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Theological *Thinking* and *Loving*: Dogmatics and Ethics
in the Theology of Herman Bavinck

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For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy was composed by myself and that the work herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

In James Eglinton's 2011 editorial, "Bavinck: Dogmatics and Ethics," he asserted that the greatest issue facing Bavinck studies in the English-speaking world was understanding the relationship between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics.¹ This project seeks to attend to this issue. In contrast to previous scholarship, which confines the relationship of dogmatics and ethics in Bavinck to one doctrine, this account recognizes a plethora of connections that stretch across Bavinck's theological and intellectual system. As a result, the work's structure investigates various major "piles" — an architectural term borrowed from Bavinck's Dutch heritage — to demonstrate how the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is distributed.

Together, the thesis imagines Bavinck's intellectual system as an Amsterdam residence. We might see this house *in toto* as the home of systematic theology, resting on the encyclopaedic avenue of theology. The house of systematic theology has several rooms but the two in the heart of the home are dogmatics and ethics. Our various "piles" allow this home to be above the swamp water of Amsterdam and facilitate connections between the two sub-disciplines. The structure of this thesis (theological anthropology) could be envisioned as God's descent into the mire of the swamp, theologically transforming humans and their activity, such that in faith humans might not only subdue the lowlands via a series of canals, but in the world-imagining activity faith construct a home in which to inhabit until they ascend to the highest good.

Tectonically, the dissertation proceeds to guide the reader through a theological anthropology that explores the origin (from God, *descent*), form (through God), and destiny (to God, *ascent*), of regenerate humans. These "piles" include election, regeneration, sanctification, *unio mystica*, ecclesiology, and eschatology to demonstrate the distributed nature of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. This relationship, according to Bavinck, is indexed to Scripture (particularly Romans 11:36), established by the Triune God's gratuitous action, concentrated on Christ, and positioned within the horizon of the Christian life of faith.

In the first chapter, the main structure of the thesis as one that explores dogmatics and ethics from the viewpoint of the subject (and therefore theological anthropology) and object (and therefore the theological disciplines under the umbrella of the theological encyclopaedia) is presented. Moreover, Herman Bavinck and the social imaginary of the late 19th century early 20th century Netherlands is introduced. In concurrence with present scholarship, he is presented as an orthodox *yet* modern theologian.

¹ James Eglinton, "Bavinck: Dogmatics and Ethics," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 29, no. 1 (2011): 1-3, 2.

In this manner, Bavinck is a confessing and confessional theologian who participates in the major discourses of modern theology, while re-imagining key theological grammar.

In the second chapter, Bavinck's understanding of the doctrine of election is examined. It becomes clear across both early and mature articulations of the doctrine that Bavinck envisions this doctrine as pivotal to ethical activity. The "pile" of election functions then as an important "surveyor's level" that identifies that simply pinning the relationship of dogmatics and ethics to one doctrine is lopsided.

In the third chapter, Bavinck's conception of "faith" as the starting point of humanity's scientific activity is considered. This is especially true in theology. As Bavinck puts it, "If one remains in the terrain of the subject, dogmatics and ethics are born from faith, there is no distinction."² Faith then is an additional "pile" in the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. This "pile" not only undergirds all ethical activity, but is in a sense "world-building"; as Bavinck's conception of faith connects intimately to the development of the human personality and the constructing of world- and lifeviews. As such the individual approaches both dogmatics and ethics in faith.

In the fourth chapter, Bavinck's conception of the movement of humans from passive to active moral subjects in the event of the conversion of "*hoofd en hart*" is considered. This movement allows for the identification of the "piles" of regeneration, sanctification, and *unio mystica* in Christ. This psychological theme is placed within the broader structure of Bavinck's theological anthropology of *munus triplex* — with a vision for the calling, nature, and destiny of humans as summarized by Christ's threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. This theme facilitates both an individual and collective vision of humans as theologically *active agents*.

In the fifth chapter, Bavinck's *munus triplex* vision is expanded from the individual to the collective as the "piles" of ecclesiology and eschatology are explored. In turning to ecclesiology, it is particularly considered how organism and institution reflect an on-going dynamic between humans as theologically *passive* and *active* in the interface of the church in the means of grace of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Following this, Bavinck's theological reflections on the human's *ascent* to God and what this entails are explored. This includes drawing together Bavinck's thoughts related to the kingdom of God, the beatific vision, and "the highest good."

² "Untitled" (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47.

In the sixth chapter, we move from the perspective of the subject to the discipline of theology. In Bavinck's theological system, dogmatics and ethics are members of a single organism — the theological encyclopaedia. The distinct features of Bavinck's encyclopaedia are exposed against their consonance and dissonance with Abraham Kuyper's (1837-1920) theological encyclopaedia. Kuyper's encyclopaedia allows us to consider the distinctiveness of Bavinck's encyclopaedia and further unveils his participation in modern theology. In this chapter, then we bring the two disciplines of dogmatics and ethics closer together, noting their systematic relationship.

When viewed from the perspective of the subject, dogmatics and ethics remain indistinguishable. Having evaluated this, alongside their shared location in the theological encyclopaedia, the thesis then distinguishes them. The activity of dogmatics and ethics is reflected upon as theological *thinking* and theological *loving*. Early threads related to the centre of the two-disciplines are re-engaged. To capstone the dissertation, the merits of Bavinck's vision of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics are also considered and further avenues of research are suggested.

Lay Summary

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) was a popular Christian theologian and thinker on either side of the turn of the 20th century in the Netherlands. This dissertation explores one avenue of his thought: that of the relationship between his theological reflections on who God is and his theological reflections on who humans are in light of God's activity. The dissertation then considers how God moves toward his people in love, redeems and reforms their lives, and therefore, transforms their daily lives so that they may love God and neighbour: stated succinctly, how man's activity is related to God's activity in transforming humans. Academic reflection on God's activity Bavinck calls "dogmatics" and the same scholarly activity oriented toward understanding man's activity in light of God Bavinck calls "ethics." Together, the two disciplines capture a portion of the field of study known as "systematic theology."

In contrast to previous scholars, my dissertation considers the relationship between "dogmatics" and "ethics" to be multifaceted. My argument is placed within a construction illustration of building a home next to a canal in Amsterdam. Much of inner-city Amsterdam is built on reclaimed swamp land. To become the city it is today, an enormous amount of effort was necessary. It first involved the transformation of miles of marshland into a series of canals. As a canal was finished, homes were erected alongside of them. A house such as this would be built by a team of builders who would have to drive "piles" into the earth. These "piles" were massive wooden poles that would provide support to the structures above. Once all these piles were placed into the ground, a home would be constructed on top of it. These "piles" would then support and distribute the weight of the home. Just like a home is built on a set of "piles" I argue that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is distributed across several doctrines.

To demonstrate the distributed nature of this relationship I put forth "piles" that include doctrines such as election, regeneration, sanctification, mystical union, ecclesiology, and eschatology. If a single "pile" bears too much weight or begins to rot, the house will begin to sink. Therefore, many homes in Amsterdam give the impression of "leaning." As such, I contend a distributed account aids Bavinck's system from becoming lopsided. The structure of this dissertation then explores the transformation of the head and heart of humans (much like the transformation of the swamp land into a canal) on account of the work of God. Bavinck describes this relationship between dogmatics and ethics as one of God's descent (dogmatics) and man's ascent (ethics). Therefore, the work considers God's descent into the mire of the swamp, the transformation of man, and man's ascent out of the swamp. In the past, interpreters have placed too much

emphasis on particular “piles”, thus causing the home to be lean. This work aims to be a corrective to that phenomenon.

These doctrinal “piles” support the Amsterdam home, which I describe as the residence of “systematic theology.” The house of systematic theology has several rooms but the two in the heart of the home are dogmatics and ethics. While the work explores the interchange of God’s activity and human activity it also places the relationship between dogmatics and ethics within the academic enterprise of the theological encyclopaedia. This scientific activity helps theologians to reflect on how the various disciplines in theology, such as how dogmatics and ethics relate to one another. I describe the Amsterdam home as resting on theological encyclopaedia avenue along with the other disciplines that compose theology. All together the various “piles” demonstrate that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is distributed.

