'general revelation' which includes God's pronouncement of God in nature, in providence, in history objectively and, subjectively, in the feeling of absolute dependence. As a gift, offered with God's self-manifestation is the givenness of self and world to the human consciousness, a logic Bavinck derives from Romans 1-2 (see Ch. 5). To summarize, Bavinck supposes the feeling of dependence and

---

[155] Jacqueline Mariña work subtly suggests otherwise, see 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty'.
[156] *RD* 1.524.

absolute dependence, and the possibility of knowledge and action guaranteed in the immediate self-consciousness, a gift of God's common grace to humanity. For Bavinck, this feeling is a 'universal fact' and to dis-believe in the fact of the unity of thinking and being, self and world, is to sin against God. For this reason, it was necessary that Bavinck write a philosophy of revelation only *after* dogmatics (which he saw as sharply distinct from Schleiermacher's approach). All knowledge, therein, becomes a faith-knowledge in this strict sense.

He makes a similar argument in *RD* 1 regarding the relation between faith, certainty, and an immediate form of knowledge. Faith is the principle of knowledge insofar as it is dependence, a consciousness of receptivity, on that which has been given: 'the term faith', he writes, 'deserves preference as the designation of this [epistemic] principle... not only because faith is most prominently featured as such in Scripture but especially because the term faith situates us in the area of consciousness and so preserves the link with the way we gain knowledge in other areas as well'.[157] Faith, in other words, in the relation between thinking and being/real and ideal, is the foundation for the possibility of knowing, which is given in the activity and receptivity of immediate self-consciousness. Both being the product of immediate certainty, a certainty of self and the objective world is a unitary act of faith distinct from belief in religious-historical truths. So, Bavinck argues:

> In religion and theology we arrive at knowledge in no other way than in other sciences. Faith is not a new organ implanted in human beings, not a sixth sense, or "superadded gift." However much it disagrees with the "natural" [unspiritual] human, it is nevertheless completely natural, normal, and human. Both objectively and subjectively revelation connects with nature, re-creation with creation. *Believing in general is a very common way in which people gain knowledge and certainty. In all areas of life we start by believing. Our natural inclination is to believe. It is only acquired knowledge and experience that teaches us skepticism. Faith is the foundation of society and the basis of science. Ultimately all certainty is rooted in faith.*[158]

---

[157] *RD* 1.565.

[158] *RD* 1.566. Rather than taking the term 'faith' as an opposite of 'knowledge', he suggests that 'the word *faith* or *belief* has this original meaning of devotion, trust, certainty: הֶאֱמִין, אמונה; πειθω, πιστις; *fido*, *fides*; *foi*; "faith" and "belief". Bavinck's account, one might say, is more oriented toward understanding than explanation. As Thiselton describes 'understanding', it is more personal, intuitive, and possesses a suprarational dimension. Anthony C. Thiselton,

4.4. Between Augustine and Schleiermacher

As commented prior, it is noteworthy as it pertains to the relation between the modern and orthodox that writing a 'philosophy of revelation' is an entirely modern enterprise. Some have asked, 'why a philosophy of revelation'?[159] And Bavinck makes clear in his reflections on modern philosophies of revelation how the discipline is itself a new development. Yet, in his defense of the project, he also situates what he recognizes as a modern discipline within the history of pre-modern theological scholarship unfolding for his readers a disruption of a sharp modern/orthodox way of going about theological reasoning. While the philosophy of revelation, assuming first the biblical form and content of revelation, explores how revelation is a correlate of the domains of knowledge, he writes in defense of the project: 'theological thought has always felt the need of such a science. Not only Origen and the Gnostics, but also Augustine and the Scholastics, made it their conscious aim both to maintain Christianity in its specific character and to vindicate for it a central place in the conception of the world as a whole'.[160] And so he does the same with his adaptation of Schleiermacher's argument by situating his reflection on being, thinking, and absolute dependence, between Schleiermacher and Augustine.

Hermeneutics: An Introduction (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 8. So, Bavinck is clear here: 'By far the greatest part of our knowledge, not only in religion and morality but also in ordinary life, is gotten not by reasoning, but by faith and observation'. Original: 'Want verreweg de meeste kennis, niet alleen in religie en zedelijkheid, maar ook in het gewone leven, krijgen wij juist niet door redeneering, maar door geloof en aanschouwen'. Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 111.

[159] George Harinck, 'Why was Bavinck in Need of a Philosophy of Revelation?' in *The Kuyper Center Review: Revelation and Common Grace*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 27-42. Harinck, using Rauwenhoff's philosophy of religion, helpfully makes clear the prior antithetical context catalyzing Bavinck's idea of a philosophy of revelation. However, more broadly, the enterprise 'philosophies of revelation' were already present in the nineteenth century in German thought before Dutch, and particularly with Schelling. See *RD* 1.292ff.

[160] *PoR*, 24.

In other words, Bavinck makes a subtle declaration in his adoption of an argument built upon the immediate self-consciousness and the feeling of dependence that this project is inaugurated first in Augustine before taken up by Schleiermacher. For his discovery of immediate self-consciousness, he was indebted to Schleiermacher in the modern era above all for unveiling the fact that consciousness of oneself in its highest expression is also consciousness of the unity of the finite world, and for showing derivatively that immediate self-consciousness is correlated with the feeling of absolute dependence on God. But it is 'Augustine', he writes, that 'was the first who so understood self-consciousness'.[161]Augustine, in his turn inward discovered 'a new metaphysics'. Bavinck does not suppose Schleiermacher's work to be entirely new but a modern account situated within a legacy of theologians of the self that include Augustine (and Calvin), a foremost theological authority for the Dutch orthodox.[162]

His point does not suggest some anachronism, that Augustine's turn inward is the same as Schleiermacher's—both Descartes and Kant stand between—but that Schleiermacher's focus on the self as a dependent self is a modernized grammar situated within the legacy of Augustine. Bavinck, working from Augustine's *Enchiridion*, argues, 'Augustine's firm point of departure was the human being, his self-consciousness, his ineradicable yearning and need for truth, happiness, and goodness, all of which are one. This starting point is certain and reliable (against the skeptics), since doubt itself still assumes belief in truth and self-consciousness is

---

[161] *PoR*, 63.

[162] Augustine had been translated by Erasmus and was distributed as a primary source for the sake of the *philosophia Christi* in the Dutch Reformation. The later struggle with the Remonstrants was previewed by Jacob Arminius dissociating himself 'from the Augustinian interpretation' of predestination. The Reformed scholastic environment had defined itself in part according to multiple readings that were considered 'Augustinian'. Further, 'Calvinism' is the term by which the Dutch Reformed church of the late nineteenth century is mainly identified and often augmented by the broader 'Augustinian'. Van Asselt and Abels, 'The Seventeenth Century', in *Handbook of Dutch History*, 299.

the final ground of truth'.[163] Set alongside Augustine's dialectic of belief and doubt, for Bavinck, is Schleiermacher's grammar of dependence and freedom—the latter assumes the former in both cases. The affinity Bavinck recognizes between Schleiermacher and Augustine's grammars is grounded in a practical theology, a specific disposition in the ethics of theology he locates in Augustine. For Augustine, Bavinck recounts, philosophy is useful but 'not the true road to salvation. It can only teach the few and these few it can only teach a little… [because it] is handicapped by its own pride in acquiring the knowledge of the truth…'. And therefore, here is the most important aspect of the conceptual relation between Augustine's self-consciousness and Schleiermacher's feeling of absolute dependence: 'for only humility is the road to life. Hence another road to truth is needed, viz., that of authority'.[164]

Yet, while Bavinck suggests that Augustine is the hinge of historical theology, the unity of East and West embodied who first penetrated the problems of the psyche, and approached theology with the habitus of deep dependence, he was a man of irresolvable contradictions. It is Augustine's legacy that he finds in Schleiermacher's grammar but Bavinck does not turn to the adoption of Augustine's details. He rejects, for example, that 'Augustine accepted two cognitive organs, sense and intellect', thereby subordinating knowledge of nature wholly at times to reason and creating space for a dualistic epistemology built on Platonic intelligibility and denying the groundwork of faith. What Augustine offers, nevertheless, is an awakening to the fact that 'the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God are the two poles between which all human thought oscillates'.[165] And such knowledge is only possible in humility, a habitus of depending. Interestingly, he draws the same conclusion in nearly the precise language as above in alternative section in *RD* 1: 'Humility alone is the way to life. Hence

---

[163] *RD* 1.137.
[164] *RD* 1.312. Bavinck draws on Augustine from *On Christian Doctrine*, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (*NPNF*), vol. II, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), II.60; *On the Trinity*, *NPNF* III, XIII.12, 24; *City of God*, *NPNF* II, II.7, IX, 20, X.29, XII.20; *Confessions*, *NPNF* I, V.4-5; VII.21.
[165] *RD* 1.137.

there is another way to the truth, the way of authority, the way of faith. On the one hand, faith assumes a measure of knowledge, but, on the other, it seeks to know, strives after knowledge'.[166] Here is where, for Bavinck, Augustine's legacy of humble interiority meets Schleiermacher's dependent self.

The self, Bavinck argues, as 'a fullness of life, a totality of gifts' is the soul that Augustine discovered in his turn inward. The activity of psychical life, the act and contents of the objective self-consciousness in modern grammar, is the context of the revelation of the fullness of 'our' own being. Unlike Descartes' corruption of self who posited thinking as the essence of the soul, 'Augustine went deeper… He discovered reality within himself'.[167] The argument is that Augustine like Schleiermacher would later, by investigating the contents of the consciousness, found a reality not visible before him with the sensible eye. He found with the 'inner eye' the soul that reveals itself in the activities of thinking while avoiding a reduction of the soul 'to its activity'. He found 'our being' beyond appearance, Bavinck argues. He found thought but 'beneath thought he penetrated to the essence of the soul'—dependence.[168]

The central distinction between Augustine and Descartes is what Bavinck, using Schleiermacher's emphases, levels against Kant: that the turn inward is not an assertion of the autonomous self, but the affirmation of exteriority. For Bavinck's Augustine, the turn inward is the pronouncement that the 'truth is not in me. I see truth in God'. If Bavinck's practical account of the Augustinian interiority is correct, then his point is that Augustine was coming at the inner self from the opposite side of what the later Descartes would do. Instead of *cogito, ergo sum*, Bavinck supposes Augustine and Schleiermacher to teach something more akin to *sum, ergo cogito*. Immediate self-consciousness is the concept that best accounts for a radical emphasis on the fact of being prior to thinking and on the fact of being a particular something

---

[166] *RD* 1.137.
[167] *PoR*, 63.
[168] *PoR*, 64.

in a particular place—a finite image of the infinite God. And in the modern grammar, it is Schleiermacher's concept of immediate self-consciousness and its coordinate concept of the feeling of absolute dependence that seizes, for Bavinck, a humanistic or inward turn which can ensure the priority of being without collapsing it into thinking—to do otherwise it so make the mistake of Descartes and Kant.

Conclusion

As Hanby suggests of Augustine, therefore, so it is for Bavinck: selfhood is doxological.[169] While in Kant one only needs an idea of God rather than the love, mercy, and gifts of God, for Bavinck, God is the Creator and Redeemer and the *Whence* who makes intelligible the conundrums of human philosophy. Theism, therefore, is the only world and life orientation (*Anschauung/wereldbeschouwing*) that can make intelligible the relation of self and world. It is only faith in the revelation or *givenness* of the self and world in the fact of its finitude that can offer an account that does not collapse being or thinking into the other. Such a supposition is a philosophy after dogmatics and a philosophy forged in the legacy of both Augustine and Schleiermacher.

Bavinck argues, therefore, that Christianity as the religion that points to the 'greatness of God's heart' in the revelation of his will in Christ Jesus, is that which awoke Augustine to the consciousness of the self beneath all thinking. It is the self-manifestation of God that registers a consciousness of the fullness of being that is the human soul in its dependent relation. Revelation, he suggests, restored the certainty of both self and world, by first manifesting God to the heart. The certainty of God as God revealed is the guarantee to the consciousness of the certainty of self and world. Augustine awoke to this 'new certainty' (a certainty of faith)

---

[169] Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, 91.

and could turn inward and discover even more of the revelation of God in the unified being of the self (the revelation of the Trinity in his psychological analogy, for instance).

Herein, Bavinck combines Augustine's inward turn (a turn awoken by his external encounter with God) with a concept of certainty and search for the conditions of knowledge derivative of his nineteenth-century context. His nineteenth-century 'turn to the subject' was, like van der Kooi noted, derivative of a theological world of rationality after Descartes and Kant—a modern theology that could have never been present for Calvin. Bavinck, in total, develops a mixed grammar between Augustine and Schleiermacher. 'Augustine… made it [his] aim to vindicate a central place for Christianity in the conception of the world'. [170] Any conceptualization of the whole first requires an account of the revelation of the self (spirit) that offers a certainty of the consciousness of world—both of which are given *gratis* (freely) by the Giver of gifts. Bavinck's modernity consists in a dependence upon the philosophical categories and grammars used within dogmatics that were of the ethos of his era. The certainty of the reality of self and world in immediate self-consciousness is a certainty of faith—a modern Schleiermacherian grammar applied to a consistent Reformed orthodox source, Bavinck's 'Augustinianism'.

---

[170] *PoR*, 24.

True Religion as Absolute Dependence

Chapter five narrows in on Bavinck's concept of religion (*religio*, *godsdienst*) and makes explicit what was implicit in the previous chapter. Chapter four focused on the philosophical, an account of unity between self and world. The unity of self and world is made certain, for Bavinck, in the experience of immediate self-consciousness, which is an original unity of the self, revealed (in the strictest sense) prior to all thinking and willing. For Bavinck, Augustine was the father who inaugurated the turn to the inner self as a method for delineating the knowledge of self and God. But, it is 'now' Schleiermacher's modern grammar that best makes intelligible the reality that is prior to all self-knowledge and discursive God-knowledge, the revelation of self, world, and God in immediate consciousness available as *gevoel*. Per Manfred Frank, for Schleiermacher, accounting for the conditions of knowledge became a doctrine of faith.[1] For Bavinck after Schleiermacher, it is only a doctrine of faith that can account for the conditions of knowledge. 'Certainty' of experience, therefore, is correlative with the fact of human religiosity, the certainty of faith that grounds knowing and doing *in toto*.

One is left then to conclude this study with the second question, 'what is religion'? With many nineteenth-century theologians, Bavinck often spoke of religion in romantic style:

> [Religion] is the foundation of the true, the good, and the beautiful. It introduces unity, coherence, and life into the world and its history. From it science, morality, and art derive their origin; to it they return and find rest. "All the higher elements of human life first surfaced in alliance with religion". It is the beginning and the end, the soul of everything, that which is highest and deepest in life. What God is to the world, religion is to humanity.[2]

---

[1] Manfred Frank, 'Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*', 33.
[2] *RD* 1.269.

His logic is as follows: if God is the foundation of existence as pure act, and if religion is the fact of 'our' relation to God, then that relation is the ground of every other relation. In being in relation with God, '[religion] encompasses the whole person in his or her thinking, feeling, and action, in the whole of his or her life, everywhere and at all times. Nothing falls outside of its scope'.[3] Because of the denial of personal religion in the modern age, he argues, 'there exists a disharmony between our thinking and feeling, our will and doing'.[4] Religion is the solution to such cacophony. Religion satisfies the feeling of the discordant relation between thinking and being, between being and becoming, between becoming and acting.[5]

The answer to this query (what is religion?), and particularly in its narrow subjective form, is the second locus of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework. This fact was established in the last chapter. There, exegesis of Bavinck's *PoR* made available that he defines religion or piety as the feeling of absolute dependence on the infinite other. Bavinck agrees in *PoR* with Schleiermacher's *CF*: religion is 'a feeling of absolute dependence'.[6] Yet, in asking 'what is religion', this chapter does not set out to define Bavinck's 'religion' *in toto*. Rather, the point is to establish the significance of Schleiermacher's 'feeling' for Bavinck's 'religion'. To be sure, when Bavinck states that the essence of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence as he does in *PoR*, much remains to be said about the totality of religion as knowing and doing. Religion is also knowledge and action, but for Bavinck religion in general begins as the feeling of absolute dependence and finds its completion in knowing and doing. The 'subjective' aspect of religion here refers to the inner-life, the conscious life, and specifically to feeling which always manifests in knowing and acting.

---

[3] *RD* 1.268.

[4] Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 8. Original: 'Er is eene disharmonie tusschen ons denken en gevoelen, tusschen ons willen en handelen.'

[5] Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 14.

[6] *PoR*, 77; *CF* §3-4.