For
Greg Parker Sr. and Shirl Werner

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In the first year of my study at the University of Edinburgh, Bavinck students were led through a portion of Herman Bavinck’s diary from his student years. One of the things that was immediately striking about this time in his life was the frequency of the appearance of his friends in his diary. It seemed as if every

other entry he was spending time with friends and family or writing and receiving a letter from someone. He seemed to possess the consummate network of friends and to be an actual human. I cannot say that I am the consummate friend, but likely, if you've read this far into the acknowledgements you have been a superlative friend to me during my time of study. I have had an extremely supportive network of friends and scholars that have made this doctoral degree possible. In this respect, including the aforementioned individuals, recognition most of all belongs to Andrew and Caitlin Keenan, Mark Evans, Trevor and Susy Smith, Dan and Heidi Hoffstetter, Camille Simpson, Jeff and Joël Mindler, Mark Horn, Alex Agnew and Faye Butcher, Ben and Jennie Richter, Michael and Natalie Duddridge, Ryan and Stacey Diehl, Sam and Mairi Macpherson, Art Werner, Griffin Parker, Tom Shorb, the late Carl Cassell, Keith Plummer, Doug Tharp, Thomas Davis, Nathan Barczy, Rick Downs, Leonard Layne, Tyler Holley, Stan and Mary Anne Simpson, and the Exiles. Thank you.

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Abbreviations

Herman Bavinck

CWB – *Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing*. Tweede herziene druk. Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1913.

CWV – *Christian Worldview*. Translated and Edited by Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Eglinton and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019.

EUZ – *De Ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli*. Kampen: G. Ph. Zalsman, 1880.

GD1^e – *Gereformeerde Dogmatieks*, Deel 1-4. Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1895-1901. References will be made by volume and page number.

GD2^e – *Gerformeerd Dogmatieks*, Deel 1-4. Tweede herziene druk. Kampen: J.H. Kok 1906-1911. References will be made by volume and page number.

RD – *Reformed Dogmatics*. Translated by John Vriend. Edited by John Bolt 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008. References will be made by volume and page number.

GE – *Gerformeerde Ethiek*. Edited by Dirk Van Keulen. Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019.

RE – *Reformed Ethics*, Vol. I-III. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019- . References will be made by volume and page number.

HOCG – *Handleiding bij het onderwijs in den Christelijken Godsdienst*. Kampen: Kok, 1913.

GICR – *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*. Translated by Cameron Clausing and Greg Parker Jr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2021.

MD – *Magnalia Dei: Ondwerwijzing in de Christelijke Religie naar Gereformeerde Belijdenis*. Tweede herziene druk. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1931.

TWWG – *The Wonderful Works of God*. 1st edition. Translated by Henry Zylstra. Glenside: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019.

OT – *On Theology: Herman Bavinck's Academic Orations*. Translated and Edited by Bruce Pass. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

POR – *The Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*. Edited by Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2018.

BCB – James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.

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Chapter One:

Introduction — Welcome to the Swamp

“If it does not have life as its end, theology is nothing. It is not padding for the brain but a matter of the whole person. It engages all its faculties and powers, occupies head and heart, the intellect and the will. It is not empty and vain opinions about God, but in accord with the saying, *pectus est quod theologum facit* (a heart is what makes the theologian), it is a *habitus* (disposition), an internal state of the human mind, a knowledge which God himself works in us so that we may love Him and be fruitful and therein glorify Him.”¹ – Herman Bavinck

“Having become with us the Son of man, he has made us with himself sons of God. By his own descent to the earth he prepared our ascent to heaven.”² – John Calvin

The relationships between dogmatics and ethics, doctrine and life, word and deed, head and heart are a weighty set of interrelated questions. Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) was one theologian, philosopher, ethicist, preacher, and politician who was interested in such questions. These questions are important for religious and non-religious alike: how does what I believe shape the way I live? How do I view the world and my place in it? How does my vision of the world relate to my mode of life? These questions are all related to the central question of how dogmatics relates to ethics. In James Eglinton’s 2011 editorial, “Bavinck: Dogmatics and Ethics” he asserted that the greatest issue facing Bavinck studies, in the English-speaking world, was the relationship between Bavinck’s dogmatics and ethics.³ This thesis explores that concern by striving to develop a fully orbéd conception of the relationship between Bavinck’s dogmatics and ethics. I will put forth several connecting doctrines that demonstrate the distributed relationship of dogmatics and ethics.

The need for such a project has become even clearer in the wake of the simultaneous publication of Bavinck’s Dutch *Gereformeerde ethiek* and the English translation *Reformed Ethics*.⁴ Bavinck’s *Reformed*

¹ *OT*, 30-60, 54.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), Book VI, c.17, 2.

³ James Eglinton, “Bavinck: Dogmatics and Ethics,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 29, no. 1 (2011): 1-3, 2.

⁴ Bavinck, *Gereformeerde ethiek*, ed. Dirk Van Kuelen (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2019); *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019); *Reformed Ethics: The Duties of the*

Dogmatics, in its entirety, has been available to English readers since 2008. The release of *Reformed Ethics* has pushed the question of the relationship between the two to the fore. In the Anglophone world, at least, this question of the relationship between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics has taken on a heightened significance with the accessibility of these two works. It is my contention that these two disciplines are not warring but are mutually compatible disciplines of Bavinck's intellectual system.⁵ In this chapter, I layout the state of the question: how are dogmatics and ethics related?. In the process, the need for a distributed account will become clear on account of the various one-sided approaches. The complexity of the question is then placed within the shifting social imaginary of the Netherlands in the 19th and 20th century.

In the decade since Eglinton's clarion call, the relationship between the two poles has floated around the periphery of Bavinck studies on account of the "two-Bavincks" narrative which dominated American Bavinck studies for a time.⁶ This caused portions of Bavinck's work to be wrongly considered "orthodox" and other portions "modern."⁷ One of the red-herrings of polarity was Bavinck's work on ethics.⁸ That is, it was thought that when Bavinck did ethical work he was leaving behind his orthodox Reformed roots. The narrative of an intellectually bi-polar Bavinck has been put to rest and for some it never existed. Indeed, more recently, Henk van den Belt has argued that the indigenous Dutch reception of

Christian Life, Vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021). The third volume of *Reformed Ethics* is anticipated in 2024.

⁵ On overcoming the dualism of dogmatics and ethics in Bavinck 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 de Gereformeerde Kerken* (November 1919) (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1994).

⁶ For a summary of the "two Bavincks" hypothesis see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark, 2012). The root of this reading is from John Bolt (see John Bolt, "Grand Rapids Between Kampen and Amsterdam: Herman Bavinck's Reception and Influence in North America," *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003): 263-280, 264-265.

⁷ Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology & The Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 18. Mattson's work questioned the validity of the "two-Bavincks" hypothesis; see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*; see also Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020) The new biography on Bavinck has put to rest the bi-polarity of Bavinck. Nonetheless, it has left the door open for explorations of the cohesiveness of Bavinck's intellectual system and, importantly, for this thesis the relationship between dogmatics and ethics [hereafter, *BCB*].

⁸ Eglinton's reading can be perceived as a suggestion that ethics should not be seen in this manner; see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 46-47; *BCB*, 143.

Bavinck never maintained a “two Bavincks” reading.⁹ The field has returned to a more human view of Bavinck – that he was an individual whose thought could develop alongside of his growth as a scholar. Tensions exist in his thinking, but these are not distressing, rather they reflect the development of a scholar.

Most recent scholarship contends that Bavinck’s neo-appropriation of Calvinism in his own time facilitated a brand of Calvinism that both permeated modern culture and battled against the spirit of the secular age. However, the question of the exact relationship between dogmatics and ethics lingers in this equation. If Bavinck’s ethics is not an antithesis to his dogmatic work, how does it relate to it? Is there harmony between his dogmatics and ethics?¹⁰ What is the historical and conceptual relationship between his dogmatic and ethical thought? How does he envision the impact of dogmatics on the living of the Christian life? Is there a theological grounding to his moral vision? All these questions remain unsettled.

I. The State of the Question in the Field

The conceptual nature of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics in Bavinck has been broached in other projects, but never as the primary focus.¹¹ In these projects the prevailing issue is one-sidedness. In

⁹ Henk van den Belt, “One, Two, or Even More Bavincks: Tensions in his Theology” (Presentation, Herman Bavinck Centennial Conference, Kampen, Netherlands, November 11, 2021). Van den Belt argues that the “two-Bavinck hypothesis” is an over-simplification of previous Bavinck scholarship; Nelson D. Kloosterman, “Natural Law and The Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck: A Response,” (Presentation, A Pearl and a Leaven: Herman Bavinck for the Twenty-First Century Conference, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, September 19, 2008). Kloosterman contended that Bolt’s reading was rooted in a misreading of Berkouwer. He suggested the best path forward to be one of identifying “tensions.”

¹⁰ Pass recommended testing his analysis of the centrality of Christ in Bavinck’s dogmatics through Bavinck’s ethical work (see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 21).

¹¹ Nathaniel Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck’s Theological Epistemology* (London: T&T Clark, 2020). Sutanto carried out Eglinton’s ‘organic’ hypothesis effectively on Bavinck’s epistemology; Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck’s Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2020); Brock further closed the gap between the “orthodox” and “modern” Bavinck through a close reading of Bavinck’s use of Schleiermacher; Bruce Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentrism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020). Eglinton, Brock, and Pass have each broached the intriguing question of development across Bavinck’s lifetime; Sutanto has explored the relationship between dogmatics and ethics indirectly by exploring Bavinck’s doctrine of sin in his *RE* (see Sutanto, “Egocentricity, Organism, and Metaphysics: Sin and Renewal in Bavinck’s Ethics,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* Vol. 32, no. 2 (October 2020): 223-240). Sutanto notes the organic features that

other words, rather than envisioning the relationship between the two disciplines as distributed across a network of doctrines (piles), or within an encompassed system (the theological encyclopaedia), they have restricted the connection to a particular doctrine.¹² In Jan Veenhof's 1968 dissertation *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, he suggested the doctrinal connection between the two as the doctrine of revelation.¹³ While Veenhof's proposal is not without merit, my contention is that revelation is not the exclusive connecting point between the two disciplines.

A second connection that has been suggested between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics is that of the imitation of Christ. This was first put forward in John Bolt's 1982 dissertation, which explored the imitation of Christ theme in Bavinck's writing.¹⁴ In 2013, Bolt updated his dissertation and published it as *A*

exists in both); Pass in his review of *Gereformeerde ethiek* (Bruce Pass, "Reading Bavinck's Ethics," *Gereformeerde Ethiek*, by Herman Bavinck, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* Vol. 27, no. 4 (2020): 452-463).

¹² Both Pass and Clausen make gestures towards the theological encyclopaedia (see Cameron Clausen, "A Christian Dogmatic does not yet Exist': The Influence of the Nineteenth Century Historical Turn on the Theological Methodology of Herman Bavinck," PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 2020), 156-158. See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 21).

¹³ Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie. De Openbaringsen Schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in vergelijking met die der ethische theologie* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn N.V., 1968). Veenhof's dissertation explores Bavinck's doctrine of revelation and inspiration in contrast with the Dutch ethical theologians and their conception of the same doctrines. Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie*, 124 (Scripture as the centre of his thought), 307 (revelation as the foundation of all sciences), 586 (Scripture as starting point of theology), 589, (Scripture as the starting point of ethics).

¹⁴ Bolt, "The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck," (PhD. Diss., University of St. Michael's College, 1982); Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi* (New York; Edwin Mellen Press, 2013). Bolt's works examine the imitation of Christ theme in Bavinck's writings both as a spotlight for Bavinck's theological differences with Abraham Kuyper and as Bavinck's cultural-ethical ideal. Bolt is largely responding to Kruithof's 1955 doctoral thesis overseen by John Baillie, which explored the cultural-ethical ideal in Bavinck. The significance of Kruithof's project lies only in it as the first Anglophone dissertation on Bavinck in Edinburgh (see Bastian Kruithof, "The Relation of Christianity and Culture in the Teaching of Herman Bavinck," (PhD. Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1955); The imitation of Christ theme as the source and centre of Bavinck's ethics has appeared elsewhere (see Chang Jun Choi, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," *Reform & Revival* (2017): 163-216, 170).

*Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi: Between Pietism and Modernism.*¹⁵ Bolt offers the imitation of Christ theme as a two-fold principle, in which the believer is in *unio mystica* with Christ, and then, as a result, submits their life to the norms and obligations of Christ and his word.¹⁶ Bolt perceives the imitation of Christ as the centre of Bavinck's ethics but only partially.¹⁷ Jessica Joustra thoroughly engages Bolt's thesis in her own dissertation, exploring the imitation of Christ theme in Bavinck and John Yoder.¹⁸ Joustra contends the imitation of Christ is a true and not a partial centre to Bavinck's ethical thought.¹⁹ Indeed, the divergent views of Bolt and Joustra necessitate that we identify the centre of Bavinck's ethical thought.²⁰

Necessarily, this thesis then also reconsiders the centre of Bavinck's dogmatic thought. Bruce Pass explored this when he argued that Christology was at the heart of both dogmatics and ethics. Drawing upon Bavinck's use of descent and ascent as it relates to the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, Pass wrote, "Indeed, if in dogmatics God descends to us and in ethics we ascend to God, it could be anticipated that Christology functions not only as the heart of Bavinck's dogmatics but also of his entire theological encyclopaedia."²¹ Christology as a potential centre for both disciplines draws yet another line of connection

¹⁵ Bolt, *Bavinck on the Christian Life: Following Jesus in Faithful Service* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 18. Bolt also published *Bavinck on the Christian Life*, a popular version of his thesis, in 2015. In the preface to this book, he suggests it as having the question of the relationship between theology and ethics in mind, although this question is never directly addressed.

¹⁶ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis*, 95; Ronald Gleason, "The Centrality of the Unio Mystica in the Theology of Herman Bavinck" (PhD. Diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2001), 372. Gleason argues for the *unio mystica* as central to Bavinck's account of redemption; see also Todd J. Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Billings' work has consonance with my own, particularly as he relates the activity of believers in Calvin's thought to their union with Christ.

¹⁷ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis*, 115, 120. He also suggests that all ethics are "rooted in the very Trinitarian being of God."

¹⁸ See Jessica Joustra, "Following the Way of Jesus: Herman Bavinck and John Howard Yoder in Dialogue on the Imitation of Christ," (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2018).

¹⁹ Joustra, "Following the Way of Jesus," 137-140.

²⁰ It is my contention that a centre to Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics is not in tension with my articulation of a distributed relationship. Just as the centre pole of a canopy tent is central to the canopy, the frame that supports the rest of the canopy still plays a necessary role in facilitating the cumulative structure. My exploration of the frame in this thesis (the distributed relationship), allows for further conversation about the centre of his system.

²¹ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 21.

between dogmatics and ethics. Bolt, Joustra, and Pass will all receive attention in the final chapter as we consider the nature, task, centre, and end of dogmatics and ethics. On this point, the thesis has most in common with Cameron Clausing's argument for a Christologically-concentrated centre that is shaped by Bavinck's conception of revelation and the Trinity.²² In this respect, knowledge of God reaches its summit in the knowledge of God in Christ.²³

A third doctrine that has been proposed as the linking concept between dogmatics and ethics, is the doctrine of sanctification. In Eglinton's essay "On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-As-Ethics" he argues for the linking doctrine between dogmatics and ethics as that of sanctification.²⁴ Eglinton merits recognition because of his identification of the terms of "passive" and "active." The shortcoming of Eglinton's proposal is akin to Veenhof's in his strict suggestion of a particular doctrine. If the relationship between the two disciplines is distributive, a single doctrine will always fail in some aspect to be able to summarize the nature of the relationship.²⁵ In this respect, we might pit Veenhof against Eglinton and *vice versa*.²⁶ Both Bolt and Eglinton do have a Trinitarian caveat, which seeks to see these various themes placed within the larger redemptive and Triune framework. This led Bolt to argue for the imitation of Christ as a "partial and limited" and not as "the comprehensive theme for Christian ethics."²⁷ And likewise, Eglinton acknowledges implicitly the various doctrines that connect to sanctification (and therefore ethics) by introducing us to several other doctrines in his account.²⁸ In a way, the thesis follows Bolt and Eglinton's gestures by building a distributed account.

²² Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist'," 87-97.

²³ "Knowledge of God in Christ" will be explored in chapter seven.

²⁴ Eglinton, "On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics," in *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*, ed. Kelly Kopic (Westmont, IL; InterVarsity Press, 2014), 167-187, 178.

²⁵ For example, Bavinck mentions the earth as the ethical centre to the universe. How does this relate to the doctrine of sanctification, if not second-hand through doctrines such as creation or eschatology? (see *RD II*, 484).

²⁶ For example, Bavinck's lectures in Kampen on Ethics encompassed several dogmatic loci: Sin, Man, Election, Faith, Scripture, etc. (see "Manuscript [van collegedictaat] 'Gereformeerde Ethiek'" (no date), Folder 61, §1.)

²⁷ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 33-34; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 422; Joustra, "Following the Way of Jesus: Herman Bavinck and John Howard Yoder," 96-97, 138-140; see also Gayle Doornbos, "Herman Bavinck's Trinitarian Theology: The Ontological, Cosmological, and Soteriological Dimension of the Doctrine of the Trinity" (PhD Diss., University of St. Michael's College, 2019).

²⁸ Eglinton, "On Bavinck's Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics," 167-187.

The most substantial and direct engagement with the question of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is Ximian Xu's article, "Gloriously Intertwined: A Bavinckian Account of the Single Organism of Dogmatics and Ethics."²⁹ Xu's proposal has a distinct continuity with my own thesis: namely, he argues for dogmatics and ethics as housed in the theological encyclopaedia under the discipline of systematic theology.³⁰ He also argues that the two sub-disciplines of dogmatics and ethics exist as single organism, as others have noted.³¹ But importantly, he explores the connection between the two through a shared *telos* in their doxological essence. Crucially, this draws out not only an organic feature of the relationship, but also how dogmatics and ethics have an eschatological horizon. Nonetheless, Xu's article capitulates to the same issue mentioned above by dovetailing the joint of dogmatics and ethics to that of sanctification. The introduction of an eschatological element allows us to envision immediately how the relationship must be anchored to more than sanctification. In critiquing that account, I do not deny that sanctification is a significant doctrine in the relationship between the two sub-disciplines. However, I argue that sanctification is not a door, but is rather one of several hinges, or "piles" (for more on "piles" see below) that relate the two sub-disciplines. Xu's article will receive further attention in the final chapter.

II. An Amsterdam Approach to the Question

The diversity of opinions on the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is euphonic to this project. It allows us to establish that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics may have doctrines that it rests on more strongly than others, but the relationship remains dispersed. The approach taken in this work is that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is distributive, which is to say, no single doctrine, theme, or motif encompasses the entirety of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. To colour the workings of this particular relationship, the image of an Amsterdam canal home will be utilized as a recurrent illustration throughout this thesis.

²⁹ Ximian Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined: A Bavinckian Account of the Single Organism of Dogmatics and Ethics," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* Vol. 24, no. 1 (December 2021): 80-99.

³⁰ Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God: Herman Bavinck's Scientific Theology for the Modern World," (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2020). Xu explores the centrality of theology to Bavinck's intellectual system. Theology as a discipline includes more than strictly dogmatics, but rather the entire theological encyclopaedia. Xu's thesis explores the *wetenschappelijke* character of theology.

³¹ Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist'," 157-158.

Much of inner-city Amsterdam is built on reclaimed swamp land. The effort required to transform that swamp into the city it is today was monumental.³² It first involved the manual removal of miles of marshland, and the construction of canals. As each canal was finished, homes would be built alongside it. In this project, I will discuss one particular “home” on a canal street: the home that is “systematic theology.” From 1902-1921, Bavinck lived in such a canal home, at Singel 62 in Amsterdam’s Grachtengroedel district. Bavinck lived there alongside his wife Johanna, daughter Hannie, and for a time, his father Jan. A house such as this would be built by a team who would first drive “piles” into the earth. These “piles” were massive wooden poles that would provide support to the structures above. Once all these piles were placed into the ground, a home would be constructed on top of them. If one could see both below and above the surface, it would appear as if the home was on stilts. This illustration of the piles, house, and canal street will allow us to consider the various distributed components that make up the relationship between dogmatics and ethics according to Bavinck. In this work, I will put forth several “piles” that together support the relationship of dogmatics and ethics.³³ This recurrent construction image will help convey the distributed relationship of dogmatics and ethics.

Bavinck attends to the question of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics succinctly in four places. The thesis can be seen as an expansion of these *precis*. The following list is not displayed chronologically, but rather from sources that are more readily available to sources that are underexplored in Bavinck scholarship. By cataloguing these in the introduction we will gather a clear idea of the significant features in this relationship that must have our attention. The first is in his *Gereformeerde dogmatiek* in 1895 and the second is in his *Gereformeerde ethiek*:

Dogmatics describes the work of God accomplished for, unto, and in humanity; ethics describes the deeds, that the renewed man now does on the foundation of and in the power of those actions. In dogmatics, man is passive; they receive and believe; in ethics they themselves are active agents. In dogmatics comes the *articuli fidei*, in ethics, the precepts of the decalogue are treated. In the former, that which concerns *fide*, in the latter *caritate* (charity), *obediential* (obedience), and *bonis operibus* (good works) are handled. Dogmatics develops what God is and does for man and causes them to know Him as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; ethics sets forth what man is and is to do for God now; how, the entire man, with all his intellect and will and strength is to serve God out of gratitude and love. Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God, Ethics that of the

³² See Russel Shorto, *Amsterdam: A History of the World’s Most Liberal City* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013).

³³ It is not my contention that these doctrine are the only piles, but rather they exemplify the distributed account.

service of God. Both sciences [dogmatics and ethics] are not independent entities to one another, but form one and the same system, they are related members of a single organism.³⁴

Dogmatics and ethics. [The] distinction is now clear. It does not lie in the genus, with one having to do with the mind, the knowing, this one with will, the doing. That would amount to a splitting of man into two halves, one which was solely intellectual, the other solely ethical. No. In dogmatic: what does God do for and in us? He is everything there. The dogmatics is a word from God to us, from the outside, from the top to the bottom of us; we work passively, listening, allowing ourselves to be operated on. In ethics: what will become of us, if God works in us in this way, what will we do for him? We are active, precisely through the deed of God to and within us, we are praising, appreciating, and thanking God. Dogmatics, God descends to us. Ethics, we ascend to God. Dogmatics, He is ours. Ethics, we are his. Dogmatics, we know we will see his face. Ethics, His name will be on our foreheads. Dogmatics, from God. Ethics, to God. Dogmatics, He loved us. Ethics, therefore, we love him.³⁵

The remainder of the *precis* on the relationship between dogmatics and ethics are located in archival manuscripts. The first is an archival draft of a theological encyclopaedia and the second, a slip of paper that succinctly delineates the two disciplines found in the archive amidst his *Gereformeerde ethiek*. Importantly, we

³⁴ *GD1*^c, I, 13-14; *GD2*^c, I, 41, *RD*, I, 58. I have utilized my own translation to draw out the presence of the Latin. The Dutch is identical between the first and second edition. What does disappear between the first and second edition is a reference to Wendt's *Die Aufgabe der Systematischen Theologie* (see Hans Hinrich Wendt, *Die Aufgabe der Systematic Theologie* (Göttingen; Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1894). Bavinck cites Wendt at the end of this quote in the first edition. Wendt argues for the "organic" coherence of ethics and theology. The fact that it was dropped should incline us to consider that Bavinck was not dependent on this source. Nonetheless, attention is drawn to it because of its absence from the second edition and its clear resonance with Bavinck's statement.