There are three aspects of this Schleiermacherian adoption to elucidate. First, this appropriation is not only significant in relation to the fact of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher but also because the adoption of Schleiermacher's definition of religion is part of Bavinck's dogmatic speech, disciplined by the logic of biblical revelation. Second, Bavinck's definition of religion is like and unlike his understanding of Schleiermacher's definition of religion because religion is defined per a dogmatic-biblical deduction, set in the grammar of an objective and subjective relational correspondence, and in antithesis to definitions drawn 'from philosophy'. Religion is only true religion, for Bavinck, when the objective, revealed fact of God's manifesation disciplines the totality of consciousness. Third, according to Bavinck's argument, narrowing in on this definition of religion also unveils the consanguinity between Calvin and Schleiermacher in addition to that of Augustine and Schleiermacher, from chapter four. While the fact of the relationship between Calvin and Schleiermacher (both Schleiermacher's use of and historical relation to Calvin's lineage) is now well-established in contemporary scholarship,[7] it must be remembered that Bavinck worked in a context that repudiated Schleiermacher. Before Bavinck's birth, as noted in Ch. 2, Schleiermacher's works were published in Dutch only under corrective annotations.[8] And Bavinck himself consistently maintained a moderate distaste for Schleiermacher's dogmatic methodology and its material content (Ch. 3). In his adoption of Schleiermacher's definition of religion, therefore, there is both a *ja* and *nee*. In summary, on the one hand, he is critical of Schleiermacher for taking his definition of religion 'from philosophy'. On the other, he argues that Schleiermacher's 'concept of dependence deserves primary consideration' and is 'most qualified' amid the history of the search for the essence of religion.[9]

Bavinck, therefore, offers a nuanced definition of religion with one foot planted in Geneva and one in Berlin. Like his construction of the unity of thinking and being, Bavinck's

---

[7] For example, see Paul Capetz's monograph on the relationship: *Christian Faith as Religion: A Study in the Theologies of Calvin and Schleiermacher.*
[8] K.H. Roessingh, *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland; hare voorberieiding en eerste period*, 24.
[9] *RD* 1.242.

definition of religion is idiosyncratic. While dependent on Schleiermacher's 'dependence' and affirmative of his 'religion in general', he simultaneously argues that Schleiermacher's definition of religion 'cannot be allowed to go unchallenged'.[10]

It is necessary in this chapter then to offer some detailed consideration of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's 'piety' (i) in order to unveil how, using religion, Bavinck *does* include Schleiermacher's concepts in his own material, dogmatic propositions. The first question, for Bavinck, is this: 'what is the ground for defining religion'? (ii) Then, regarding Bavinck, one must ask 'what is religion in general?' The answer explains Bavinck's appropriation of the feeling of absolute dependence in light of his broadest definition of religion. (iii) Finally, to establish more conclusively Bavinck's association of a broad conceptual unity between Calvin and Schleiermacher regarding the subjective aspect of religion in general, from whom does Bavinck's concept of religion derive? In view in this final section is a more detailed examination of Bavinck's appropriation of both Calvin and Schleiermacher on religion that reinforces with clear evidence Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher within his Dutch tradition's dogmatic theology.

5.1. Religion as Dogmatics

Although the primary location of Schleiermacherian appropriation in Bavinck's mature career is the philosophy in *PoR*, Bavinck's dogmatics and wider corpus do indeed manifest Schleiermacherian categories within its dogmatic rationality. This is necessarily so because the fact of his adoption of Schleiermacher's coterminous relation between the immediate self-consciousness and the feeling of dependence demands not only a philosophical appropriation but includes an appropriation of the concept of human piety or religion.

---

[10] *RD* 1.242.

By adopting the definition of religion popularised by Schleiermacher, in both *PoR* and *RD* 1 (the feeling of absolute dependence) Bavinck might have been charged alongside Schleiermacher with the anthropocentrist indictment that Barth and Brunner famously appropriated to liberal theology's concept of 'religion in general'.[11] In *Mysticism and the Word* in 1924, Brunner contrasted 'the modern concept of religion and Christian faith', where Schleiermacher played the role of *the* modern mystic.[12] In Brunner's account, one must choose Jesus Christ or the modern religion of Schleiermacher who is charged with replacing the Christian faith for a more basic religion in general.[13] Brunner echoes this reading later in *The Mediator* sharpening the distinction between general and special revelation and stating that Schleiermacher remains an adherent to the lineage of rationalism, not an objector to it.[14] Schleiermacher, he argues, did not turn from general to special revelation but merely deepened the natural religion he gained through mysticism and a neo-Platonic rationality.

Barth was somewhat measured and, as noted in chapter two, esteemed Schleiermacher amid the highest order of theologians. Yet, Barth claimed, Schleiermacher's 'religionism' and its wide influence was anti-Reformation: 'Neo-Protestantism means "religionism"'. And, 'even the conservative theology of these centuries, the supra-naturalistic of the 18th and the confessional, biblicistic and "positive" of the 19th and 20th, has, on the whole, co-operated, making such concessions to the prevailing outlook that in spite of the immanent resistance which it has put up it cannot be regarded as a renewal of the Reformation tradition'.[15] Human religion is, Barth states, 'the realm of man's attempts to justify and to sanctify himself before a

---

[11] Capetz recounts this history without reference to Bavinck in Capetz, *Christian Faith as Religion*, 4ff.

[12] Emil Brunner, *Die Mystik und das Wort: Der Gegensatz zwischen moderner Religionsauffassung und christilichem Glauben dargestellt an der Theologie Schleiermachers* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1924).

[13] E. Brunner, *Die Mystik und das Wort*, 10. Cited in P. Capetz, *Christian Faith as Religion*, 5.

[14] Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1934), 48ff.

[15] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 2*. Vol. 1, (*CD* I/2) eds. Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Thomas F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 305.

capricious and arbitrary picture of God'.[16] For both Brunner and Barth, Schleiermacher's version of religion is a subversion of the Reformation's emphasis on the Word and antithetical to revelation.

Bavinck was amid the 'confessional' theologians Barth describes who did indeed conceptualize a 'religion in general' which is a universal response to a common, ubiquitous revelation of God, in which Christianity is counted as one religion among many.[17] Bavinck even ascribed to all religions, including various paganisms, a measure of value.[18] Further, in his unfolding of the 'essence' (*wezen*) of *religio*, Bavinck places his definition of religion within the section titled '*principia* in general' in *RD* 1. In both *PoR* and *RD*, he gives space to investigating the word 'religion' (*religio*) itself and offers in brief a phenomenology of religion to assert the fact of a universal religiosity as a common good. Across his corpus, he appeals to religious studies in support of dogmatic arguments. In one simple instance, he concludes: 'The bare fact that religion exists already means much'.[19]

---

[16] Barth, *CD* I/2, 264. Also, Sven Ensminger, *Karl Barth's Theology as a Resource for a Christian Theology of Religions* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014). Cited in Capetz, 5.

[17] *RD* 1.51-52. In his examination of the science of religion, for example, he commends some of the correct assumptions of that developing science: 'such study also presupposes that *religions are interrelated, that they all possess a common component*, and that in an ascending order they produce and develop "religion" proper. Fundamental is the conviction that religion is not an illusion but a reality—in a word, the premise that in religion God makes himself known and enters into fellowship with human beings'. Emphasis added.

[18] Accordingly, Bavinck understands his theology of religions to be more nuanced than past Reformed treatments: 'But, however severely Scripture judges the character of paganism, it is precisely the general revelation it teaches that enables and authorizes us to recognize all the elements of truth that are present also in pagan religions. In the past the study of religions was pursued exclusively in the interest of dogmatics and apologetics. The founders of [non-Christian] religions, like Mohammad, were simply considered imposters, enemies of God, accomplices of the devil'. *GD* 1.238; cf. *GD* 1.290; *RD* 1.318. Cited in Henk van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation: The Development of Herman Bavinck's View from a Reformed Orthodox to a Neo-Calvinist Approach', 22.

[19] *PoR*, 142.

Nevertheless, one must consider how Bavinck relates the concept of religion in general or the genus of religion (Christianity included) to his constructive dogmatics to understand that these affirmations of a universal aspect of religion manifest in various forms can only be defined *after* or *within* the science of Christian theology. Because of his perceived distinction from Schleiermacher in dogmatic method (as he describes it, see Ch. 3), he distances himself from Schleiermacher's religion while simultaneously affirming Schleiermacher's religion. This section focuses on the former. Yet, because Bavinck subsumes Schleiermacher's definition of religion into his dogmatic theology, Bavinck's dogmatic framework does indeed adopt Schleiermacherian concepts, which remain consistent throughout the *RD*. For Bavinck, religion is the feeling of absolute dependence on the absolute essence. This definition is a dogmatic-philosophical claim, not mere philosophy, but derived from philosophical reflection on biblical logic, which is the very activity of dogmatics. While affirming the universality of this same experience in all religions, he rejects the idea that a positive study of religions or reflection on human experience can provide the ground for such a subjective definition.

To define religion is to speak dogmatics. In 1876, the Higher Education Act situated the study of theology within the field of religious studies in the Dutch university. Theology, therein, was officially registered as an historical and psychological science.[20] While the outworking of the Act largely failed and both theology and specifically dogmatics was allowed space in the modern Dutch university, the Act pointed to an atmosphere of growing appreciation for religious studies on the one hand and for emphasizing the practical aspects of theology over

---

[20] See A. J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1981), 179ff. Bavinck proposes that the movement toward religious studies in the university is a symptom of the general 'agnosticism' concerning speech about God in theological modernity. Thereby, religious studies is derivative of the 'turn to philosophy'. *RD* 2.44: 'Theology has so far fallen victim to the dread of this agnosticism that it hardly any longer dares to speak of a knowledge of God. It tries as much as possible to exclude all metaphysics (although of late we can see some reaction to this trend) and to restrict itself to the realm of the religious. It has become ashamed of its own name and has allowed itself to be re-baptized into a science of religion. For although agnosticism is in fact the death of theology, many theologians have nevertheless maintained it in another form'.

the theoretical on the other. While the Higher Education Acts was relatively unsuccessful in practice, for Bavinck, this attempted relegation of dogmatics to the science of religion was tragic. He confessed his desire for the opposite relation by arguing that religion ought to be understood as a necessary response to the fact of the universal, covenantal human relationship with the one true God, even if falsified by sin. For true religion over against false, he argues, 'no more beautiful description of religion is conceivable than that offered in the Heidelberg Catechism…: "That I, not wanting to endanger my salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry, magic, superstitious rites, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God'.[21] While the true God has revealed God to every human subject according to the doctrine of general revelation (hence religion as a universal piety or ubiquitous religious affection), every human subject necessarily rejects the true God (hence religions as varied external expressions and institutions, including the faith of atheism) except in the agency of the Spirit to regenerate the consciousness. The science of religion, therefore, has no ability to locate the essence of religion. In accordance with his usual writing style, he critiques the logic behind the Education Act in a satirical presentation:

> Dogmatics [rests] on an unprovable foundation, and cannot be a science in the true sense of the word. Therefore, if theology, and specifically dogmatics, wants to become a genuine science, it must put aside all prejudices and proceed only on the basis of the indisputable fact—which is an established certainty for all—that religions exist. These religions are the object of theology; and if it studies them historically, psychologically, and comparatively, it may foster the hope that it will in the end break through to the essence of religion.[22]

However, he suggests, Christian theology cannot proceed from a positive science of religious experience nor can the Christian religion as a positive religion be defined in essence by its relation to religions in general. The unique treatment of religion 'in theology consists in the fact that [it is] viewed in [its] relation to God as [its] source and end'.[23] The object of a theology department, therefore, is not the study of religion or even reflection on religious

---

[21] *RD* 1.244-45.
[22] *RD* 1.36.
[23] *RD* 1.36.

affections. Rather, theology's object is God, through the lens of his objective self-manifestation and from the disposition of religion (*pietas*). *Pietas* and *religio* he argues, must be defined by dogmatic, biblical rationality before theology makes use of any positive study of religions and religious experience. This definition of piety as an inward response to the revelation of the true God, derived from Christian dogmatic science, is the definition of the subjective disposition for all religions, the knowledge of the revealed God, the taste for the infinite. Arguing in accordance with Polanus (as well as Zwingli and Zanchi) on the idea of a subjective religious disposition which includes the feeling for and knowledge of the divine, he writes: 'Religion, [therefore] (*religio*) or piety (*pietas*) is the internal cause of the worship of God (*cultus Dei*)'.[24] While Holy Scripture does not provide an explicit definition of this general subjective essence of religion, it does 'stamp the religious disposition that the *Christian* feels toward God and his revelation with the name *faith*'.[25]

Bavinck proposes that Schleiermacher's concept of the feeling of absolute dependence, nevertheless, is 'most qualified' for describing the notion of a *pietas* in general which manifests itself in outward expressions (knowledge and action) in all religions. While 'the very question concerning the essence of religion, because it is so indefinite, is not susceptible to solution' and 'the religious life is much too deep and too rich for it to find its correct interpretation in a single formula', the feeling of absolute dependence is 'most qualified' to describe this universal reality.[26] Schleiermacher, however, failed to ground his description of piety within the bounds of the *principia fidei*, focusing solely on the subject, and became, Bavinck argues, a primary catalyst for the turn to religious studies.

> [Schleiermacher], in fact, by his borrowed propositions (*Lehnsätze*), made dogmatics dependent on philosophy. For a long time under the heading of "prolegomena," "fundamental theology," or "philosophical theology" and the like, following Schleiermacher's footsteps, many theologians prefaced dogmatics with a far-ranging introduction that had an apologetic thrust.

---

[24] *RD* 1.241.
[25] *RD* 1.243.
[26] *RD* 1.252.

> Theology lacked a foundation of its own and was not developed from its own first principles; it could only undertake its task after first letting philosophy examine and judge its basis and right to exist. The theologian did not from the outset take his stance within Christianity but took his initial position outside of Christianity, *in religion in general*, in order from that vantage point to proceed to an exposition of Christian doctrines.[27]

Also, Bavinck implicitly associates the trend toward the science of religion with Schleiermacher's dogmatic method as explained in Ch. 3: 'In order to remain scientific, [dogmatics] abandoned the knowledge of God and traded it for that of religion… its [object] became the religious consciousness in its historical development and psychological particularity'.[28] Instead, Bavinck proposes the opposite. The concept 'religion in general' must be itself a Christian doctrine defined within the speech of dogmatics. While religion is indeed positive (but only observable in part, he adds), dogmatics begins with dogmatics and makes use of other disciplines only after the identification of its own principles and definitions. To do otherwise, is to make dogmatics dependent on 'philosophy' generally and the 'science of religion' specifically.

For Bavinck therefore, Schleiermacher's insight that religion is not knowing or doing but first the feeling of absolute dependence is indeed an adequate description of the subjective kernel of every religion's husk. However, one must understand that Schleiermacher's distinction between religion as feeling, knowing, and doing is rather specific. 'Knowing' in this trichotomy refers to 'knowing about' (science) and specifically about God. If religion was fundamentally knowing about God, then the one who knows most is most pious, an inadequate proposal for the Reformed tradition. Likewise, 'doing' refers to good action and encounters the same problem.[29] In this trichotomy, therefore, religion takes shape in knowing and doing, because feeling 'is strongly present in one's most lively elements… and underlies all the expressions of

---

[27] *RD* 1.209. Emphasis added.

[28] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid* (Wageningen: Vada Press Ltd., 1902), 21. The following English translations of this article were made in correspondence with translations by Bruce Pass, *Reformed Theological Review*, forthcoming in 2018.

[29] *CF* §3

one's will'.[30] Piety is fundamentally a feeling but a feeling that always takes expression in knowing and doing.

Against the myopic principle that faith is merely assent (which Bavinck associates with Socinianism, Arminianism), 'Schleiermacher had a valid point when he said that religion was neither a matter of knowledge nor of action but had its seat in the heart, and that the Christian religion differs from all other religions by the fact that everything in it is related to the redemption brought about by Jesus of Nazareth'.[31] The cause of this 'kernel' is the revelation of the Triune God. Yet, Bavinck denies the broader 'change' in the 'modern concept of religion' that accompanies this definition. He characterizes it accordingly: 'the various religions [now] therefore are also not to be classified according to true (*ware*) and false (*valsche*); they do not oppose each other as "yes" (*ja*) and "no" (*neen*). But they are all together waves in the same ocean, refractions of one light… There is no reasonable, pure, and unblemished religion…'.[32] Schleiermacher categorized religions, therefore, as 'lower and higher' in *CF* §8 in what Bavinck titles the 'evolutionistic approach'.

Because of the relegation of the knowledge of God to the activity of thinking in Kantian thought, to maintain its status as 'science' theology was forced to withdraw under the auspices of philosophy, and particularly a philosophy of religion. Theology was 'the scientific, ordered knowledge of God [as defined in previous centuries]' but since 'the mouth of Kant', he writes, 'theology was faced with a grave choice':

> Faced with this choice, theology has frequently been unfaithful to its calling. The seduction of a scientific reputation was too powerful for it; it succumbed to the temptation of vain philosophy. In order to remain scientific, it abandoned the knowledge of God and traded it for that of religion. Its

---

[30] *CF* §3.5.