³⁵ *GE*, 47; *RE* I, 22. The statement in *GE* is also present in the various manuscripts. See Manuscript "Gereformeerde Ethiek" (1900, 1901, 1903, 1913), Box 346, Folder 56; Manuscript "Gereformeerde Ethiek van Bavinck" (1902), Box 346, Folder 58; "Geref. Dogmatiek" (excerpt) (1906), Box 346, Folder 59. Notably the first doctrine that Bavinck begins to talk about after distinguishing the two is the doctrine of election. Variations on this statement in *RE* are also present in the various manuscripts. See Manuscript "Gereformeerde Ethiek" (1900, 1901, 1903, 1913), Folder 56; Manuscript "Gereformeerde Ethiek van Bavinck" (1902), Folder 58; Manuscript "Geref. Dogmatiek" (excerpt) (1906), Folder 59; "Manuscript [van het collegedictaat] "Gereformeerde Ethiek" (no date), Box 346, Folder 61. See also Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*: Some Remarks About Unpublished Manuscripts in the Libraries of Amsterdam and Kampen," *TBR* 1 (2010): 25-56. In this article, Van Keulen distinguishes between the various manuscripts of Bavinck's ethics.

may note that the relationship or difference between the two disciplines is not centred on a particular doctrine, but rather is distributed.

If one remains in the terrain of the subject, dogmatics and ethics [illegible] are born from faith, no distinction is possible. Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God revealed to the church. Ethics is the system of the service of God, described in his word. One must become objective. Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God revealed to the church. Ethics is the system of the service of God, described in his word. The dividing line does not pass between faith and works, credenda and agenda, rest and work, God and man, salvation and life, intellect and will, individual and community, but between people as passive and active; in the same way, dogmatics describes the man as created, redeemed, sanctified, ethics now describes this man on the basis of those acts of God for, to, and in him by serving God out of gratitude. The source of this Ethics is only the Holy Scripture, just like Dogmatics (against nearly everyone), not faith, confession, or Christ. As a result, it is theological: that is, its object is the man, but as God wills and has revealed that this man exists, and Ethics (being) and morality (act) may not be separate agents serving him. Theology is thus also here the starting point and goal. Man is considered in relation to God, how he in all things by intellect, will etc according to God's law, towards God's glory. And just as dogmatics is ethics is also ecclesial.³⁶

Elsewhere in the same manuscript, these notes are found:

Dogmatics describes Sunday, passive, rest

Ethics “---” weekdays, active

Dogmatic describes Gods work in Creation, Redemption, Sanctification

Ethics “---” our work on that basis.

³⁶ “Untitled” (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47-48. Emphasis is original. Unfortunately, the remainder of this source is nearly illegible. It includes an entire section entitled “Dogmatiek en Ethiek”:

[Dutch: Als men op 't terrein van 't subject blijft, dogm. & ethiek [illegible] geboren worden uit 't geloof, is geen onderscheid mogelijk. Men moet objectief worden. Dogmatiek is 't stelsel van de kennis Gods door aan gemeente geopenbaard. Ethiek is het stelsel van den dienst God, in zijn woord beschreven. De scheidingslijn loopt niet door tusschen geloof en werken, credenda en agenda, rust en beweging, God en mensch, heil & leven, verstand, wil, individu en gemeenschap, maar tusschen den mensch als passief en als actief wezend; de dogm. beschrijft ook den mensch als geschapen verlost geheilgd, de ethiek dien mensch nu op grond dies daden Gods voor aan, in hem Gods dienend uit dankbaarheid. Bron dezer Ethiek is alleen de H. Schrift, evenals is de dogmatiek (tegen schier allen), niet geloof, confessie, Christus. Daardoor is ze theologisch: d.i. haar object is wel de mensch maar gelijk God wil & geopenbaard heeft dat die mensch zijn en Ethiek (zijn) en moraal (handelen) mogen niet gescheiden gezant hem dienen zal. Theolog. is dus ook uitgangspunt en doel. De mensch beschouwd in betrekking tot God, hoe hij in alles en geheel naar verstand, wil enz. naar Gods wet, tot Gods eer zich heeft te gedragen].

Kingdom of God, law, sin, person X, sanctification, etc. occurs in both, but on either side.

Ethics are also biblical, ecclesial, progressive.

The object of dogma and ethics is one. It reveals itself outward in word (dogma), and in deed (ethics). So dogma and ethics depend on each other. Neither of them is *prieur* (prior). In treatment, dogmatics takes precedence. It is word before deed.

Dogmatics describes the objective acts God did for us.

Ethics describes how these deeds are fulfilled in us.³⁷

Notably, a number of doctrines may be identified as connecting dogmatics and ethics: creation, hamartiology, anthropology, Christology, sanctification, ecclesiology, eschatology. Each connects the two disciplines. These four sources allow for an important point of my argument to be made – the relationship between dogmatics and ethics cannot be restricted to a single doctrine. Our Amsterdam home is held up by many “piles.” All of the above *loci* are on the table as facilitating a connection between dogmatics and ethics because they do not divide the two.³⁸ Now that we have been exposed to the four main locations in which Bavinck engages the question of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, we can proceed forward to explain the foundation of the architecture of the Amsterdam home that we are constructing.³⁹

³⁷ “Untitled Loose Papers” (no date), Box 346, Folder 56:

[Dutch: Dogmatiek beschrijft den Zondag, passief, rust Ethiek ----- werkdagend, actief... Dogma. beschrift Gods werken in Schepping, Verloss., Heiliging. Ethiek - - - ons werken opgodsdienst daarvan Rijk gods, wet, zonde, persoon X, heliging, etc. kome in beide voor, maar v. andere zijde. Ethiek zij ook bijbelisch, kerkelijk, progressief. het object v. dogma en ethiek is egl. één. 'T openbaart. zich naar buiten 't in woord (dogma), en in daad (ethica). Dogma en ethiek hangen dus met v. elkaar af. Geen v. beide is prieur. In behandeling gaat dogmatiek voor. 'T Woord voor de daad. Dogmatiek beschrijft objectief de daads Gods voor ons. Ethiek ----- hoe die daads zich in ons voltrekken].

These “Loose” papers engage the question of dogmatics and ethics further. It also references Schelling, Schleiermacher, Van Dijk, and Rothe and very succinctly their articulations of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

³⁸ Ziegler, “*Nisi per Spiritum sanctum – The Holy Spirit and the Confession of Faith*,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 8 (2014): 347-356, 357. Ziegler suggests that the birth of faith is connected to various loci: proclamation of the Word (visible and invisible), divine election, and the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. The advent of faith is related to human agency and activity. These various loci can be located across the second-fourth chapters of the thesis as the work of God is related to the inception of human as active agents.

³⁹ Oliver O’Donovan, *Self, World, Time: Ethics as Theology*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), x.

In contrast to accounts that limit the relationship of dogmatics and ethics to one doctrine, this account of the relationship between his dogmatics and ethics sees a multiplicity of relationships that stretch across Bavinck's theological system. Therefore, the shape of the work explores several key "piles" in order to draw out the distributed nature of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. In particular, this statement by Bavinck is enticing: "The dividing line does not pass between faith and works, credenda and agenda, rest and work, God and man, salvation and life, intellect and will, individual and community, but between people as passive and active."⁴⁰ Bavinck conceives this relationship as indexed to Scripture, established by the gratuitous action of the Triune God, and set within the horizon of the Christian life of faith.

I attend in the second chapter to election. The "pile" of election is consistent throughout Bavinck's theological activity. His mature depiction of election in *Reformed Dogmatics* is first given attention, which allows us to see how he perceives the doctrine relating to the correlative doctrines of predestination and providence. His reflections on the impact of election on the ethics of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin are also considered to develop a precedence for this connection existing in the Reformed tradition. In the final portion of the chapter, Bavinck's 1918 speech on "Praedestinatie" is investigated, in which election and ethics are connected.⁴¹ Moreover, Bavinck positions the speech in relation to both ethical and contemporary theological discussions. The chapter concludes that election is a pile that relates dogmatics and ethics.

While the doctrine of election acts as an excavation, which reveals that the central claim of the connection between dogmatics and ethics cannot be solely sanctification, in the third chapter, I consider the undergirding role of faith in scientific and world-imagining activity.⁴² This includes inspecting faith as the starting point of man's scientific activity in the world. This applies superlatively to theology, for which reason one of the piles that connects dogmatics and ethics is faith. As Bavinck puts it, "If one remains in the

⁴⁰ Manuscript "Untitled" (no date), Box 346, Folder 227 47-48.

⁴¹ Manuscript "Praedestinatie" (1918), Box 346, Folder 406. Within Bavinck studies this speech should be considered important because it enables us to see that claims of Bavinck moving away from Reformed theology are unimaginative in their consideration of Bavinck's activity in the final decade of his life. A transcription and translation of the speech is provided as Appendix A, as such the reader is also pointed to the appendix in citations.

⁴² It is interesting to note then the significant this has broadly on the perception of theology. In anglo-theological context the word science is hardly drawn into connection with theology, yet in the Netherlands and Germany theology retains its "scientific" (*wetenschap/Wissenschaft*) character. I have the continental understanding of science in mind here.

terrain of the subject, dogmatics and ethics are born from faith, there is no distinction.”⁴³ This allows us to see that for Bavinck faith is a necessary connecting point between all the various sciences. Most importantly, though, it provides us with a connecting “pile” in the relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

Not only are the sciences undergirded by faith, but faith facilitates the development of a world- and lifeview. Accordingly, we also explore how faith is at the centre of Bavinck’s world- and lifeview, which allows us to see the role faith plays in providing harmony to the life of Christians. The resulting picture is that in the cultivation of faith believers develop an all-encompassing way of viewing the world, which begins with faith. Both dogmatics and ethics, doctrine and life, are born out of faith. The head and heart of the human personality find their harmony in faith. Viewed from the “pile” of faith, there is no significant distinction between dogmatics and ethics. It is the theological activity of a unified agent in pursuit of God.

Bavinck contends that the distinction between dogmatics and ethics is a division between people as *passive* and *active*. In the fourth chapter, then, we step further into his theological anthropology. Bavinck employs the *munus triplex* (threefold office of Christ). He claimed that we could not split the human in half and accord to dogmatics and ethics individual faculties. Instead faith facilitates harmony in head and heart and thus I move toward the centre of his theological psychology to consider a leitmotif in Bavinck’s thinking on “head and heart.”⁴⁴ The chapter engages with Cory Brock and his discussions related to self-consciousness, and Anthony Hoekema’s dissertation surveys the “Centrality of the Heart in the Theological Anthropology” of Bavinck.⁴⁵ The final section of the chapter explores “regeneration”, “sanctification”, and “*unio mystica*” as further “piles.”

If dogmatics is a reflection on God’s descent to humanity, and ethics on humanity’s ascent to God, then regeneration, sanctification, and *unio mystica* — as operations of the Holy Spirit — are critical piles at identifying the distributed nature of the relationship.⁴⁶ His understanding of the operation of the Holy Spirit

⁴³ “Untitled” (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47.

⁴⁴ *GE*, 47; *RE I*, 22.

⁴⁵ Anthony Hoekema, “The Centrality of the Heart in Herman Bavinck’s Anthropology,” *TBR* 11 (2020): ix-xvii, 1-261.

⁴⁶ Ziegler, “The Adventitious Origins of the Calvinist Moral Subject,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 28, no. 2 (2015): 213-223, 223. In Ziegler’s 2015 essay he argued that a “Reformed Christian ethic should take its first and defining cues from a dramatic theological account of fall and redemption.” He identifies this cue through attending to the origin of the moral subject in the theology of John Calvin. Like Calvin, Bavinck’s moral subject is best “suspended from

provides several theological-ethical links which connect divine and human activity. This scheme of election, regeneration, sanctification, and *unio mystica* conceptualize important “piles” upon which the relationship of dogmatics and ethics stands. Humans are made active *munus triplex* agents by the application of Christ’s *munus triplex* work by the Spirit.

We then turn in the fifth chapter to further unfurl Bavinck’s *munus triplex* theological anthropology not only as individuals but collectively. In the two doctrines of ecclesiology and eschatology is a continued inspection of humans as *passive* and *active*, the dividing line of dogmatics and ethics. In Bavinck’s *ecclesia militans* the interface of humans as *passive* and *active* is considered through baptism and the Lord’s Supper. A clear theme that permeates descriptions of the relationship of dogmatics and ethics is summarized under the activity of descent and ascent. In Bavinck’s *ecclesia triumphans*, the distinction of humans as passive and active is returned to again in eschatology by considering the continued *munus triplex* and the believers ascent to the highest good. The further “piles” of ecclesiology and eschatology are added to the relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

In the sixth chapter, we move from the perspective of the subject to the discipline of theology. In Bavinck’s theological system dogmatics and ethics are members of a single organism. He writes, “The two disciplines (dogmatics and ethics), far from facing each other as two independent entities together form a single system; they are related members of a single organism.”⁴⁷ These two disciplines belong to the theological encyclopaedia, a sub-discipline of the wider endeavour of academic theology that has now been largely forgotten in anglo-contexts. In particular, they belong to the subdivision of the theological encyclopaedia known as systematic theology. Naturally, considering the “organism” of the theological encyclopaedia will require that we assess the current state of discussions on Bavinck’s use of “organicist” thinking.⁴⁸ This chapter is largely archival and requires the reader to be patient with the heavy use of English

soteriology” where we may fully acknowledge the transformative moral life that has its origins in the operation of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁷ RD, I, 58; “Manuscript, eerste zin ‘Terwijl dus de exeg. theol’ (no date), Box 346, Folder 227 [Dutch: Als men op ‘t terrein van ‘t subject blijft, dogm. & ethiek laat geboren worden uit ‘t geloof, is geen onderscheid]. “If one remains in the terrain of the subject, dogmatics and ethics are born from faith, there is no distinction.”

⁴⁸ James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 51-78; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 17-71; Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 24-36; Eglinton’s 2012 dissertation was the catalyst for renewed interest in Bavinck and provided a cohesive vision of Bavinck through the organic motif, an archetypal ectypal motif, rooted in God’s self-disclosure of himself in unities-in-diversities. This Eglinton argues was pulled from within the Reformed tradition. Sutanto furthered this thesis

translation of Dutch sources. These sources, however, expose a whole portion of Bavinck's thinking that is previously unexplored, and the nature of the argument requires the heavy use of sources.

What is Bavinck's conception of the encyclopaedia and what makes it theological? These two questions will be probed. In doing so, I will show that Bavinck viewed theology, broadly speaking, through the Scriptural lens of Romans 11:36: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever." Even here, we might note the distinct roles of dogmatics and ethics. In dogmatics God descends to us, and in ethics the regenerate human ascends to him. In both, the glory of God is the *telos*. The distinct features of Bavinck's encyclopaedia are exposed in terms of their consonance and dissonance with Abraham Kuyper's (1837-1920) theological encyclopaedia.⁴⁹ In this chapter, then, we bring the two disciplines of dogmatics and ethics closer together, noting their systematic relationship.

According to Bavinck then, dogmatics and ethics remains indistinguishable from the perspective of the subject on account of faith. In other words, both are fundamentally carried out by an individual in faith. Moreover, their shared location on theological encyclopaedia avenue —the house of systematic theology — has once linked again them arm in arm. The two can be distinguished if one considers humans as *passive* or *active*. But, if both are systematic theology, what makes them distinct from one another when viewed as objects of study? In the final chapter, the nature, purpose, and task of dogmatics and ethics are explored as distinct disciplines.

One must become objective. Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God revealed to the church. Ethics is the system of the service of God, described in his word. The dividing line does not pass between faith and works, credenda and agenda, rest and labor, God and man, salvation and life, intellect and will, individual and community, but between people as passive and active.⁵⁰

through its application to Bavinck's epistemology, an area beyond Eglinton's scope. Pass pushed back against the thesis of Eglinton arguing that Bavinck's organism was not from Reformed but modern sources, while also concurring with Eglinton that it was utilized toward Reformed ends.