[31] *RD* 4.118.

[32] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 20. Original: 'De verschillende godsdiensten zijn daarom ook niet in ware en valsche in te deelen; zij staan niet als ja en neen tegenover elkander. Maar zij zijn allen te zamen golven in denzelfden oceaan, straalbrekingen van één licht, schakels in dezelfde keten, momenten van één proces'.

emphasis shifted away from the world of metaphysics to history and psychology. Its object could no longer be the knowledge God revealed in the face of Christ Jesus his Son, but it became the religious consciousness in it is historical development and psychological particularity. As such, it now regards itself as having the task of first carefully studying the various religions in order afterwards to discover, progressing from the particular to the universal essence the laws and the origin of religion and finally to demonstrate, in which form religion comes to its purest expression.[33]

It is due to the lineage of such epistemic theological modesty, Bavinck argues, that 'Schleiermacher… defined religion as the "absolute feeling of dependence." Many objections have been raised against this definition', he writes.[34] The fundamental objection is directed to the disregard for the 'object' (God) in theology. But, in terms of the human subject, Schleiermacher's definition of the religious element, he argues, remains true. Bavinck's argument for the truth of Schleiermacher's proposition is to appeal to the fact of general revelation, the *imago Dei*, and the universal element that humans are indeed in relation with God the creator.[35]

---

[33] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 20-21. Original: 'Voor die keuze geplaatst, is de theologie menigmaal ontrouw aan hare roeping geweest. De verleiding van den wetenschappelijken naam was haar te machtig; zij bezweek voor de bekoring der ijdele philosophie. Om wetenschap te blijven, heeft zij daarom de kennisse Gods prijs gegeven en voor die van den godsdienst ingeruild. Haar zwaartepunt werd uit de metaphysische wereld in de historie en de psychologie verlegd. Haar object kon de kennisse Gods niet meer zijn, geopenbaard in het aangezicht van Christus Jezus, zijnen Zoon, maar werd het religieus bewustzijn in zijne historische ontwikkeling en psychologische eigenaardigheid. Als zoodanig ziet zij zich thans tot taak gesteld, om eerst de verschillende godsdiensten nauwkeurig te onderzoeken; om daarna, uit het bijzondere tot het algemeene opklimmend, het wezen, de wetten en den oorsprong der religie te leeren kennen; en om eindelijk aan te wijzen, in welke vormen de religie het zuiverst tot hare uitdrukking komt'.
[34] *RD* 1.260: 'This definition in Schleiermacher indeed has a meaning that cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. In his thinking dependence is so pantheistically construed that objectively it relates only to the whole of the universe'. And describing Schleiermacher's method: 'Since dogmatics is a positive science and does not exist in virtue of a scientific idea but only for the sake of a practical purpose (to guide the church), it cannot derive its nature from its own idea but must in its introduction borrow certain propositions from a variety of sciences'.
[35] *RD* 4.276. Citing Schleiermacher in fn. 2, he writes in the body of the text: 'There exists in religion a powerful social element[2] The reason for this is not hard to find: religion is more deeply rooted in the human heart than anything else. It is the immediate result of our being

What makes human beings religious beings and drives them toward religion is the realization that they are related to God in a way that specifically differs from all their other relationships. This relationship is so deep and tender, so rich and many-dimensional, that it can only with difficulty be expressed in a single concept. But certainly, the concept of dependence deserves primary consideration and is best qualified for this purpose.[36]

Nevertheless, Bavinck complains in simultaneity: 'recent theology has not derived its definition of religion from… the theism of Holy Scripture but from… Schleiermacher' who gives the appearance of deriving the concept of religion and the borrowed propositions from some position of 'neutrality'.[37] In the face of Schleiermacher's religion, he says, therefore, *ja* and *nee*. The *ja* is exposited more precisely in section three. The *nee* regarding religion, for Bavinck, is two-fold. First, he argues, the subjective essence of religion defined, the feeling of absolute dependence, must be logically derived from biblical-dogmatic reason within the theological sciences, not from borrowed sciences. Second, while the feeling of absolute dependence is indeed evoked by God in Bavinck's theology according to God's revelation to all of humanity through the fact of the *imago Dei* and general revelation to the human conscience, this feeling will always develop false knowledge and action until it is wedded to the truth of objective revelation under the agency of the regenerating Spirit of Christ: 'Religious feeling, however intimate and deep it may otherwise be, is pure only when it is evoked by true ideas'.[38] Christianity, he argues, is the *religio vera* amid the false presentations of other religious feelings that fail to correspond to the objective reality of objective revelation.

---

created in God's image and therefore radically integral to our nature. In religion, we regulate our relationship to God, the relationship that is central'.

[36] *RD* 1.242.

[37] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 22. Also, *RD* 1.267: 'But when, as in Schleiermacher, feeling is detached from faith, from the religious representation, and made into an independent and exclusive source and seat of religion, it loses its own quality and becomes completely independent of the categories of truth and untruth, good and evil. Then every individual feeling is already as such religious, true, good, and beautiful. And that was romanticism's great fault as a whole'.

[38] *CF* §4.2.

It is worth noting here that Henk van den Belt has added some nuance to the picture of Bavinck on 'religion in general' through his analysis of the distinctions between the earlier and later editions of *RD* 1. From the first to the second, van den Belt argues, Bavinck decided to 'approach the phenomenon of religion from a less exclusive starting point'.[39] This is to say, in the earlier version, his section on religion began with an assertion of the *religio vera*, derivative of the Reformed orthodox arguments, and then to a negative judgment of other religions from this 'pure conception of religion', i.e. the Christian concept. In the second and later editions, these comments on the 'pure conception' as a starting point of his description of the religious disposition are deleted. So, according to van den Belt: 'whereas [Bavinck] argues from Christianity as the one revealed and true religion to the other religions in the first edition, in the later editions he argues from religion in general to Christianity, that he, of course, still sees as the only *religio vera*'.[40]

Yet, this transition is measured. In the 1906 edition, while affirming the value of the study of religions, he affirms an earlier judgment that neither reflection on religious experience nor the science of religion can approach the essence of religion in principle or practice.[41] Therefore, van den Belt determines:

> the conclusion is the same in the later editions, but the way that leads to this conclusion is different; for, instead of placing the orthodox Reformed view antithetically over against the other views, Bavinck sees the science of religion and especially the philosophy of religion as a method to grant religion its proper value. Instead of rendering the historical and psychological methods impossible, he writes that they are "insufficient and have to be augmented… by the philosophical or metaphysical method, which establishes the validity and value of religion and hence also its ideas and actions (dogma, cult, etc.)".[42]

One must not overstate the shift. The conclusive statements remain the same between both editions and the study of religion remains insufficient for defining the essence of religion. This

---

[39] H. van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation', 13.
[40] H. van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation', 13.
[41] *GD* 1.200; *GD* 1.241; cf. *RD* 1.268. Cited in H. van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation', 16.
[42] H. van den Belt, 'Religion as Revelation', 13, 16-17; *GD* 1.218; cf. *RD* 1.246.

is only a shift in the logic of presentation but not in the structure of the relation between religion in general and Christian theology. Bavinck categorizes the difference in Christianity and other religions as that between the 'true' and 'false' across his corpus. One could indeed map in Bavinck's later career a growing appreciation for the human and natural sciences which was reflected in the introductory comments on *PoR* in the previous chapter. These estimations of value and observations of the common phenomena per religion, nonetheless, remain situated within a *gereformeerde dogmatiek* and a philosophy of revelation with the same definitions and conclusions. While he does indeed adopt Schleiermacher's definition that piety is the feeling of absolute dependence and that this is a universal reality, he does so, according to his own argument, under the rationality of sacred Scripture. Bavinck concludes, then, with an obvious allusion to Schleiermacher: 'For dogmatics is not a description of the pious conditions of the mind, no incomplete formulation of the faith of the church… but an exposition in scientific form of the truth revealed by God in his Word, and therefore theology is the knowledge of God in the proper and genuine sense of the word'.[43] Because the definition of religion is a dogmatic proposition, religion as the feeling of absolute dependence is derivative of the logic of Scripture, not the science of religion.

5.2. Religion as Feeling, Religion as Revelation

Bavinck defines religion both as the feeling of absolute dependence with regard to the subject and as the fact of being in relation with God objectively. 'What is religion'? For Bavinck, *pietas* is the feeling of absolute dependence on God. As he states clearly in *PoR*: 'the feeling of dependence is the core of self-

---

[43] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 56. Original: 'Want de dogmatiek met name is geen beschrijving van vrome gemoedstoestanden, geen gebrekkige formuleering van hetgeloof der gemeente, veel minder nog eene stichtelijke toespraak op een collegium pietatis, maar uitstalling in wetenschappelijken vorm van de waarheid, door God in Zijn Woord geopenbaard, en daarom theologie, kennisse Gods, in den eigenlijken en echten zin van het woord'.

consciousness and the essence of religion'.[44] But this definition only offers part of the picture. Bavinck's definition of religion is simultaneously modern and orthodox. He first invites the reader to return to the modern philosophical dichotomy used within the entirety of his dogmatic theology to frame the definition: the relation between subjects and objects. In the section prior to his elucidation of religion in general in *RD* 1, he concludes his evaluation of the epistemic relation between the human consciousness and the fact of external being (objects) by adding an appeal to the *Logos*. The *Logos* of God, the eternal Word, is the creator of being and the creator of being as human consciousness. The unity of subject and object in creation is upheld by the *Logos* as mediator of creation who is the active agent in the establishment and maintenance of all relations in space and time. The 'laws of thinking within us' relate to the laws of being outside of 'us' because of the activity of the *Logos*. 'The Logos who shines in the world must also let his light shine in our consciousness'.[45] And, regarding the knowledge of God mediated: 'in the final analysis, it is God alone who from his divine consciousness and by way of his creatures conveys the knowledge of truth to our mind—the Father who by the Son and in the Spirit reveals himself to us'.[46] He then sets the subject/object relation mediated by the *Logos* as the framework for the relationship of all of his major dogmatic pairs: 'Just as in the sciences the subject must correspond to the object, and in religion subjective religion must answer to objective religion, so external and objective revelation demands an internal revelation in the subject'.[47] In another instance, he writes: 'similarly, there is not only an external and objective but also an internal and subjective revelation. The former is the external principle of the knowledge of religion (*principium cognoscendi externum*); the latter the internal principle of that knowledge (*principium cognoscendi internum*). The two principles are most intimately related'.[48]

---

[44] *PoR*, 77.
[45] *RD* 1.233.
[46] *RD* 1.233. An account, therefore, of the unity of thinking and being requires a doctrine of faith, as argued in chapter four.
[47] *RD* 1.348.
[48] *RD* 1.273.

The objective is, fundamentally, the Scriptures and the subjective is the agency of the Spirit of Christ at regenerating work in the human consciousness. To have true religion is to have the unity of 'knowing and doing' disciplined by the Scriptures objectively and received according to the subjective disposition of *Christian* piety, the regenerated consciousness in union with the Redeemer. Before elucidating the details, the broad picture concerning Bavinck's definition of religion includes first the fact of a universal subjective religion in the feeling of absolute dependence on the infinite other that manifests in knowledge and action. This feeling corresponds to the objective fact that God relates to all of his creatures according to the covenantal Creator-creature relation. He, after Calvin, considers this form of the knowledge of God to be 'primal' wherein one 'feel[s] that God as our maker supports us by his power'. Yet, it is another thing altogether to 'embrace' and 'apprehend God the redeemer in Christ the mediator'.[49] This former 'religion', therefore, is not true religion. True religion is also objective and subjective. Objectively 'the essence of the Christian religion consists in the reality that the creation of the Father, ruined by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God and re-created by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a kingdom of God'.[50] Subjectively, true religion is the disposition of the regenerate habitus, only possible due to the agency of the Spirit of Christ, and the knowledge of the Triune God.

Religion only exists, therefore, in a unity of subject and object 'just as in the sciences'. Because true religion is only possible through a particularized unity of the subject with *the* object (the fact of the revelation of the Triune God), the feeling of absolute dependence manifest in knowing and doing across all religions is necessarily false before it can be true. Religion in general as subject/object correspondence with general revelation means that on the objective side 'religion is revelation' because revelation is God's activity of relating—objective religion is

[49] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, Vol. 1, in The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), I.ii.1.
[50] *RD* 1.112.

the fact of being in relation with the God who relates universally, to all creatures, and particularly to the human conscious. For this reason, van den Belt can use the phrase 'religion as revelation'. It is in the objective act of God in his choice to relate to 'us', the *imago Dei*, that religion as the feeling of absolute dependence is grounded. In Bavinck's texts, objective religion, therefore, is correlative and often synonymous with objective revelation. When God self-manifests himself to creation, he relates to creation. When God relates, there is religion—the fact of being a creature in relation to God, the fact of absolute depending. Bavinck suggests therefore that 'objective religion' is first God's activity of establishing a relationship with the pinnacle of creation, humanity, and subjective religion (*pietas*), in second place, is 'our' consciousness of depending on God in response to the fact of God's relating to 'us':

> Religion itself is a moral relationship. Religion is indeed based on a mystical union between God and humanity; however, it is not itself a substantial but an ethical union between human beings and their God. In the case of God, one cannot speak of religion. *It is his indwelling in human beings that from that side fosters the relation to God we call religion.*[51]

This relationship between God and humanity is both general and specific. The creature in general is in relation to the Creator *de facto*. But, specifically, true religion is expressed first in the Old Testament primarily as an objective covenant: 'Objective religion is identical with the revelation of God and consists in the covenant (ברית), which God gave to Israel and may therefore be called, in the full sense of the word, a divine establishment (διαθηκη)'.[52] The prior pre-lapsarian covenant with creation was initially, per the human subject, manifest in the full unity of God- and self-consciousness, where the subject depended absolutely on God revealed objectively and subjectively. In the Edenic state, 'the question—which of the two was first, external or internal revelation—is superfluous. In the selfsame moment in which God revealed himself to human beings by creating them in his image, the latter knew this God and served him, and, vice versa, served and knew him'.[53] Therefore, he argues, 'true and genuine

---

[51] *RD* 1.262.
[52] *RD* 1.237.
[53] *RD* 1.279.

religion can exist only in the complete correspondence of the internal to the external revelation. Those who love God—with all their heart, soul, and strength—as he is and as he makes himself known by revelation, these are the truly religious, images of God, servants and children of God; they are human beings in the full sense'.[54] To be 'fully' human, therefore, is to be fully God- and self-conscious (Ch. 2).

After the Fall, objective religion is manifest in the promise and ordinances of God for the people of God, apparent in an outlined path of righteousness (Torah). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the 'I Am' of objective religion, God with us, disclosing his own self-conscious identity as the fulfillment of the 'way' of righteousness. Objective religion, therefore, is God's revelation of 'the right manner of knowing and serving Him (*recta verum Deum cognoscendi et colendi ratio*)', which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.[55]

Subjective religion, however, is not first a visible activity (as in dogmatic pronouncement or liturgical action) but a mode of being, signified by the term *pietas*. 'Subjectively: religion is the fear of the Lord. Such fear is not timidity. Rather, in the New Testament, Εὐσεβεια indicates holy reverence toward God; its meaning is related to that of the Latin *pietas* and hence expresses an attitude such as is present in children toward their parents'. Also: 'Subjective religion is first of all a state of being ἕξις (*habitus*), a certain predisposition in human beings that, as a result of the influence of objective religion, passes into actions (as internal or external worship). Such a predisposition is present in every human'.[56] The 'seed of religion' as a disposition of every human soul (the desire to be who one is as God's fully dependent creature) is only accurately disclosed and its needs satisfied, Bavinck suggests, in the feeling of absolute dependence on the Triune God. Again, 'this relationship', between God and humanity, 'is so deep and tender, so rich and many-dimensional, that its meaning eludes a

---

[54] *RD* 1.278–279.
[55] *RD* 1.238.
[56] *RD* 1.241.

singular definition. But certainly the concept of *dependence* deserves primary consideration and is best qualified for this purpose'.[57] In the general subjective aspect of religion, 'a human *feels* related to a personal being who has one's destiny in his hands in every area of life, for time and eternity'.[58] But pious absolute dependence on the triune God is synonymous with the dispositions of Christian faith and love: 'Πιστις and ἀγαπη are the basic attitudes inherent in Christian piety'.[59] He iterates a similar point in his Stone lectures regarding the universal subjective aspect of religion in relation to the fact of the objective: 'the sense [or feeling, *gevoel*] of dependence is the core of self-consciousness and the *essence* of religion. But, it is not a mere *de facto* dependence, as the unconscious and the irrational creation is dependent on God; in man it is a sense [or feeling] of dependence'.[60]

Absolute dependence, while the appropriate grammar for religion, is only genuinely absolute, Bavinck argues, when it is directed to the God who actually relates to 'us'. In other words, while the '*feeling* of absolute dependence' is a universal reality, although suppressed (e.g. atheism) and distorted (idolatry), the category of absolutely depending (as knowing and doing) is reserved for 'true' belief in the 'true God'. When one feels absolutely dependent and directs that dependence in cognition and action toward an idol, for example, one merely *feels* absolutely dependent but is not so in reality. Absolute dependence is the condition of feeling, knowing, and acting with respect to the true God.

This distinction is the same as that in Ch. 4, section 3 where Bavinck supposes he is 'going beyond' Schleiermacher and nuancing absolute dependence according to that which Schleiermacher did not see. One could describe absolute dependence, says Bavinck, as the unity of objective revelation and subjective religion disciplined by the Spirit. This is to say, the Spirit of Christ in both the agency of renewal and the work of advocation, transforms the

---

[57] *RD* 1.242.
[58] *RD* 1.242.
[59] *RD* 1.238.
[60] *PoR*, 77–8.

whole human consciousness. Accordingly, for dependence to be absolute, it must capture the whole of the human consciousness in correspondance to the truth, the actual, objective *Whence*. Bavinck describes his idea of religion, therefore, in 'Religion and Theology' in 1902: 'Just as subject and object must always correspond, in order to bring about anything in the expansive field of knowing and doing, so too a similar agreement is required in the area of religion. We see an object only, when the one and the same the sun illumines that object and our eye'. Analogously, 'one can only speak of *genuine* religion, when God's command and our desire coincide, as obligation and virtue, as law and inclination'.[61] Holy Scripture defines this Christian faith with respect, therefore, to two elements, the subjective and objective:

> First, over against God and his revelation, human beings are *totally receptive and absolutely dependent on God*. Second, precisely by the acknowledgment of this dependence, they become the beneficiaries of forgiveness, adoption as children, and salvation by grace. Certainly, in other religions there are analogies to this subjective religion in Christianity, but only in the Christian religion is the subjective relation of human beings to God completely normal, inasmuch as dependence and freedom are reconciled here.[62]

The feeling of absolute dependence, then, when manifest in the knowings and doings of other religions is not absolute dependence on God, the true God, but is indeed a feeling of dependence on God who has revealed God. Yet, because this dependence is not manifest in knowing and doing in relation to the Triune God, it is not absolute. In true religion, said dependence is not simply a feeling of absolute dependence on the Triune God, but an objective actuality that captures the whole consciousness. The feeling of absolute dependence which manifests in knowing and acting directed toward any god other than God, is both 'false' and is, therefore, 'relative dependence' on some relative being. True religion is absolute depending on the Absolute.

---

[61] Bavinck, *Godsdeinst en Godgeleerdheid*, 17. Original: 'En zoo ook is er eerst van echten godsdienst sprake, als Gods gebod en onze lust, als plicht en deugd, als wet en neiging samenvallen'.
[62] *RD* 1.243.

The feeling of absolute dependence only becomes absolute dependence of a complete, ultimate register when the consciousness directs its gaze to the cross of Christ. Thus, with respect to life, knowledge, and religion,

> What counts is not merely existence, or pleasure, or intensity, but first of all content and quality. And it is precisely by truth that this content and quality are determined. The truth is of more value than empirical life; Christ sacrificed his life for it. None the less, by doing so he regained his life. Truth is worth more than reality; it belongs to that higher order of things in which *physis*, and *gnosis*, and *ethos* are reconciled, and in which a true philosophy gives full satisfaction both to the demands of the intellect and to the needs of the heart.[63]

Absolute depending on *the* Absolute, he suggests, is also true freedom in contradistinction to the feeling of absolute dependence manifest with reference to some false deity. In the latter, 'we' deny absolute dependence on the true God and, therefore, become relatively dependent on God by denial of God, the fact that 'our' will and action will not submit to the Creator. 'Our' feeling of absolute dependence must become 'conscious [or discursive] and voluntary'. Such absolute submission is freedom insofar as absolute dependence means becoming wholly human, dependent children of God.[64]

> By implication this absolute dependence in which human beings stand toward God does not exclude freedom. We are dependent but in a way that differs from that of other creatures. We are dependent in the manner and sense that we simultaneously remain rational and moral creatures who are akin to God,

---

[63] *PoR*, 82.

[64] In *Godsdeinst en Godgeleerdheid*, 44, he adds: 'Experience and discovery is not and can never be the foundation, the measure, or the source of revelation. It is, however, the only path on which the Christian religion in its absolute character can be acknowledged and recognized by us. Or more preferably still, the Christian religion, the revelation of God in the face of Christ His Son, acquires no absolute certainty for our consciousness other than on the path of saving faith. If the Christian religion is the absolute religion, there is no other path… If it could be proven along another path, it would thereby cease to be the absolute religion'. Translated by Bruce Pass. Original: 'Ervaring, bevinding is niet en kan nooit wezen de grondslag, de maatstaf, de kenbron der openbaring. Maar zij is toch wel de weg, waarin de Christelijke religie in haar absoluut karakter alleen door ons gekend en erkend worden kan. Of liever nog, de Christelijke religie, de openbaring Gods in het aangezicht van Christus, Zijnen Zoon, krijgt voor ons bewustzijn geen absolute zekerheid, dan alleen in den weg van het zaligmakend geloof. Indien de Christelijke religie de absolute religie is, is er geen andere weg. En omgekeerd, indien ze langs een anderen weg bewezen moest worden, zou zij daarmede ophouden, de absolute religie te zijn'.

are his offspring and his image. We are absolutely dependent in such a manner that the denial of this dependence never makes us free, while the acknowledgment of it never reduces us to the status of a slave. *On the contrary: in the conscious and voluntary acceptance of this dependence, we human beings arrive at our greatest freedom.* We become human to the degree that we are children of God.[65]

This requirement that absolute dependence be both 'conscious and voluntary' with respect to the Triune God does not negate the fact of the relation of dependence between every human being and the Triune God. The universality of religion is derivative of the fact of universal objective religion (i.e. revelation, God's active agency in relating to humanity as Creator to creature). Religion, in this sense, does indeed produce false presentations (idolatry) but these falsities are a response to God's true self-manifestation perceived indirectly in the religious element of the immediate self-consciousness, the feeling of absolute dependence (*pietas*). For Bavinck, every single human is religious because every single human is in relation with God *de facto*. Their very existence is to be in relation with their Creator and that relation has been revealed. That relation is, however, ethically marred but not negated. One cannot cease being a creature. Every human is and will be, by necessity, religious, 'sensing the divine' and feeling absolutely dependent on the Absolute. He argues therefore: the idea of 'a "religionless" human is a mere construct, as thin and vacuous an abstraction as the "natural man" of Rousseau and the adherents of the social contract. In reality, it never existed. Religion itself [in the construct of the "religionless" human], like morality in the thought of Darwin, thus becomes completely a product of chance'.[66]

5.3. Between Calvin and Schleiermacher

Bavinck's definition of subjective religion uses Calvin's notion of sensus and Schleiermacher's concepts of 'feeling' and 'dependence' together, synonymously. The initiated reader will recognize in the previous elucidation of Bavinck's definition of religion in its subjective element his adoption of not

---

[65] *RD* 1.243. Emphasis added.
[66] *RD* 1.275.

only Schleiermacher but also Calvin. He sets the concepts 'seed of religion', '*sensus divinitatis*', and 'feeling of absolute dependence' in a synonymous relation.

> Religion is an essential of human nature so integral to it and inseparably bound up with it that, though sin can devastate it, it cannot eradicate it. For that reason religion is universal and has such immense power in life and history. Whether one wishes or not, one always finally encounters in humans a certain religious propensity. One can call it by various names: "the seed of religion," "a sense of divinity" (Calvin), religious feeling (Schleiermacher, Opzoomer) …'.

More notably, in *Magnalia Dei* of 1909, Bavinck spends nearly two pages paralleling Calvin's 'sense of divinity' or '*zaad der religie*' (seed of religion) with what he calls '*gevoel der Godheid*' (feeling of divinity), a '*besef van het Goddelijke buiten in ons*' (consciousness of the divine in us). At one point, he states that Calvin taught a '*gevoel der Godheid*', as did 'Paul', the apostle.[67] Zylstra, the translator of *Magnalia Dei*, like Vos, also chooses to translate the term '*gevoel*' as 'sense' ignoring the implicit point made clearer by the fact that Bavinck defines Calvin's 'feeling of divinity' explicitly. It contains two elements, he argues:

> In the first place, a sense [or feeling] of absolute dependence…Underneath the mind and will, underneath thought and action there is in us a self-consciousness which is interdependence with our self-existence and seems to coincide with it… And the core of this near-identity of self-existence and self-consciousness is the feeling of dependence. In our inmost selves we are immediately… conscious of ourselves as… dependent…. [Second], this sense [or feeling] of divinity has in itself a sense [or feeling] of the nature of that being on whom man feels himself to be dependent.[68]

The persistent un-named but clear Schleiermacherian references are striking: a 'feeling of absolute dependence', 'self-consciousness', 'immediately…conscious of ourselves as dependent, that being on whom man feels himself to be dependent'. Further, in parallel to Schleiermacher's *OR*, Bavinck argues: 'man is a "dependent" of the universe'. The feeling 'does not carry discouragement… but rather prompts man to religion… it has in it the

---

[67] Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei: Onderwijzing in de christelijke religie naar gereformeerde belijdenis* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1909), 36. ET: *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 42-43.
[68] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 43.

element of freedom'.[69] Bavinck cites Schleiermacher nowhere in this discussion of the feeling of absolute dependence. Rather, he attributes Schleiermacher's grammar directly to Calvin. He concludes his chapter with this remark which is worth seeing in Dutch per the use of 'feeling' instead of 'sense': '*Het "gevoel der Godheid" is dus, naar Calvijns omschrijving, tegelijk het "zaad der religie"*' ('The "feeling of divinity" is therefore, as Calvin wrote, the same as the "seed of religion"').[70] Whereas in *RD*, Bavinck uses the term '*sensus*' regarding Calvin's 'sense of divinity', here he chooses *gevoel*, directly relating Calvin's sense to the feeling of absolute dependence. This evidence alone is definitive of Bavinck's interpretative parallel and is an instance of a peculiar self-masking of his Schleiermacherian intentions.

Further, returning to the historical narrative in Ch. 2, Adriaan Steketee, Bavinck's favorite lecturer at Kampen during Bavinck's study at Leiden, made an implicit Schleiermacher-Calvin connection in his lecture giving an historical precedent in Bavinck's own life for Bavinck's later Calvin-Schleiermacher appropriation. As noted previously, Steketee called upon his audience at Kampen to loosen their grip on the philosophy of Aristotle in favor of more Platonic sensibilities. He turned to Schleiermacher as his premiere example for such a move. Bavinck praised the lecture calling it 'beautiful'. At the end of the lecture, Steketee draws a parallel between the renaissance of Platonic dialogical methods but particularly '*Plato's leer van deugd en plicht*' (Plato's doctrine of virtue and duty) adapted and hidden within the robe (*kleed*) of Christianity in Schleiermacher, among others, and the work of the Reformation. In God's providence, Steketee argues, from Augustine, to Luther and Calvin, and even in Dordt, 'our' fathers have preserved the doctrines of grace and updated, changed, cleaned, and hid Plato's ethics within the purifying garments of the Christian faith.[71] Steketee drew a line between Schleiermacher and the theologians the secessionist church prized most while the young

---

[69] Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 43.
[70] Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei*, 37.
[71] Adriaan Steketee, *De Studie van Plato, met het Oog op de Theologische Vorming*, 49.

university student Bavinck sat in the audience, offering Bavinck perhaps an early precedent for his later move.

In the original concept in the *Institutes*, Calvin argues for the 'natural endowment' or that awareness 'naturally implanted' (*Hominum mentibus naturaliter … inditam*) wherein all 'men' have an 'understanding of his divine majesty'.[72] God as active agent 'repeatedly sheds fresh drops' of the sense of the divine in the consciousness of the human subject ever-renewing God's 'memory' to them.[73] All humans therefore seem to exhibit 'some seed of religion. So deeply does the common conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it inhere in the hearts of all'!'[74] For Bavinck, Calvin's doctrine of *sensus* is made intelligible 'today' by an appeal to Schleiermacher's feeling. God is ever-renewing this awareness of God (as feeling) in the human consciousness, prior to all thinking and willing. He uses both to define subjective religion.

Subjective religion is first an integral aspect of what a human is, religious (in relation to God), a response to the presence of God in his self-manifestation to the human subject as light. This subjective seed, which will grow into bloom at the experience of God's objective manifestation in objective revelation is more precisely paralleled, for Bavinck, by the concept *sensus divinitatis*, which Bavinck understands to be a relative synonym with 'seed'. Bavinck's offers his reading of Calvin directly:

> [Calvin] specifically believed that an "awareness of divinity" (*sensus divinitatis*) was present within the human mind "by natural instinct." … Another name he gives to this awareness is "the seed of religion" (*semen religionis*), which explains the universality of religion (ibid.). The conviction that there is a God is "naturally inborn." It can never be eradicated (I.iii.3).[75]

---

[72] Calvin, *Institutes,* I.iii.1.
[73] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.iii.1.
[74] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.iii.1.
[75] *RD* 2.67. Also, Calvin writes in *Institutes*, I. iii. 3: 'Men of sound judgment will always be sure that a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men's minds. Indeed, the perversity of the impious, who though they struggle furiously are unable to extricate

A precise clarification of what Calvin meant spoken in modern grammars with respect to the sciences of human psychology and epistemological philosophy can only be speculative. Nevertheless, Calvin at least distinguishes between this inborn 'knowledge of God' (or it is better to speak of 'divinity') of which one is 'master from mother's womb' and the knowledge of God acquired and 'found', a knowledge that must be 'grasped for'.[76] The former is simply there and the concept remains vague. Perhaps the obscurity is the point. The latter, in distinction, is gained, develops, can be right or wrong, and displays itself in external worship, in actions.[77] No matter how one interprets the *sensus* with some precise delineated definition, Calvin's ambiguity points to the fact that he is trying to distinguish between two aspects of religion: between a mere sense of divinity (a subjective sense) and the knowledge of God proper (hence: the institutes of the Christian *religion*), the knowledge acquired that is necessary for righteous worship of the true God. The latter is the unity of the *sensus* and the act of God in the gift of the two-fold grace by the Spirit. 'Religion' (*religio*) in this full concept is the knowledge and worship of the Triune God. In the fullest sense, religion is relatively synonymous with theology insofar as right knowledge is accompanied by worship. Bavinck summarizes the relationship accordingly:

> Theology… is no philosophy, which seeks an explanation of the problem of the world; it is no metaphysic, which traces out the final ground of being; it is not a heuristic or a speculative, but rather, a positive science: the knowledge of God in the face of Christ, the sent of the Father. It is most closely connected, therefore, to the Christian religion, with the faith of the congregation, with the confession of the church, and with the life of piety.[78]

themselves from the fear of God, is abundant testimony that this conviction, namely, that there is some God, is naturally inborn in all, and is fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow'.

[76] Calvin, *Institutes*, I. iii. 3: 'From this we conclude that it is not a doctrine that must first be learned in school, but one of which each of us is master from his mother's womb and which nature itself permits no one to forget, although many strive with every nerve to this end'.

[77] Calvin, *Institutes*, I. iii. 3.

[78] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 9. Original: 'En de theologie is daarom geen philosophie, die eene verklaring zoekt van het wereldprobleem; geen metaphysica, die de laatste gronden van het zijn opspoort; geen heuristische of speculatieve, maar eene positieve wetenschap: kennisse Gods in het aangezicht van Christus, den Gezondene des Vaders. Zij

Because he sets *sensus* parallel to Schleiermacher's 'feeling', Bavinck's appropriation of Calvin's *sensus* reveals that Bavinck is, at least, making use of Calvin to propose a pre-discursive, subjective form of the 'knowledge' of God, already present and arising for the consciousness in the experience of being a self in a world. Bavinck divides Calvin's doctrine between 'sense' or 'seed' and knowing (the knowledge of God). For knowledge as assent, experience and thinking must be added: 'added to "this seed of religion" comes the revelation of God in his works; hence, now "people cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him" (I.v.1)'.[79] The first is the 'light of God' and not the 'light of reason', Bavinck argues. 'God is indeed the light of human souls' from their birth. Yet, 'we' only come to 'knowledge of God' by encountering God's revelation in nature and Scripture.[80] All people, therefore, first have an idea of God but the content becomes 'defined in very divergent ways' when the feeling of absolute dependence passes into knowing and doing in human experience and cognition, in relation to objective revelation. The lack of uniformity per religious knowledge proves that 'strictly speaking, natural theology never existed any more than "natural rights" and "natural morality"'.[81] This is to say, the 'knowledge' of God, like the moral order, is not first acquired by thinking.