⁴⁹ Harinck, "Herman Bavinck and Geerhardus Vos," *Calvin Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (2010): 18-31, 18. Harinck succinctly summarizes the importance of Bavinck and Kuyper to neo-Calvinism and that they are often couple together like "Goldman and Sachs or Mercedes and Benz." This portion of the thesis aims to distinguish Bavinck's encyclopaedia from Kuyper's.

⁵⁰ "Untitled" (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47; *RD*, I, 58. "In dogmatics human beings are passive; they receive and believe; in ethics they are themselves active agents."

This naturally reveals more common ground – shared methods, shared dependence on revelation, shared doxological ends, and shared centres. At this point, I argue that Bavinck’s system has a concentric centre, in which “Christ” and the “knowledge of God” exist co-terminously.⁵¹ The activities of dogmatics and ethics are reflected upon as theological *thinking* and theological *loving*. The entirety of the Christian life is pictured, then, as the outworking of believer’s return to God (*ascent*) as the worshipful response to God’s *descent*. I will close considering the merits of the relationship that Bavinck posits between dogmatics and ethics, namely through the lens of Oliver O’Donovan’s work.

One way to envision the piles is to consider them as collated around God’s activity in salvation. As such, the “piles” may fall under the banner of grace, and are located along the lines of the *ordo salutis* (election, regeneration, *unio mystica*, faith, justification, sanctification, glorification, etc.).⁵² Structurally, the work then subtly guides the reader through the transformation of humans in theological anthropology, which considers the origin (election, regeneration), form (sanctification, ecclesiology), and horizon (eschatology, highest good) of ethical activity.

Why these “piles” as opposed to others? First, these “piles” were selected because they allow an integrated approach to the relationship to come to the surface. Philip Ziegler is correct when he frames Reformed ethics as follows, “A theological account of ethics thus involves sustained doctrinal description of Christian persons as moral agents... Taken together and rightly ordered, these overlapping descriptions constitute our understanding of the origins, form, and horizon of ethical activity and guide its exercise.”⁵³ The piles then allow a direct connection to be seen between dogmatics and ethics. Second, by identifying “piles” along the *ordo salutis* lines might be drawn more readily to Christ. If Christ is the centre of both dogmatics and ethics the *ordo salutis* will naturally unfurl this connection as creatures in salvation are drawn into participation with Christ and his benefits. Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics* are shaped around the “doctrine of the moral subject” attuned to the gratuitous activity of God in Christ. Third, these “piles” provide the opportunity to foray into underexplored areas of Bavinck studies.

⁵¹ Despite having a centre — this is not to suggest that the relationship between the two disciplines is not distributed. The centre of a home is still supported by the structure of the house.

⁵² *GICR*, 133.

⁵³ Ziegler, “Reformed Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 577-591, 577. See also, O’Donovan, *Self, World, Time*, 6-7.

This thesis is an attempt to discern and distil the relationship between the two moorings in Bavinck's thought. The unity of the Amsterdam home in systematic theology rests on the cumulative relationship of the piles together. Without the piles, the home would simply topple over, or sink into the mire. Without an understanding of the work of God toward man, ethics would be askew. Without an understanding of who God is, the sacrifice of praise rings hollow. The home will begin to lean in one direction or another until the structure becomes *theologically* uninhabitable. Without the religious-ethical life, knowledge of God's redemptive work remains abstract. The various piles facilitate the cumulative structure of the systematic theology home and allow the flourishing of dogmatics and ethics, theological *thinking* and *loving*.

We might see this house *in toto* as the home of systematic theology, on the encyclopaedic avenue of theology. Bavinck's fourfold theological encyclopaedia included: exegesis, church history, systematic theology, and practical theology.⁵⁴ Although the house of systematic theology has several rooms, the two at the heart of the home are those of dogmatics and ethics. Our various "piles" therefore allow this home to stand above the swamp water of Amsterdam and facilitate connections between the two sub-disciplines. The architecture of this work of the swampland is an illustration for theological anthropology. The movement from a swampland to a series of canals illustrates, albeit imperfectly, the arc humans move through in the narrative of redemption in which God descends into the pit of creaturely life embraces the mud of sin and lifts believers out of it. In this manner, the construction of the canal home functions as a re-vivified theological creature.

Bavinck's own life and context provide a useful starting point to understanding his thought. Accordingly, in the space that remains in this chapter, a survey of his context is offered.⁵⁵ Importantly, it identifies that Bavinck was himself a "man of faith" as a confessing Christian and nuances the modern background of his life. Therefore, the task of outworking the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, one that is rooted in "faith", was both an intellectual and a personal task.

III. Herman Bavinck and 'The Age of Mobilization'

⁵⁴ *GICR*, 18-19.

⁵⁵ Walter Lowe, "Prospects for a Postmodern Christian Theology: Apocalyptic Without Reserve," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 1 (1999), 17-24, 19.

It is well established that Bavinck's life was marked by piety having been shaped by the rhythms of a pious home steeped in the Word of God and the three forms of unity (the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism). This faith remained close to his heart throughout his life as he navigated the shifting context of the onset of modernity. Headlined by the work of Cory Brock's *Orthodox yet Modern* reading of Bavinck, a plurality of scholars have argued for the general tenor of Bavinck's life as marked by piety expressed in the modern age.⁵⁶ The section below, which engages the thought of Charles Taylor, provides nuance to the modern context of Bavinck's life. This is important because it helps to identify further the complexity of Bavinck's setting and his navigation of it.

The period in which Bavinck lived is well-illustrated by Taylor as one of increasing "mobilisation."⁵⁷ Taylor's notion of mobilisation "designates a process by which people are persuaded, pushed, dragooned, or bullied, into new forms of social and religious associations."⁵⁸ In the Netherlands' rapidly expanding civil society, new social structures were "mobilised" into existence. As a prime example, we might consider Bavinck's colleague Abraham Kuyper, whose mobilising efforts included a new university (the *Vrije Universiteit*), political party (the Anti-Revolutionary Party), newspapers (The Standard), and new denomination (the *Doleantie*). It is not hard to imagine how Kuyper is a model partaker in the age of mobilisation.⁵⁹

Taylor also points to the development in the Netherlands of "pillarisation." Pillarisation was a political development in the Netherlands in which society was organized into political and religious groups, and these groups were encouraged to flourish within their own sphere.⁶⁰ This pillarisation was the result of

⁵⁶ *BCB*, xix, xx, xxii; Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern, in toto*; Clausing, "'A Christian Dogmatic does not yet Exist,'" iii, iv; see also, Sutanto, "Moving Beyond the Binaries," *Westminster Magazine*, October 15, 2021, <https://wm.wts.edu/content/moving-beyond-the-binaries-herman-bavinck-100-years-later>.

⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 445-472.

⁵⁸ Taylor, "Religious Mobilizations," *Public Culture: Society for Transnational Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2006): 281-300, 282.

⁵⁹ Molendijk, *Protestant Theology and Modernity*, 143, see also 2-3, 91, 93; see also Taylor, "Religious Mobilizations," 282. "This generally means they are induced through the actions of government, church hierarchies, or other elites not only to adopt new structures but also to some extent, to altar their social imaginaries... as well as their sense of what is crucially important in their lives or society."

⁶⁰ See Arend Lijphart, *Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

Anti-Revolutionary Party policy, and this drastically altered the fabric of Dutch society.⁶¹ Dutch scholar Arie L. Molendijk identifies “pillarisation’s” impact on three broad *stratum*: churches, institutions (profit and non-profit, such as hospitals and schools), and cultural associations (such as sports clubs, unions, and media). Molendijk likewise connects the concept of pillarisation to the modernizing social fabric of the Netherlands.⁶²

Beyond pillarisation, there are several components to Taylor’s age of mobilization that are easily identifiable in the social imaginary of the Netherlands in Bavinck’s lifetime: (i) advancing disenchantment, (ii) development of the modern moral order, and (iii) direct access to citizenship.⁶³ Taylor perceives disenchantment as the exhuming of the spiritual from both the fabric of society (angels, demons, Satan, etc.) and above society, i.e. God.⁶⁴ In contrast, the modern moral order was able to posit that God exists, but could not conceive that he was active in the world. Nonetheless, this deity desired that we obey the norms that he had established to arrive at a conception of fullness.⁶⁵

Against this shifting backdrop Bavinck attempted to construct a world- and lifeview that encompassed the whole of reality: humanity’s relationship to God, God’s relation to humanity, and both of their relationships to the world. We might think of this world- and lifeview as an attempt at constructing a neo-Calvinist social imaginary, that is, a comprehensive vision of the realities that undergird all of society. At the foundation of this world- and lifeview is faith. Likewise, in Taylor’s work he locates the social imaginary as one that shifts or pivots across three areas: God, self, and world. After all, Bavinck wrote, “God, the world, and humanity are the three realities with which all science and all philosophy occupy themselves. The conception which we form of them, and the relation in which we place them to one

⁶¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 450, 458, 470; For a concise history of “pillarization” see Arie L. Molendijk, *Protestant Theology and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 141-146.