There have been multiple interpretations of Calvin's *sensus* in recent decades specific to the Reformed theological tradition. Alvin Plantinga, for example, describes Calvin's concept as an 'innate tendency, or nisus, or disposition' to believe in God.[82] Plantinga's point is that this *sensus* is not belief itself, which is a determination, but a disposition toward belief that gives rise to belief in response to nature. Humans in original creation possess, at least, a noetic

hangt daarom ten nauwste met de Christelijken godsdienst, met het geloof der gemeente, met de belijdenis der kerk, met het leven der vroomheid saam'.
[79] *RD* 2.69.
[80] *RD* 2.69.
[81] *RD* 2.70
[82] Alvin Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God', in *Faith and Philosophy: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16-93, 65.

ability for belief, even if that ability has been destroyed to some extent by sin. Paul Helm, in contradistinction, associates Calvin's *sensus* with cognitive, propositional knowledge of God: 'mankind is created not only as capable of knowing God, but as actually knowing him... belief in God is natural in the sense of being part of man's original condition, part of what it means to be really or fully human'.[83] Helm augments his reading with the terms 'metaphysical-cognitive' (the knowledge that God or a god exists), and dissociates the *sensus* from any experience of God.

Bavinck, similarly to Helm but with some distinction, thinks that every human believes in the divine and that there is an immediate awareness of the divine as a *gevoel*. For Bavinck, due to the parallel between Calvin and Schleiermacher, this *sensus* as 'knowledge of God' does not have the Triune God in view as its object directly because it is not a result of discursive cognition. Rather, it is an awareness of divinity, and is properly called a 'feeling' in the trichotomy of consciousness to dissociate it from discursive, propositional knowing. It does indeed arise in relation to sensation and experience. Yet, because God is not a perceptible object, the sensus, for Bavinck, describes an immediate feeling. The Triune God, for Bavinck, is indeed the cause of the 'feeling of absolute dependence' in his revelatory agency to every human subject derivative of the fact of their covenantal creaturliness, but this revelation which arises in the human consciousness as the feeling of absolute dependence is not propositional knowledge as it is in Helm's logic. Bavinck's 'God-consciousness' is an indirect awareness following the fact of being dependent with the world and absolutely dependent on that which is not self or world.[84] For Bavinck, because revelatory creation is the secret of the universe, God's witness is everywhere presenting God both objectively and subjectively, directly and

---

[83] Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 222. Cf. 'John Calvin, the *sensus divinitatis*, and the Noetic Effects of Sin', *International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): 87-107.

[84] The fact that Calvin states that the *sensus* is from the mother's womb may trouble Helm's account. Calvin, *Institutes*, I. iii. 3. For Bavinck, *pietas* is like a child in dependence upon their mother.

indirectly. The awareness of divinity arises, therefore, in the activity and receptivity of being in the world, not first as active 'thinking' in propositions or in 'willing' (or doing), but as a 'feeling' or '*sensus*'. Bavinck's use of Calvin on this point is akin to Leithart's reading: 'The *sensus* is not a *source* of knowledge in the sense that men reflect on it and deduce from that reflection certain conclusions about the nature of God. Rather, the *sensus* is a disposition or momentum that propels man to bow before someone or something higher than himself'.[85]

In Bavinck's use of Calvin and Schleiermacher on religion, he is working implicitly with the Pauline logic of Romans 1 and 2 that God is revealed to all and that human beings suppress the revelation of God. While Schleiermacher's propositions related to piety are derivative of the discipline he calls 'philosophy of religion', Bavinck's use of Schleiermacher's definition of universal piety is derived from Pauline logic. And Bavinck's point regarding idolatry follows Calvin who draws this conclusion in *Institutes* I.iv.1, and which Bavinck quotes: 'As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion in all men, but scarcely one man in a hundred is met with who fosters it, once received, in his heart, and none in whom it ripens— much less shows fruit in season'. Leithart, commenting on Calvin's quote, suggests that 'Calvin's reference to "scarcely one man in a hundred" should be understood as "no one"; the whole thrust of Calvin's argument in the opening chapters of the *Institutes* is that no man can, without the aid of special revelation, be fruitful in the knowledge of God'.[86] Similarly, as argued, for Bavinck, no human can 'know God' in the sense of true *godsdeinst* without objective revelation confronting a regenerate subject.[87]

In relation to Calvin's *sensus*, for subjective religion, Bavinck's preferred expression

---

[85] Peter Leithart, 'That Eminent Pagan: Calvin's Use of Cicero in *Institutes* 1.1-5', *WTJ* 52 (1990), 1-12, 9-10.

[86] Peter Leithart, 'That Eminent Pagan: Calvin's Use of Cicero in *Institutes* 1.1-5', 11.

[87] '*Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*', 47: 'If religion is not described according to the philosophical premises of an arbitrary intellect but according to the witness of Scripture, according to the experience of the pious, according to the reality of life, then everything mentioned previously is just an aesthetic enjoyment of a pantheistic reveling in feeling'.

consistently remains the 'feeling of dependence'. Although Bavinck's adoption is clear in the quotes provided already, this appropriation of Schleiermacher's grammar can be mapped more specifically in two movements. As stated in Ch. 2, in *CF* §3, Schleiermacher first distinguishes religion as feeling, from the concept of religion as knowing (knowing about God) or doing. In *CF* §4, he, then associates the religious feeling with the consciousness of being absolutely dependent. Bavinck adopts both aspects of this religious element combining the logic of *CF* §3 and §4 as Schleiermacher did in the phrase 'the feeling of absolute dependence'.

First, for Bavinck, the *sensus* is a broader referent to 'feeling' within the trichotomy of knowing, doing, and feeling. Feeling, again, is a form of knowledge, but non-discursive, prior to all thinking and willing. His argument betrays implicit (and, on occasion, explicit) interaction with Schleiermacher's *CF* §3: 'Piety that constitutes the basis of all ecclesial communities, regarded purely in and of itself, is neither a knowing nor a doing but a distinct formation of feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness'. [88] Religion, Bavinck argues accordingly, is not *first* a knowing. Religion as knowing is 'based on a total misconstrual of the essence of religion' where 'knowing' refers to science.[89] He associates this problem with both the 'orthodox' and modern (the old and new):

> In earlier times people did not understand that religion was not a doctrine. They simply equated religion with orthodoxy, and faith with accepting as true some doctrine or another, and revelation with the communication of ideas. It was all intellectualism in either the orthodox or the rationalistic form. *But now after Kant and Schleiermacher*, we have much better insight into all these things. Religion is life: subjective religion is primary and central and constitutes the heart of objective religion.[90]

---

[88] *CF* §3. Further, Bavinck defines Schleiermacher's idea of religion in the *Speeches* in *RD* 1.265 as follows: 'Religion is neither thinking nor acting, neither metaphysics nor morality, but feeling for the infinite. The object of that feeling is not a personal God with whom a human lives in fellowship but the universe, the world as a whole, conceived as a unity. And the faculty for the perception of that infinite is not the intellect, reason, or will but feeling, the focus of the mind on and capacity for intuiting the infinite'.
[89] *RD* 1.257.
[90] *RD* 1.550.

Amid the modern interlocutors, he also deliberately sets his definition of religion as 'feeling' of dependence in contradistinction to Hegel's 'mind'. For Hegel 'self-consciousness of the absolute mind in the finite mind is religion. Hence religion *is* essentially a knowing, not feeling or acting, but a knowing: knowing God by the finite mind or an objective divine knowing of himself through and in the finite mind'.[91] Knowing, however, is the 'aim of science', not religion. Religion, instead, is 'comfort, peace, salvation'. No one, 'not even the most profound philosopher' rises above the feelings of dependence and absolute dependence. No one rises above religion. 'For salvation is bound up with believing, not with knowing'.[92]

With Schleiermacher likewise, he affirms that religion is not a doing (moral action). 'Unjustifiably, he writes, 'the opinion has gained acceptance, that religion is conceived of as something external, that goes on completely outside of the heart'.[93] Rather, 'religion is no mere *cultus externus*, but above all a *cultus internus*, a knowing and serving of the heart'.[94] He situates his definitions, therefore, between Hegel and now Kant who, he argues, offered religion only as a 'way of morality'. For Kant, 'Religion, subjectively considered, is the knowledge of all our duties as divine imperatives. Religion here is not directly and immediately grounded in human nature but only by way of morality. It has no material content of its own and is nothing but a further qualification of morality'. But, 'Kant... had to admit that no actual

---

[91] *RD* 1.255. Bavinck quotes Hegel: 'Man only knows of God insofar as God has knowledge of himself in man; this knowledge is the self-consciousness of God but also a knowledge of the same by man, and this knowledge of God by man is the knowledge of man by God. The mind of man in coming to know God, is just the mind of God itself' from G. W. F. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, "Jubilee" edition, ed. H. Glockner, 22 vols. (Stuttgart, 1927–30), XVI, 428. ("*Vorlesungen uber die Philosophie der Religion*," in *Werke*, XII, 428).
[92] *RD* 1.257.
[93] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 15. Original: 'Ten onrechte heeft de meening ingang gevonden, dat de religie hiermede als iets uitwendigs werd opgevat, dat geheel buiten het hart omging'.
[94] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 16. Original: 'De godsdienst is geen cultus externus slechts, maar vóór alles een cultus internus, een kennen en dienen met het hart'.

religion was ever satisfied with his notion of religion'.[95] Contra Kant, 'religion… is something essentially different from morality… morality can be neither the foundation nor the principle, or the norm, or the content of religion, but, conversely, religion has to form the basis of morality'.[96] Objectively religion is the relation to God that is God-established: 'the relation to God is then the primary and central relation that governs all other human relations'.[97] But the heart of religion, rather than a knowing (about) or doing (moral action), is the fact that human beings 'feel themselves totally dependent' because 'human beings are *totally receptive and absolutely dependent on God*'.[98] Subjective religion, therefore, is neither metaphysics nor morality, but the feeling of absolute dependence manifest in knowing and doing. Despite the close association between religion and moral action, this association, Bavinck argues, ought 'not lead to a denial of the distinction between the two'.[99]

The second aspect of Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's religion is a persistent emphasis on 'dependence' as the primary genitive referent to 'feeling', as previewed in numerous quotes already, with respect to both the relative and the absolute. Perhaps the most substantial explicit adoption is here: 'There is in Schleiermacher's definition a substantial element of truth. For in religion a human feels related to a personal being who has one's destiny in his hands in every area of life, for time and eternity'. This personal being, however, is 'not yet conceived' as God but, all the while, God is 'confronting us' as the 'Absolute sovereign'. Accordingly, 'this creaturely dependence, though it is not the essence of religion, is its foundation'.[100] In this thesis, Bavinck divides the language of essence and foundation between the objective and subjective. The feeling of absolute dependence is the foundation of religion (that is, *pietas*). The essence of religion is, however, the objective, the fact of God

---

[95] *RD* 1.259.
[96] *RD* 1.263.
[97] *RD* 1.263.
[98] *RD* 1.243.
[99] *RD* 1.262.
[100] *RD* 1.242–243.

relating to 'us' as active agent. God is 'always confronting'. In *PoR*, however, he will use the term 'essence' with regard to *pietas*, the religious feeling. These terms 'essence' and 'foundation', applied differently in each work, ought not be taken as contradictions. In *PoR*, Bavinck is referring to the essence of religion from the perspective of the subject specifically, thereby suggesting an alternative and corresponding objective revelation. In *RD* 1, he speaks of essence and foundation per object and subject in unity. The essence of religion is God's relation to us. The foundation of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence, he argues.

In addition to the explicit, there are multiple examples of Bavinck's implicit appropriation of Schleiermacher's religion. Bavinck distinguishes between the feeling of 'fear' or 'devotion' with respect to the relative and absolute. 'Between λατρεια and δουλεια, between the feelings of fear, respect, deference, etc. as we have them toward God and those feelings as we have them toward creatures' there must be a profound distinction.[101] That distinction, he suggests, 'can consist only in the fact that in religion the absolute dignity and power of God and absolute subjection on our part comes into play'. In other words, 'we are only *partially dependent on creatures*; as fellow creatures, we are on the same level with them. God, however, is a being on whom *we depend totally* and who decides about our weal and woe in every respect'.[102] This final quote follows directly the logic of Schleiermacher in *CF* §4.4: while the subject's relation to the world of creatures 'permits only a feeling of limited dependence but excludes the feeling of absolute dependence', 'feeling oneself to be absolutely dependent and being conscious of oneself as in relation with God are one and the same thing'.

Further, Bavinck argues, that what makes an action religious is that it puts 'us' subjectively into active relation to the *Whence*, the God that 'we' already relate to in the feeling of absolute dependence. Religious action is religious insofar as it puts 'us in relation to a person on whom

---

[101] *RD* 1.242.
[102] *RD* 1.242. Emphasis added.

we, along with all things, are absolutely dependent and on whom we as human beings are uniquely, i.e., as rational creatures, dependent'.[103] Another example of implicit appropriation:

> Religion, after all, originates only when human beings do not just ask for help ingeneral, as people do when they look for help from each other or from art and science, but when in a special way belief, trust, and a feeling of dependence with respect to an invisible power are aroused in their heart. Religion always assumes a certain distinction between God and the world, between the power of a being above nature and subordinate forces in nature.[104]

Derivatively, while subjective religion is first the feeling of absolute dependence, it is never alone but manifest in knowing and action. 'Under the impact of objective religion, subjective religion passes from its habitual state into action'.[105] And regarding religion, 'the area of its dominion began with the internal stirrings, with the hidden deliberations, with the secret inclinations of the soul and from there extends outwards to the furthest boundaries of human knowledge and capability'.[106] Religion, Bavinck argues, directly adopting Schleiermacher's trichotomy, 'encompasses the whole person in her thinking, feeling, and doing'.[107] Therefore, religion and worship, are related 'as cause and effect. Still, this does not mean that worship is a free invention or expression of subjective religion'.[108] While objective revelation provides the content for the expression of subjective religion, 'in all these religious actions, the sense of absolute dependence is basic and inspiring'.[109]

In addition to the most explicit adoption of Schleiermacher's religion, Bavinck frames his 'Religion and Theology' in 1902 with what might be the clearest example of implicit adoption—an attack on the 'despisers of religion' paralleling Schleiermacher's *OR*. Toward the

---

[103] *RD* 1.244.
[104] *RD* 1.73
[105] *RD* 1.244.
[106] Bavinck *Godsdeinst en Godgeleerdheid*, 15. Original: 'het gebied harer heerschappij begon bij de inwendigste roerselen, bij de verborgenste overleggingen, bij de geheimste genegenheden der ziel, en strekte zich vandaar dan uit tot de verste grenzen van menschelijk kennen en kunnen toe'.
[107] *RD* 1.268.
[108] *RD* 1.244.
[109] *RD* 1.244.

beginning of the article he writes: 'the despisers of religion (who are at least indifferent about it) continually increase in number among all classes of society. If they do not openly oppose religion, they regard it, nevertheless, as a "*Privatsache*"…'.[110]

In a striking instance of the unity of his modern and orthodox grammars in *RD* 1, Bavinck also implicitly ties Schleiermacher's definition of the subjective element with his explicit addition of the objective element from the Heidelberg catechism:

> True religion, on the other hand, consists in the kind of human disposition that on the one hand is rooted in a deep sense [or feeling] of one's absolute dependence on God as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, etc., and on the other seeks in sincerity to live according to all God's commandments. Hence, no more beautiful description of religion is conceivable than that offered in the Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 94: "That I, not wanting to endanger my salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry, magic, superstitious rites, and prayer to saints or to other creatures. That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God, trust him alone, look to him for every good thing humbly and patiently, love him, fear him, and honor him with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against his will in any way".[111]

This example of unity between Schleiermacher's subjective concept and the catechism reflects the fact that Bavinck supposes Schleiermacher's explication of piety a continuation of the Reformed tradition rather than an aberration. Against the ethos of his climate, Bavinck makes explicit the relation between Schleiermacher and the 'old dogmatics', as it pertains to religion as piety:

> Schleiermacher, though striving after the liberation of theology from philosophy, could act in this way according to his conviction only because he believed he possessed in the religious feeling of absolute dependence an immediate revelation of the Infinite… *which* [with the mediation theologies after him] *was only more or less a reflection of the old dogmatics*—by means of

---

[110] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 24. Original: 'De verachters van, de onverschilligen althans omtrent den godsdienst nemen onder alle klassen en standen der maatschappij voortdurend in aantal toe. Als dezen de religie niet openlijk bestrijden, beschouwen zij haar toch als eene „Privatsache", waarover ieder denken kan wat hij wil'.

[111] *RD* 1.244–245. Also, in *RD* 4.447, Bavinck commending the breadth of the means of grace cites Calvin, Schleiermacher, and the Reformed Confessions for his argument in fn.15: J. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV; Second Helvetic Confession, #16; Westminster Confession, ch. 14.1; F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §127.

speculative reasoning on the immanent requirements, needs, or experiences of the religious and ethical man.[112]

Bavinck's definition of religion after Calvin and Schleiermacher, therefore, emphasizes the primal experience of the relationships that comprise the unity of consciousness, between self and world, between relative and absolute dependence on the creaturely and transcendent, and the universal fact of human religiosity by determining that subjective religion is first a feeling of absolute dependence on God. Such a claim is situated inside of Christian dogmatics and not to be confused with a natural theology isolated from biblical logic. It is a reflection on the concept of subjective revelation conceived in tandem with the Triune God that makes intelligible such universal feeling and establishes the value of religions even in the situation of suppression and idolatry in response to the truth. Bavinck is willing with his tradition, therefore, to structure his idea of religion primarily between true and false. And he, with Schleiermacher, situates Reformation and post-Reformation theology in the language and logic of the modern emphasis on the subjective element of piety, particularly *gevoel.*

Mariña offers a helpful summary of the whole of Schleiermacher's approach that gives clarity to both Bavinck's adoption and separation from Schleiermacher regarding religion and dogmatics: 'Both in the *Speeches* and in *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher offers a comprehensive theory of the nature of religion, grounding it in experience. In the *Speeches* Schleiermacher grounds religion in an original unity of consciousness… [and] *The Christian Faith* presents a similar analysis of religion: the feeling of absolute dependence is grounded in the immediate self-consciousness. In both accounts a fundamental experience grounds religion'.[113] Mariña's description locates Bavinck's adoption of Schleiermacher's religion into his own category of religion in general. Yet, Bavinck rejects Schleiermacher's second move, as Mariña describes it: [then] 'in *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher explains *that doctrines are*

---

[112] *PoR*, 213.
[113] Jacqueline Mariña, 'Schleiermacher on the Outpouring of the Inner Fire: Experiential Expressivism and Religious Pluralism', *Religious Studies* 40:2 (June 2004), 125-143, 126.

expressions of this fundamental experience; Christian doctrines are, for instance, "accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech". This view has been aptly labelled experiential expressivism'. [114] Bavinck will not affirm the movement from the primal experience of religion to experiential expressivism. Doctrines, Bavinck supposes, are not expressions of this fundamental experience but this fundamental experience is the subjective foundation for the possibility of dogmatic cognition in relation to the objective source of doctrine, the Holy Scriptures. His priority for a theological rationality determined by exegesis is evident in his affirmation that Scripture must 'explain all of human living':

> Scripture is the Book of the Kingdom of God, not a book for this or that people, for the individual only, but for all nations, and for all of humanity. It is not a book for one age, but for all times. It is a Kingdom book. Just as the Kingdom of God develops not alongside and above history, but in and through world history, so too Scripture must not be abstracted, nor viewed by itself, nor isolated from everything. Rather, Scripture must be brought into relationship with all our living, with the living of the entire human race. And Scripture must be employed to explain all of human living.[115]

In alliance, therefore, with a Barthian sensibility, Bavinck suggests that Schleiermacher's theology, his dogmatic method, 'dissolve[s]… in a completely secularized science of religion'. In treating dogmatics primarily as a positive science of religious experience or 'an expression of religious faith alone', the process of dogmatics only describes the characteristics of Christian piety and fails to lay the subject before the fact of revelation, in rational submission.[116] While Schleiermacher's primary categorization of religions is higher and lower and while Barth's is in antithesis to the idolatry of religion altogether, Bavinck with Calvin distinguishes between the true and false.[117] In total, at the center of Bavinck's concept of true religion is the unity between revelation and the human consciousness, the subjective domain

---

[114] Mariña, 'Schleiermacher on the Outpouring of the Inner Fire', 126. Emphasis added.
[115] Bavinck, 'KGHG', 163.
[116] *RD* 1.48.
[117] Bavinck was outspoken about his repudiation for the theses surrounding lower and higher religions, which he generalized as the 'evolutionistic' method. 'This evolutionistic representation, however, fails to do justice to the facts of Scripture and is incompatible with a number of elements that, according to the witness of Scripture, are integral to the doctrine of God'. *RD* 2.31.

of religion. He writes: 'If God has not revealed God to us, then he can neither be felt or known'.[118] The reader ought notice in that quote, the movement from 'feeling' to 'knowing', both of which are dependent on the revelation of the Triune God.

In toto, for Bavinck, the feeling of absolute dependence as an immediate self-consciousness fills out philosophically the insight Augustine catalyzed and the *sensus* to which Calvin appealed. This adoption is in accordance with Bavinck's positive response to much of the intellectual climate's return to the religious in the early twentieth century: 'there is cause for rejoicing that the intellectualism of the last century has been succeeded by a feeling for religion and mysticism, for metaphysics and philosophy; and that in religion itself there now is recognized a revelation of God'.[119] Here, the modern sensibility has again coincided with the pre-modern, intellectualism has returned to feeling and shed the corruptions of 'pure reason'. And perhaps one of the more explicit examples of this unity of modern and orthodox is here, combining once more implicitly references to Schleiermacher and the Heidelberg Catechism:

> In all…religious actions, the sense [feeling] of absolute dependence is basic and inspiring. Detached from this sense [feeling] of dependence, it becomes a religion of the letter, lip service, cold and dead formalism…True religion, on the other hand, consists in the kind of human disposition that on the one hand is rooted in a deep sense [feeling] of one's absolute dependence on God as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, etc., and on the other seeks in sincerity to live according to all God's commandments.[120]

One may summarize Bavinck's meta-logic from both chapters four and five regarding his appropriation of 'Bavinck's Schleiermacher' as follows: Objectively, nearly all the wisdom humans possess consists of the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God. No one can truly know themselves without simultaneously knowing God and no one can truly know God without knowledge of self. John Calvin's Augustinian insight into the correlation between self-knowledge and God-knowledge is preceded, however, by an immediate awareness of self in

---

[118] *RD* 2.56.
[119] *PoR*, 15.
[120] *RD* 1.244.

relation to God that is prior to Calvin's understanding of self-knowledge. To know oneself, 'I' must first be revealed to 'me'. The self and the revelation of its essence is awoken by its relation to and with the world. Particularity is known only in correlation to totality. To have self-consciousness (*zelfbewustzijn*) at all, therefore, is to have world-consciousness (*wereldbewustzijn*). An awareness of 'me' only arises in relation to that which is not-me. This, for Bavinck, is the certainty of the self in immediate self-consciousness: the givenness of the self, the ground of the possibility of thinking making the self known in the experience of being.

This immediate self-consciousness makes possible all thinking and acting. The presupposition, says Bavinck, of all thinking and acting, of all science and art, of all ethics and theology, is self-consciousness, an awareness of identity. In turn, this self- and world-consciousness gives rise to a particular feeling, a feeling of unity with the world as together one in finitude. And, therefore, it is also simultaneously a feeling of an absolute dependence on that which is not self or world, not finite, but wholly other, on the *One* who *gives* self and world. In other words, our immediate self-consciousness of being in relation with God reveals to us the fact of God, upon whom we depend absolutely. This feeling is not cognition of an object called 'God', but an intuition or *sensus* of God. It is the result of the fact of God's ubiquitous, covenantal revelation, starting with the ever-renewing drops of the 'inborn' knowledge of divinity, which is basic to human nature and is manifest in the fact of the universality of the arising feeling of absolute dependence and institutionalized religions. Humans, by nature, 'feel themselves to be absolutely dependent on some absolute prior to all thinking and willing'.[121] 'We' are, therefore, religious. To be otherwise is to be ill.

Conclusion

---

[121] *PoR*, 66.

Capetz, in his generalized assessment of Schleiermacher's relation to Calvin, suggests that 'the history of protestant theology since the eighteenth century is the chronicle of various attempts to interpret the classical Christian heritage in relation to modern thought'.[122] Accordingly, Bavinck consistently displays an effort to translate the theological content of his Reformed orthodox heritage into the grammar of modern thought. The premiere example of such is his relation to Schleiermacher's conceptual framework. In this chapter, his recognition of the reality of Schleiermacher's work in the spirit of Calvin's 'religion' is manifest in his own placement of Calvin's religious framework within a world-view of subjects and objects after Kant. Per the subject, Bavinck situated his conclusions with Schleiermacher. Yet, he places more and proper emphasis on the objective as the revelation of the Triune God thereby designating religion not as a development from lower to higher with respect to the positive study of history, but as either true or false. And while Bavinck did not, as argued prior, adopt the material dogmatic propositions or methodological logic of Schleiermacher's *CF*, he did indeed adopt Schleiermacher's philosophical grammar in order to fill out the content of his own dogmatic claims especially as it pertains to his definition of religion as the feeling of absolute dependence.

---

[122] P. Capetz, *Christian Faith as Religion*, 1.

Conclusion

Is Bavinck modern, orthodox, or both? Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's conceptual framework pertaining to God- and self-consciousness, feeling, and absolute dependence is a paradigmatic example of how Bavinck perceived the theological task. Bavinck's theology allows the ancient to speak to the modern and the modern to the ancient. He also remains fully wedded to a specific tradition, a *gereformeerde dogmatiek*, adopting the confessional commitments of his Dutch forebearers and, while moving within those boundaries, incorporating trajectories from theological and philosophical modernity. As he confessed, one cannot understand theological modernity without understanding modern philosophy and specifically the 'turn to the subject', so he in an idiosyncratic way turned to the subject himself. In this broad turn, more specifically, this study has unveiled that foremost amid modern thinkers Bavinck learned a grammar and logic from Schleiermacher for conceptualizing his theology in the light of the modern principle of subjectivity.

Chapter one revealed an underlying structure to much of the specific treatments of Bavinck in the last fifty years. Namely, that the central trajectories in Bavinck scholarship revolve around the question of his relationship to the modern and orthodox. After Eglinton's work, *Trinity and Organism*, tensions between his orthodoxy and theologically modern tendencies need not be taken as dualistic or as evidence in a 'Jekyll-Hyde bi-polarity' narrative. Rather, Bavinck ought to be understood in the way he defined his catholic task and argued that theology need not rely on any specific philosophical framework but can adopt an array of lexicons and logics for its purposes. While it is permissible to disagree with his conclusion regarding theology's relation to philosophy, it is only adequate that he be read with that hermeneutical principle at hand.

After stating in both the introduction and chapter one that Bavinck's adoption of modern grammars is above all indebted to Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology, chapter two together with chapter three asked 'did Bavinck interact with Schleiermacher's texts and adopt within his own corpus any of Schleiermacher's concepts in his early career'? The answer to this question revealed the fact that Bavinck and Dutch theology in general had a unique relation to Schleiermacher and his progeny amid the German theologians of the long nineteenth-century. Chapter two focused on the historical relation between Schleiermacher and Bavinck and traced how Schleiermacher's texts and concepts made their way from Berlin to Kampen by 1881 when Bavinck pronounced Schleiermacher 'deeply misunderstood' to his confessionalist theological school. Of note is that his favorite lecturer at Kampen, and his supervisor at Leiden were both indebted to Schleiermacher's conceptual lineage. His father Jan, also, displayed evidence in writing of conceptual interaction with German philosophers and theologians of modernity.

Chapter three, in consanguinity with chapter two, examined a host of Bavinck's early texts to prove that Bavinck like Hodge perceived Schleiermacher with measured esteem between the typical options of demonization and exaltation. Additionally, Bavinck from the outset of his career especially emphasized the subject with attention to Schleiermacher's most famous concepts. In his doctoral work at Leiden, Bavinck wrote his doctoral *scriptie* on Schleiermacher and used Schleiermacher to frame his dissertation on Zwingli's ethics. Then, in his first publication, and consistently throughout his early career, Bavinck set his theological construction in conversations with the motif of self-consciousness. Chapter three also argued that his early adoption of this subjective emphasis was less indebted directly to Schleiermacher's arguments than it was to a more generalized milieu.

Part II began with chapter four focusing on Bavinck's later career and specifically on the most important work, *The Philosophy of Revelation*. Chapter four focused on the philosophical or an account of epistemic unity between self and world with respect to the fact of self-

consciousness and faith. The unity of self and world is certain in the experience of immediate self-consciousness, which is an original unity of the self, revealed (in the strictest sense) prior to all reason. For Bavinck, Augustine was the father who located the turn to the inner self as a method for knowing God but it is now Schleiermacher's modern grammar that best makes intelligible the reality that is prior to all self-knowledge, the given nature of embodied consciousness. Per Manfred Frank, for Schleiermacher, accounting for the conditions of knowledge became a doctrine of faith.[1] For Bavinck after Schleiermacher, it is only a doctrine of faith that can account for the conditions of knowledge. 'Certainty' of experience, therefore, is correlative with the fact of human religiosity, the certainty of faith that grounds knowing and doing *in toto*. Bavinck implicitly and subtly shows in his *PoR*, that he was directly working with Schleiermacher's *CF*, using terms like *schlechtinnig* (untranslated) and *afhankelijkheidsgevoel*. At the climax of the work, Bavinck set Schleiermacher's human agent in antithesis to Kant's and conceptually adopted the former.

Chapter five made explicit Bavinck's adoption of Schleiermacher's definition of religion or piety as the 'feeling of absolute dependence'. While Bavinck in *PoR* describes religion in essence as the feeling of absolute dependence, in *RD* 1 he suggests that the feeling of absolute dependence is the foundation of religion. By the feeling of absolute dependence, he refers to a universal response to God's general revelation in the conscious of all human beings, which necessarily manifests in human idolatry. In *RD* 1, he divides the religion between the object and subject. The objective foundation of religion is the fact of God's revelation, wherein God is in relation with his creation and particularly with human beings as their Creator. Reciprocally, the foundation of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence, grounding all moments of the subjective, religious disposition of the human heart, and manifesting itself in the agency of knowing and doing. The subjective element of religion, then, is best defined not first as a knowing or doing, but as a feeling that serves as the ground of knowing and doing.

---

[1] Manfred Frank, 'Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*', 33.

Bavinck argues that he derives this concept of subjective religion from a dogmatic, biblical rationality and suggests that Schleiermacher's grammar of 'feeling' is the most qualified above all other for articulating the subjective element.

After surveying the whole from chapters one to five, it is appropriate to return to the claims of the introduction. The introduction previewed several broad assertions that are derivative of Bavinck's catholic ethic. First, in acknowledgement of the fact that the essential principles of contemporary theology cannot be understood without knowledge of philosophical movements, the fact of subjectivity became a locus in Bavinck's work. It was in facing the 'challenges posed by modernity' that his own constructive efforts reflected the content of those challenges: the turn to the subject. This 'turn' is apparent in his earliest career, from his first publications after Leiden, into the climax of his work in *The Philosophy of Revelation*. Second, from Bavinck's earliest career, Friedrich Schleiermacher and his mediation progeny in both Germany and the Netherlands were Bavinck's most significant modern theological interlocutors. Bavinck first interacted with those he deemed 'consciousness-theologians' somewhat indirectly through his father and teachers, but came to converse with their primary texts in his earliest publications. Third, most significantly, Bavinck adopted their terminology and emphases and, in fact, appropriated the concepts and arguments of Schleiermacher into his own corpus. In the beginning, this was evidenced by a basic turn to the principle of subjectivity in relation to objective revelation and reflection on the Kingdom of God. The direct adoption of Schleiermacher's grammar of consciousness grew into his later career. Finally, this appropriation of Schleiermacherian concepts and arguments unveils precisely Bavinck the Reformed catholic theologian's subjection of the demands of the modern theological intellect to the boundaries of his confessional Reformed heritage.

'Modern… and yet orthodox', so begins McCormack's study of Barth.[2] This study, then, ends with a parallel statement about its subject Herman Bavinck: 'orthodox… and yet modern'. It is in Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's grammar of consciousness, this study suggests, that he is first established as 'orthodox… yet modern'. Bavinck's Reformed orthodox identity does not preclude the adoption of a particularly modern philosophical grammar used for the expression of his confessionalist theological rationality. *Bavinck is orthodox yet modern insofar as he subsumes the philosophical-theological questions and concepts of theological modernity under the conditions of his orthodox, confessional tradition.* Schleiermacherian appropriation is the paradigmatic example of such. Bavinck adopts, therein, an Schleiermacherian grammar of consciousness, and even an Schleiermacherian rationality, as a primary expression of his own theological-philosophical discourse. Additionally, Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher's grammar of self-consciousness, feeling, and absolute dependence manifests Bavinck's ethic of catholicity. Catholicity demands that no single grammar monopolize theological discourse. 'Theology is not in need of a specific philosophy', he argues. 'It is not *per se* hostile to any philosophical system and does not, *a priori* and without criticism, give priority to the philosophy of Plato or of Kant, or vice versa. But it brings along its own criteria, tests all philosophy by them, and takes over what it deems true and useful'.[3]

The consequences of this investigation are at least five-fold: (i) most broadly, van der Kooi is correct to suggest that the subject is a cornerstone of Bavinck's theological construction in a way that is distinctly modern and requires attention. This study has filled out that generality with specific proof of this reality per Schleiermacher; (ii) subsequently, Bavinck's relation to theological modernities requires re-assessment in its entirety. Swain concludes that Bavinck 'maintained a free relation to modern Protestantism's revisionist program'.[4] Yet, Bavinck's

---

[2] McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 9.
[3] *RD* 1.609.
[4] Scott Swain, 'Divine Trinity', in *Christian Dogmatics*, 78-106, 80. Swain's point has only the doctrine of the Trinity in view. However, neither the broader claim that Bavinck is 'free' from revisions due to the impact of theological modernities, nor that Bavinck's doctrine of the

paradigmatic relationship to Schleiermacher demands a re-visit of his theological construction across both the formal and material aspects of his work to determine his nuanced relation to theological modernity; (iii) in moving forward then, this study offers a fruitful heuristic to be used as a ground and point of investigation for Bavinck research: Bavinck is orthodox yet modern insofar as he subsumes the philosophical-theological questions and concepts of theological modernity under the conditions of his orthodox, confessional tradition. This general thesis provides ample room for investigation and nuance in all domains of Bavinck's corpus; (iv) it is the concept and ethic of Reformed catholicity that is most basic to Bavinck's identity and theological task. Reformed catholicity is the ethic that drives his nuanced relation to theological modernity. Such a marker of identification demands primary place in the future of Bavinck scholarship; (v) as Eglinton notes in the conclusion of *Trinity and Organism*, this work 'has only begun to scratch the surface'.[5] And so it is with this study. The foundations of nuanced historical-theological treatments of the development of Bavinck's dogmatics and philosophy is, after both Eglinton's study and the current one, set in place and beckons a generation of Anglophone Bavinck scholarship.

Finally, at the completion of the publication of Bavinck's *RD* in English in 2008, the question arose 'does Herman Bavinck speak today'? Indeed, Bavinck's work is more widely read now than ever. He speaks insofar as his readership has become immense. The extent of Bavinck's readership and influence is clear in the briefest of comments made by Joshua Ralston in an *IJST* editorial in 2016. Ralston, working with Brian Gerrish's *Christian Faith*, situates Gerrish's dogmatics amid a potential conversational trilemma of influence between Schleiermacher, Bavinck, and Barth: 'Reformed theologians more influenced by Barth or Bavinck than Schleiermacher might protest Gerrish's understanding of the norms of theology'.[6] Bavinck's inclusion in this list is remarkable. Bavinck now takes his place in the community of modern

---

Trinity is free from modern revision, is true. See the discussion of Bavinck's adoption of the grammar of 'Absolute Personality' in Ch. 2.

[5] Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 209.

[6] Joshua Ralston, 'Editorial', *IJST* 18:3 (July 2016): 257.

Reformed theologians as the choice between titans, *between the two*: Schleiermacher and Barth. Indeed, Bavinck speaks today. But how so? The answer may be manifold. This study determines at least one aspect of Bavinck's relevance in a double-sided answer to the question of Bavinck for today: *ja* and *nee*.

Bavinck is for the twenty-first century insofar as his definition of Reformed catholicity and its task teaches the student of dogmatics that in every generation attention must be paid to the philosophical milieu, to the needs of the times, to the precise nature of the 'modernity' of today, to write dogmatics that is indeed for the Church in a given time. Bavinck unites in his catholic method that which remains true and precious, the Gospel, the authority of the sacred text, and the voices of old, with the particularities of his cohort. Yes, Bavinck is 'for us' insofar as his commitment to the concept and method called Reformed catholicity has timeless import. The timeless lesson of Bavinck's definition of the 'Reformed catholic' theological method is built upon consistent ideas: that there is no pristine era of theology, that the Reformed theologian must not desire 'to repristinate', that dogmatics must make use of an array of philosophical grammars that matter 'for today', that theologians must 'stand on theological and philosophical shoulders in order to look farther' than those whose shoulders they stand on could—even surprising shoulders for those amid the confessionalist context. This methodological *ja* necessitates then a reciprocal *nee*. If theology must make use of an array of philosophical frameworks, answering the questions and concepts of its day, then dogmatics requires movement. Dogmatics looks back but pays attention above all to today— to today's people and today's questions. Dogmatics must be written and re-written. One can only conclude that if Bavinck were to write the *Reformed Dogmatics* today, his 'catholicity' demands that it would not be the same. Bavinck, therefore, is 'for us' in the twenty-first century insofar as his ethic beckons one to learn from him, read Scripture with him, reflect on the material of dogmatics under his authoritative voice, and while ever-returning to him, move beyond him. The post-Kantian milieu, the romanticism and idealisms of the nineteenth-century, are no longer the direct generation that precedes the new today.

One must recall Bavinck's burden: 'modern Calvinists do not wish to repristinate and have no desire for the old conditions to return… They strive to make progress, to escape from the deadly embrace of dead conservatism, and to take their place, as before, at the head of every movement'.[7] Dogmatics peers into its own day and 'takes over what it deems true and useful', under the discipline of the foundations set forth by God: the being of God, the inscripturated revelation of God, and the witness of the Spirit of Christ upon the agent.[8] A dogmatics which both respects social and intellectual trajectories of its today and disciplines them under the exegetically-grounded doctrines of old doing so with a holistic piety, absolute dependence on the Triune God in feeling, thinking, and doing, is Bavinck's legacy:

> Religion, the fear of God, must therefore be the element which inspires all theological investigation… A theologian is a person who determines themselves to speak about God because he speaks out of God and through God. To practice theology—it is a holy work. It is a priestly ministration in the house of the Lord. It is religion itself, a service of God in his temple, a consecration of intellect and heart to the glory of His name.[9]

---

[7] Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', 13.
[8] *RD* 1.609.
[9] Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*, 62. Original: 'Religie, vreeze Gods moet daarom het element zijn, dat alle theologische onderzoekingen bezielt. Zij moet de polsslag zijn, dien men in ieder dogma zachter of luider kloppen hoort. Een theoloog is iemand, die zich onderwindt over God te spreken, omdat hij uit en door Hem spreekt. Theologie te beoefenen — het is een heilig werk; het is een priesterlijke dienst in het huis des Heeren; het is zelve godsdienst, een dienen van God in Zijn tempel, een wijden van verstand en hart tot de eere van Zijn Naam'.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Bavinck, Herman. *De ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli*. Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1880.

—. 'Het Geweten I-II'. *De Vrije Kerk* (Januari-Februari, 1881): 1. 27-37; 2. 49-58.

—. 'Gereformeerde Theologie' *De Vrije Kerk* 7 (November 1881): 497-509.

—. *Het Rijks Gods, het hoogste goed* I-V'. *De Vrije Kerk* 7 (April-Augustus 1881): 4.185-192; 5. 224 234; 6.271-277; 7.305-314; 8.353-360.

—. 'De hedendaagsche wereldbeschouwing'. *De Vrije Kerk* 9 (Oktober 1883): 10.435-461.

—. *De wetenschap der H. Godgeleerheid*. Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1883.

—. 'Het dualisme in de Theologie', *De Vrije Kerk* 13 (Januari 1887) 1. 11-39.

—. *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk: Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen*. Kampen: G.Ph. Zalsman, 1888.

—. 'The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition on Communities and Nations', *Proceedings of the Fifth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System* (London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1892): 48-55.

—. *De Algemeene Genade: Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het Recotraat aan de Theologishce School te Kampen op 6 Dec. 1894*. Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1894.

—. 'Recent Dogmatic Thought in the Netherlands'. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* Vol. III (1892): 209-228.

—. 'The Future of Calvinism', *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* V (1894): 1-24.

—. *Beginselen der psychologie*. Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1897.

—. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* I-IV. First Edition. Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1895-1901.

—. *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid*. Wageningen: Vada Press Ltd., 1902.

—. *De theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye,* 2nd ed. Leiden: D. Donner, 1903.

—. *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing: Rede bij de overdacht van het Rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam op 20 October 1904*. Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1904.

—. 'Philosophie des geloofs', in *Annuarium of the Societas Studisorum Reformatorum*. Rotterdam: Donner, 1906, 62-72.

—. *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring: Stone-Lezingen voor het jaar 1908, gehouden te Princeton N.J. door H. Bavinck*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1908.

—. *Philosophy of Revelation*: *The Stone Lectures from 1908-1909*. Translated by Geerhardus Vos, Henry E. Dosker, and Nicolas Steffens. New York: Longman, Greens, and Co., 1909.

—. 'Philosophy of Religion (Faith)', in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*. Translated by Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008, 25-32.

—. *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, trans. Hermann Cuntz. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1909.

—. *Magnalia Dei: Onderwijzing in de christelijke religie naar gereformeerde belijdenis* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1909), 36.

—. *Modernisme en Orthodoxie: Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Vrije Universiteit op 20 Oktober 1911*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1911.

—. 'Modernism and Orthodoxy'. Translated by Bruce Pass, *The Bavinck Review* 7 (2016), 63-114.

—. H. Bavinck. 'Ter Gedachtenis', in A. Steketee, *Beschouwingen van een Christen-Denker*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1914, v-ix.

—. *Beginselen der psychologie, tweede herziene vermeerderde druk bezorgd door* Hepp. Kampen: Kok, 1923.

—. *Our Reasonable Faith*. Translated by Henry Zylstra. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

—. *The Certainty of Faith*. Ontario: Paideia Press, 1980.

—. 'Common Grace'. Translated by Raymond C. van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24:1 (1989): 35-65.

—. 'The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church', trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 220-51.

—. *Mijne reis naar Amerika*, ed. George Harinck. Barneveld: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, 1998.

—. 'My Journey to America'. Translated by James Eglinton and George Harinck. *Dutch Crossing: Journal of Low Country Studies* (2017): 1-14.

—. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume One: Prolegomena*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

—. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Two: God and Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

—. *Reformed Dogamtics, Volume Three: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

—. *Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Four: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

—. 'Foreword to the First Edition (volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*'. Translated by John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 11-17.

—. 'The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl'. Translated by John Bolt. *The Bavinck Review* 3 (2012): 123-63.

—. 'The Conscience'. Translated by Nelson Kloosterman. *The Bavinck Review* 6 (2015): 113-26.

—. H.E. Dosker to H. Bavinck, December 23, 1876. H. Bavinck Archive, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/12.

—. 'Dagboekjes'. H. Bavinck Archive, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/16.

—. *De leer het van het geweten*. H. Bavinck Archive, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum, Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/29.

—. 'Eene beknopte aanwijzing van den invloed van Schleiermacher op de uitlegging van der H. Schrift'. H. Bavinck Archive, *Historisch Documentatiecentrum*, *Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, #346/298.

Biographies:

Bremmer, R. H. *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*. Kampen: Kok, 1966.
Bristley, Eric D. *Guide to the Writings of Herman Bavinck*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008.
V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck*. Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1921.

Secondary Sources:

Adams, Nicholas. 'Hegel', *Theology and Philosophy*. Edited by Oliver Crisp, Gavin D'Costa, MervynDavies, and Peter Hampson. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011, 129-142.
Adams, Robert Merihew. 'Faith and Religious Knowledge'. *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Edited by Jacqueline Mariña. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 35-51.
Allen, Michael and Swain, Scott. *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.
Allen, Michael, and Swain, Scott. Editors. *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic.*Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.
Allison, Henry. *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
Aubert, Annette G. *German Roots of Nineteenth Century American Theology*. Oxford: OUP, 2013.
Augustine. *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. Translated by John Hammond Taylor. Vols. 41–42 of *Ancient Christian Writers*. New York: Newman Press, 1982.
—. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (*NPNF*), vol. I-III, 14 vols. Edited by Philip Schaff. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.
van Asselt, Willem J. and Ables, Paul H.A.M. 'The Seventeenth Century', in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*. Edited by Herman J. Selderhuis. Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015, 259-261.
Bacon, Francis. *The Works of Francis Bacon*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1877.
Barth, Karl. *The Theology of Schleiermacher*. Edited by Dietrich Ritschl. Translated by G. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982.
—. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*. London: SCM Press, 1972.
—. *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 2*. Vol. 1, (*CD* I/2). Edited by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance. London: T&T Clark, 2004.
Bavinck, Jan. 'Iets over het Godsbegrip volgens de Heilige Schrift'. *De Getuigenis* (1868-69), 7 28.

Beiser, Frederick. 'Early Romanticism', in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions.* Edited by James Schmidt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

van den Belt, Henk. 'An Alternative Approach to Apologetics', in *The Kuyper Center Review: Revelation and Common Grace*, vol. 2, Edited by John Bowlin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 43-60.

—. 'Religion as Revelation: The Development of Herman Bavinck's View from a Reformed Orthodox to a Neo-Calvinist Approach', *The Bavinck Review* 4 (2013): 9-31.

—. *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust.* Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Berkouwer, G.C. *Zoeken en Vinden. Herinneringen en ervaringen.* Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1989.

Billings, Todd J. 'Catholic and Reformed: Rediscovering a Tradition'. *Pro Ecclesia* 23 (2014): 132-46.

—. 'The Catholic Calvin', *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011): 120-34.

Blackwell, Albert. *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life: Determinism, Freedom, and Phantasy.* Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.

—. 'The Antagonistic Correspondence of 1801 between Chaplin Sack and His Protégé Schleiermacher', *Harvard Theological Review* 74:1 (1981): 101-121.

Blei, Karel. *The Netherlands Reformed Church: 1571-2005.* Translated by Allan J. Janssen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

den Boer, Hugo. 'Another Revolution: Towards a New Explanation of the Rise of Neo Calvinism', in *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution.* Edited by James Eglinton and George Harinck. Edinburgh: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

Boersma, Hans. *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Bolt, John. *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2013.

—. 'Editor's Introduction', in Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

—. 'Sola Scriptura as an Evangelical Theological Method?', in *Reforming or Conforming: Post Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church.* Edited by Gary L. W. Johnson and Ronald N. Gleason. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2008, 154–65.

—. Editor. *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011.

—. *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service.* Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2015.

à Brakel, Wilhelmus *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol. 1. Translated by Bartel Elshout. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992.

Brandt, Richard. *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of his Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1968.

Bratt, James. 'The Context of Herman Bavinck's Stone Lectures: Culture and Politics in 1908', *The Bavinck Review* 1 (2010): 4-24.

—. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.

Bremmer, R. H. *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*. Kampen: Kok, 1961.

Brock, Cory 'Bavinck the Neo-Thomist'? MTh dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2014.

Brock, Cory and Sutanto, Nathaniel Gray. 'Herman Bavinck's Reformed Eclecticism: On Catholicty, Consciousness, and Theological Epistemology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* no. 3 (2017), 310-32.

Brouwer, Rinse H. Reeling. 'Election', in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology*. Edited by Paul Nimmo, David Fergusson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

de Bruijn, J. Harinck, George. Editors. *Een Leidse vriendschap: De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, 1875-1921*. Baarn: Uitgeverij Ten Have, 1999.

de Bruijn, J. *Abraham Kuyper: A Pictorial Biography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Brunner, Emil. *Die christliche Lehre von Gott. Dog.* I, 3rd edition. Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1960.

—. *Die Mystik und das Wort: Der Gegensatz zwischen moderner Religionsauffassung und christilichem Glauben dargestellt an der Theologie Schleiermachers.* Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1924.

—. *The Mediator.* Translated by Olive Wyon. London: Lutterworth Press, 1934.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2.* Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Vol. 1, in The Library of Christian Classics. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.

—. *The Divine-Human Encounter.* Translated by Amandus W. Loos. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943.

Capetz, Paul. *Christian Faith as Religion: A Study in the Theologies of Calvin and Schleiermacher.* Oxford: University Press of America, 1998.

Cary, Philip. *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Chantepie de la Saussaye, Daniel. *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1905.

Cramer, J. *Alex. Vinet.* Leiden: Brill, 1883.

Crouter, Richard. *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Michael Moriarty. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

van Deursen, Arie Theodorus. *The Distinctive Character of the Free University, 1880-2005: A Commemorative History*, trans. Herbert Morton. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Dilthey, Wilhelm. *Aus Schleiermachers Leben in Briefen*, vol. I. Berlin: Reimer, 1858.

Dorner, Isaak. *A System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1. Translated by Alfred Cave. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880.

Dosker, Henry Elias. 'Herman Bavinck', *Princeton Theological Review* 20, no. 3 (1922): 448-464.

Echeverria, Eduardo. 'The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology: A Catholic Response to Herman Bavinck', *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 87-116.

Eglinton, James. Harinck, George. Editors. *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

Eglinton, James. *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012.

Eichner, Hans. 'The Genesis of Romanticism', *Queen's Quarterly* 72 (1965): 213-231.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel. *Multiple Modernities*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction, 2002.

Ensminger, Sven. *Karl Barth's Theology as a Resource for a Christian Theology of Religion*. Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014.

Faull, Katherine. 'Schleiermacher and Transcendentalist Truth-Telling' in *Schleiermacher's Influences on American Thought and Religious Life (1835-1920)*. Edited by Jeffrey A. Wilcox, Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey. Eugene: Pickwick, 2013, 293-321.

Ferrini, Cinzia. 'Hegel's Transition to Spirit: Some Introductory and Systematic Remarks', *Hegel Studien Band* 46 (2012): 117-150.

Flipse, A. 'The Origins of Creationism in the Netherlands: The Evolution Debate among Twentieth Century Neo-Calvinists', *Church History* 81:1 (March 2012): 104-47.

Frank, Manfred. 'Metaphysical Foundations: a look at Schleiermacher's *Dialectic*', in *Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Edited by Jacqueline Mariña. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

—. *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*. Translated by Elizabeth Millán Zaibert. Albany: State of New York Press, 2004.

Gay, Peter. *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Gerrish, B.A. *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology*. London: Fortress Press, 1984.

—. *Tradition and Modern World: Reformed Theology in the Ninteenth Century*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.

Gilson, Étienne. *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Gockel, Matthias. 'Mediating Theology in Germany', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth Century Theology*. Edited by David Fergusson. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 301–18.

Grenz, Stanley *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Hanby, Michael. *Augustine and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Harinck, George, van der Kooi C., and Vree. J. Editors. '*Als Bavinck nu maar eens kleur bekende*', *Aantekeningen van H. Bavinck over de zaak-Netelenbos, het Schriftgezag en de situatie van the Gereformeerde Kerken* (November 1919). Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994.

Harinck, George and Winkeler, Lodweijk. 'The Nineteenth Century' in *Handbook of Dutch Church History*. Edited by Herman J. Selderhuis. Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Harinck, George. 'Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth: Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA', in *The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage; Proceedings of the 11th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies.* Edited by Larry J. Wagenaar and Robert P. Swierenga. Holland, MI: The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, 1998.

—. 'The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion: A Case Study of Herman Bavinck's Engagement with Modern Culture', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (2011): 60-77.

—. '"Something That Must Remain, If the Truth Is to Be Sweet and Precious to Us": The Reformed Spirituality of Herman Bavinck'. *Calvin Theological Journal* 38, no. 2 (2003): 248–62.

—. *Bavinck's Mijne reis naar Amerika.* Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998.

—. '"*Land dat ons verwondert en ons betoove*": *Bavinck en Amerika*', in *Ontmoetingen met Herman Bavinck.* Edited by George Harinck & Gerrit Neven. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2006.

—. 'Why was Bavinck in Need of a Philosophy of Revelation?' in *The Kuyper Center Review: Revelation and Common Grace*, vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011, 27-42.

Hector, Kevin. *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Werke in 20 Bänden,* vol 8. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983.

Heideman, Eugene. *The Relation of Revelation and Reason: E. Brunner and H. Bavinck.* Assen: Van Gorcum, 1959.

Heilema, Syd. 'Herman Bavinck's Eschatological Understanding of Redemption'. ThD Disseration, Toronto School of Theology, 1998.

Helm, Paul. *John Calvin's Ideas.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

—. 'John Calvin, the *sensus divinitatis*, and the Noetic Effects of Sin'. *International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998): 87-107.

Helmer, Christine, Kranich, Christiane and Rehme-Ieffert, Birgit, Eds. *Schleiermachers Dialektik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003)

—. 'Schleiermacher', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth Century Theology.* Edited by David Fergusson. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 31-57.

Hirsch, Emanuel. *Geschichte der Neuern Evangelischen Theologie*, vol. 5. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1949.

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology,* vol. II. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Holmes, Stephen R. 'Divine Attributes', in *Mapping Modern Theology*: *A Thematic and Historical Introduction.* Edited by Bruce McCormack and Kelly Kapic. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012. 47-66.

Holte, Knut Ragnar. *Die Vermittlungstheologie: Ihre theologischen Grundbegriffe kritisch untersucht.* Translated by Björn Kommer. Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells, 1965.

Horst, Stephan and Schmidt, Martin. *Geschichte der evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland seit dem Idealismus.* New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973.

Huttinga, Wolter. *Participation and Communicability: Herman Bavinck and John Milbank on the Relation Between God and the World.* Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn Motief, 2014.

Israel, Jonathan. *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Izenberg, Gerald N. *Impossible Individuality: Romanticism, Revolution, and the Origins of Modern Selfhood,1787–1802.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

de Jong, Peter Y. and Kloosterman, Nelson eds., *The Reformation of 1834: Essays in Commemoration of the Act of Secession and Return.* Orange City, IA: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 1984.

Junius, Franciscus. *A Treatise on True Theology with the Life of Franciscus Junius.* Translated by David C. Noe. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014.

Kalwaitis, Carl. 'The Meaning of Original Consciousness: A Philosophical Study of Schleiermacher's Second Speech', in *The State of Schleiermacher Scholarship Today.* Edited by Edwina Lawler, Jeffery Kinlaw, and Ruth Richardson. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006, 81-110.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason.* Edited and Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

—. *Critique of Practical Reason.* Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Kapic, Kelly and McCormack, Bruce. *Mapping Modern Theology.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Klemm, David E. 'Mediating Schleiermacher: The Prospect for a Transcendental Anthropological Theory of Religion' in *Schleiermacher, the Study of Religion and the Future of Theology: A Transatlantic Dialogue.* Edited by Brent Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010, 165-178.

Kloosterman, N. 'A Response to "The Kingdom of God is Twofold"'. *Calvin Theological Journal* 1:45 (April 2010): 174-5.

Kuyper, Abraham. *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. Amsterdam: J. A. Wormser, 1894.

—. *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.

van der Kooi, Cornelius. 'The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, Especially in H. Bavinck', *Journal of Reformed Theology* 2 (May 2008): 103-112.

Lamm, Julia. *The Living God: Schleiermacher's Theological Appropriation of Spinoza.* University Park: Penn State University Press, 1996.

Lane, Anthony. *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers.* Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1991.

Lane, Laura M. *The Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890.

Lange, J. P. *Christliche Dogmatik*, 3 vols. Heidelberg: K. Winter, 1852.

Lauzon, Matthew. 'Modernity' in *The Oxford Handbook of World History.* Edited by Jerry Bentley. Oxford: OUP, 2011.

Leithart, Peter. 'That Eminent Pagan: Calvin's Use of Cicero in *Institutes* 1.1-5'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 1-12.

Louden, Robert. 'Introduction', in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*. Edited by Robert Louden. Translated by Louise Adey Huish. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Mackay, H. *Religious Thought in Holland During the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911.

Mariña, Jacqueline *Transformation of Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

—. 'Schleiermacher on the Outpouring of the Inner Fire: Experiential Expressivism and Religious Pluralism'. *Religious Studies* 40:2 (June 2004): 125-143.

—. 'Schleiermacher, Realism, and Epistemic Modesty: A Reply to my Critics', in *Schleiermacher, the Study of Religion, and the Future of Theology*. Edited by Brent W. Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010, 121-134.

Martensen, L. *Christian Dogmatics*. Translated by William Urwick. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871.

Mattson, Brian. *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology & the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

McCormack, Bruce L. *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Mehl, Paul Frederick. *Schleiermacher's Mature Doctrine of God as Found in the Dialektik of 1822 and Second Edition of the Christian Faith* (1830-31). PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1961.

Meijers, S. *Objectiviteit en Existentialiteit: Een onderzoek naar hun verhouding in de theologie van Herman Bavinck en in door hem beinvloede concepties*. Kampen: Kok, 1979.

Michalson, Jr., Gordon. *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Muller, Richard A. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy; Volume 1: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

—. *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

—. 'A Note on "Christocentrism" and the Imprudent Use of Such Terminology'. *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 2 (2006): 253–54.

Nevin, John W. Preface to *Antichrist; Or the Spirit of Sect and Schism*. New York: John S. Taylor, 1848.

Nesselmann, R. 'Schleiermachers Werthschätzung. Vorgetragen bei Schleiermachers Jubelfeier in der Aula des Elbinger Gymnasiums' in *Der Beweis des Glaubens: Monatsschrift zur Begründung und Verteidigung der Christlichen Wahrheit fur Gebildete* 5. Edited by O. Andreae and C. Brachmann (January-December 1869), 103-115.

Nimmo, Paul and Fergusson, David. Editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Nimmo, Paul. 'The Mediation of Redemption in Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5:2 (2003): 187-199.

—. 'Introduction to the Third Edition', in F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 3rd edition. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2016.

Nitzsch, C. E. *System of Christian Doctrine*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1849.

O' Donnell, Laurence. '"Bavinck's Bug" or "Van Tilian" Hypochondria?: An Analysis of Prof. Oliphint's Assertion That Cognitive Realism and Reformed Theology Are Incompatible', in *For the Healing of the Nations*. Edited by Peter Escalante and W. Bradford Littlejohn (Burford: The Davenant Press, 2014), 139-172.

van Oosterzee, J. J. *Voor Kerk en Theologie,* Vol. I. Utrecht: Kemink, 1875–79.

Pass, Bruce. 'Herman Bavinck and the Cogito'. *Reformed Theological Review* 74:1 (May, 2015):15-33.

Paulsen, Friedrich. *Geschichte des Gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten. Vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart*, 3rd edn. Leipzig: Veit, 1919–21.

Plantinga, Alvin. 'Reason and Belief in God', in *Faith and Philosophy: Reason and Belief in God*. Edited by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983, 16-93.

Puchinger, G. *Ontmoetingen met theologen.* Terra: Zutphen, 1980.

—. '*Groen van Prinsterer, aangestoken door de Franse Revolutie*', *Radix* 15 (1989): 114-120.

Purvis, Zachary. *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

van Raalte, Theodore G. 'Unleavened Morality? Herman Bavinck on Natural Law', in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology*. Edited by John Bolt. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011, 57–100.

Ralston, Joshua. 'Editorial', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18:3 (July 2016): 257.

Rasker, A. J. *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 2nd ed. Kampen: Kok, 1981.

Redeker, Martin. *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1973.

Reuter, Hans-Richard. *Die Einheit der Dialektik Friedrich Schleiermachers: Eine systematische Interpretation*. Munich: Chr. Kiser Verlag, 1979.

Roessingh, K.H. *De Moderne Theologie in Nederland: Hare Voorbereiding en Eerste Periode.* Groningen: Ervan B. van der Kamp, 1914.

Rothe, Richard. *Theologische Ethik*, Vol. II, 2nd ed., 5 vols. Wittenberg: Zimmerman, 1867–71.

Rowan, Frederica. *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Biography and Letters*, 2 Vols. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1860.

Rullmann, J.C. *De Afscheiding in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk de XIXe Eeuw.* Kampen: Kok, 1930.

von Schlegel, Friedrich. *Lucinde.* Jena: E. Diederichs, 1907.

—. *Athenaeum: Eine Zeitschrift.* 2 Vols. Berlin: F. Vieweg, 1799.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith: A New Translation and Critical Edition*, Vol. 1 and 2. Translated by Terrence Tice, Catherine Kelsey, and Edwina Lawler. Edited by Catherine Kelsey and Terrence Tice. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016.

—. *Kritische Gesamtausgabe.* Edited by Hans-Joachim Birkner, Gerhard Ebeling, Hermann Fischer, Heinz Kimmerle, and Kirt-Victor Selge. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980- .

—. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.* Translated by John Oman. New York: Harper and Bros., 1958.

—. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.* Translated by Richard Crouter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

—. *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr. Lücke.* Translated by James Duke, Francis Fiorenza. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

—. *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, trans. John C. Shelley. Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

—. *On Freedom.* Translated by Albert Blackwell. Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1992.

—. *Soliloquies.* Translated by Horace Leiland Friess. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002.

—. *Christliche Sittenlehre (Vorlesung im Wintersemester 1826/27): nach grösstenteils unveröffentlichte Hörernachschriften und nach teilweise unveröffentlichten Manuskripten Schleiermachers.* Edited by Herman Peiter. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010.

—. *Christmas Eve Celebration: A Dialogue.* Translated by Terrence Tice. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010.

—. *Friedrich Schleiermachers Dialektik* (1822). Edited by Rudolf Odebrecht. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988.

—. *Dialectic, Or, The Art of Doing Philosophy: A Study Edition of the 1811 Notes*. Translated and introduced by Terrence Tice. Oxford: OUP, 1996.

—. *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Dialektik (1811).* Translated and Introduced by Andreas Arndt. Hamburg: Meiner, 1986.

Scholten, J.H. *Der leer der Hervormde Kerk.* Leiden: P. Engels, 1848, 1850.

—. *Supranaturalisme in Verband met Bijbel, Christendom en Protestantisme.* Leiden: P. Engels, 1867.

—. *Het Evangelie naar Johannes.* Leiden: P. Engels, 1864.

Schwarz, Hans. *Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Schweizer, Alexander. *Die Glaubenslehre der evangelisch-reformierten Kirche, Dargestellt und aus den Quellen belegt*, 2 vols. Zürich: *bei Orell, Füssli und Comp.* 1844-47.

Sederhuis, Herman J. Editor. *Handbook of Dutch Church History.* Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Smyth, Newman. 'The Late Dr. Dorner and the "New Theology"'. *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 28 (May 1884 to October 1884): 774-84.

Sockness, Brent W. 'The Forgotten Moralist: Friedrich Schleiermacher and the Science of Spirit', *Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 317–48.

Stanley, Jon. 'Restoration and Renewal: The Nature of Grace in the Theology of Herman Bavinck' in *The Kuyper Center Review*, vol 2. Edited by John Bowlin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 81-104.

Strauss, D. F. *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre*, 2 vols. Tubingen: C. F. Osiander, 1840–41.

Sytsma, David S. 'Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology: The Argument and Sources of His Principia of Science', in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology*, Edited by John Bolt. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2011, 1–56.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Taylor, Mark C. *Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Thandeka. *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self.* New York: NYU Press, 1995.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Thiel, John. *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre: Criticism and Methodology of Dogmatics. Basler und Berner Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, Band 43.* Bern: Peter Lang, 1981.

Tice, Terrence. *Schleiermacher.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

Tiel, John. *God and World in Schleiermacher's Dialektik and Glaubenslehre.* Bern: Peter Lang, 1981.

Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Twesten, August. *Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 2 vols. Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1834, 1837.

Van Til, Cornelius, 'Bavinck the Theologian: A Review Article', *Westminster Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (1961): 48–64.

Vanderlaan, E.C. *Protestant Modernism in Holland.* Oxford: OUP, 1924.

VanDrunen, David. 'The Kingship of Christ is Twofold: Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck'. *Calvin Theological Journal* 1:45 (April 2010): 147-64.

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Vial, Theodore. 'Friedrich Schleiermacher on the Central Place of Worship in Theology'. *HarvardTheological Review* 91:1 (January 1998): 59-73

Veenhof, Jan. *Revelatie en Inspiratie: De Openbarings- en Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in Vergelijking met die der Ethische Theologie.* Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1968.

—. '*De God van de filosofen en de God van de bijbel*', in *Ontmoetingen Met Herman Bavinck.* Edited by George Harinck and Gerrit Neven. Barneveld: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, 2006, 219-234.

—. 'Theology and Spirituality in the Dutch Reformed Churches', *Calvin Theological Journal* 28.2 (November 1993): 266-297.

Vinet, Alexander. *L'Evangile compris par le coeur, Discours*, 6th ed. Paris: Ches Les Èditeurs, 1862.

Vos, Arvin. 'Knowledge According to Bavinck and Aquinas', *The Bavinck Review* 6 (2015): 9-36.

Wagenaar, Larry J. and Swierenga, Robert P. Editors. *The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage; Proceedings of the 11th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies.* Holland, MI: The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, 1998.

Walzel, O.F. *Deutsche Romantik*, vol. 1. Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1918.

Warfield, B.B. *The Inspiration of the Bible* (1894) in Warfield, *Works of Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield*, Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000.

Weiss, Bruno. *Untersuchungen über Friedrich Schleiermachers Dialektik.* Halle: Heynemann, 1878.

Welch, Claude. *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. I. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1972.

Willis-Watkins, David and Welker, Michael. *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Wilson, John E. *Introduction to Modern Theology: Trajectories in the German Tradition.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Wolters, Albert. 'Translator's Preface', in Jan Veenhof. *Nature and Grace in Herman Bavinck.* Translated by Albert Wolters. Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2006, 1-6.

—. 'Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality', in *Rationality and the Calvinian Tradition.* Edited by H. Hart, J van der Hoeven and Nicholas Wolterstorff. Toronto: UPA,1983, 113-131.