⁶² Molendijk, *Protestant Theology and Modernity*, 148-150. Molendijk notes the tension between “pillarization” as a modern phenomenon and its development a theory to impede secular influences.

⁶³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 156, 171-176, 460. Taylor defines social imaginary as “the ways we are able to think or imagine the whole of society”; In this thesis, the construction theme of “piles” is used to describe Bavinck’s theological project — it should be noted that “construction” themes are imbedded in the fabric of Neo-Calvinist theological projects, especially in constructive approaches to understanding the development of the fabric of society, “pillarization” is one example of this.

⁶⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 287-292.

⁶⁵ See Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2004), 3-21.

another, determine the character of our world and of life, the content of our religion, science, and morality.”⁶⁶ Recalling Taylor here is helpful in painting a picture of how Bavinck seeks to construct his Christian world- and lifeview and ultimately how the three spheres of God, humanity, and world relate in Bavinck’s system.⁶⁷

In the medieval imaginary, Taylor perceives the world as thoroughly enchanted. The relationship between God, the world, and mankind was “porous.”⁶⁸ In other words, God is present in the cosmos and humanity has no difficulty recognizing the action of God. Which is to say, Taylor would submerge Bavinck within secularity² – the age of mobilization – a time in which belief and practice were in decline, and individuals were institutionalizing their beliefs. Taylor allows for distinct phases of the development of secularity to bleed into each other.⁶⁹ *Contra* secularization theory, it is not simply a story of “decline” for Taylor, but more richly, it is a new arrangement of these relationships.⁷⁰

According to Taylor, the God-self-world relationship was reconfigured in this time period. In the previous era, the God-self-world relationship was hierarchical. In that setting, the church, state, and individual related to each other through this hierarchy. Taylor writes, “In societies on this model, the presence of God was unavoidable; authority itself was bound up with the divine and various invocations of God were inseparable from public life.”⁷¹ In the age of mobilization, however, this shifted. There was a

⁶⁶ *POR*, 70.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26-27. Taylor delineates his treatment from the medieval to modern imaginary across the lines of (1) God, (2) man, (3) world and how these three relate.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 35-42.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1-4, 12-15. Taylor has three different meanings for secular: secular¹, secular², and secular³. He writes about these three seculars as if they are a two-storey building. History moves us from one kind of secularism to the next: secular³ is the basement and includes the 14th-18th centuries with changes in the conditions of belief. In secular². in the 19th century, one moves to the ground floor. At the ground floor there is decline in belief and practice. In secular¹, which is the top storey, or the 20th century, we have a retreat from religion’s influence on public life.

⁷⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 437. See also Richard Lints, “Afterword,” in *What Is Christianity?* ed. Gregory Parker Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2022), 79-84; see also Oliver O’Donovan, *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflections and the Shaping of Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 46.

⁷¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 446.

break from this hierarchical structure. God is no less present in this world, but one perceives him through “His Design.”⁷²

One may observe this in the history of Bavinck’s ecclesial group (*Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* [CGK]), which broke away from the mainstream Dutch Reformed Church in 1834. Some belonging to the CGK called for the church to be recognized as the true historic Dutch reformed church, but Bavinck’s own family participated in the development of a new institution. They did not pursue God through pre-existing structures, but instead they fractured their relationship with this order and developed their own church.⁷³ Taylor writes about such actions: “Its members are not agents who are essentially embedded in a society which in turn reflects and connects with the cosmos, but rather as disembedded individuals who come to associate together.”⁷⁴ This God-man-world relationship is reordered, then, such that the presence of God is largely perceived in society as the “author of a Design” and the development of “free churches” such as Bavinck’s *Afscheiding* church group.⁷⁵ Humans then relate to God in various spheres through attempting to discern his design.⁷⁶

Bavinck would make a great case-study for a man living in the age of mobilization, albeit with one caveat: Bavinck pushes back against definitions that describe the man-God relationship as simply one of acknowledging God’s presence via design (i.e., deism), he likewise pushes back against articulations that conflate God with the world (i.e. pantheism). In this respect, Bavinck fits better in Taylor’s conception of the ancient regime in which, as Taylor puts it, “Society is still seen as organic, and one’s place in this organic whole is the essential definer of obligation and duty.”⁷⁷ We might then allow for Bavinck to be a figure who is a blend of the ancient regime and age of mobilization. One who feels and benefits from the cross pressures of mobilization while perceiving God’s activity under an older age. Identifying Taylor’s conception of this period sheds important light on how Bavinck envisioned the threefold relationship between God, self, and the world.

⁷² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 446-447.

⁷³ Although some Seceders called explicitly for their church to be recognized as the true historic *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, they still broke from the existing institution and created their own.

⁷⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 447, 450.

⁷⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 453.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 446-447, 460.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 442.

Conclusion

By framing Bavinck's context via Taylor I have provided a background by which we can explore his theological conceptions of the relationship between God, self, and the world. In other words, a philosophical background to God's movement toward humans as descent, and humans' movement toward God as ascent in which the relationship between the world and God is envisioned as organic, without God himself being so. Furthermore, I acknowledged that Bavinck's activity as a theologian — as a confessing and confessional Christian — was not simply an intellectual exercise. It was also deeply personal and therefore, the intellect and will, the head and heart, theological thinking and loving, were intimately connected. As was noted at the very beginning of this chapter:

If it does not have life as its end, theology is nothing. It is not padding for the brain but a matter of the whole person. It engages all its faculties and powers, occupies head and heart, the intellect and the will. It is not empty and vain opinions about God, but in accord with the saying *pectus est quod theologum facit* (a heart is what makes the theologian), it is a *habitus* (disposition), an internal state of the human mind, a knowledge which God himself works in us so that we may love Him and be fruitful and therein glorify Him.⁷⁸

Therefore, the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is not a stale intellectual enterprise, but one vivified by his religious life and stimulated by the shifting modern culture in which he participated. Clausing puts it well when he writes, "In a sense the thrust of Bavinck's project throughout his entire career was one of trying to mediate between the reformed and orthodox wing of his theological tradition and the *Zeitgeist* in which he found himself."⁷⁹ The complexity of this task was aided through the lens of Taylor's "age of mobilisation" of which Bavinck was a participant.

In the chapters that follow, our exploration will begin with the "pile" of election.

⁷⁸ *OT*, 30-60, 54.

⁷⁹ Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist'," 14.

Chapter Two: Election — The Foundation of Ethics

*“But all ongoing, unfolding, developing of God’s glory in his creatures, from lower to higher, through nature, ethos. Electio the crown! That is what all things proceed from. Sin and misery are means to this end. Just as God’s mercy proceeds out of it. From, through, and to God are all things. God is all in all.”*¹ – H. Bavinck

*“Calvinism is the only consistent theological view of the world and of humanity. And therefore, it is particularly apparent, but in reality it is most universal and catholic. From the high, spiritual, theological standpoint, which the Calvinist occupies, he looks over the whole world. He sees everything ‘sub specie aeternitatis’ broad and wide and far. In his system, all depends not on any creature, but only on God Almighty. There is no limit to His grace and mercy but that, which He himself, in His unsearchable and adorable good pleasure, may have established. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son and the communion of the Holy Ghost have no limitation or condition, outside of themselves, in any quality of the creature. Neither country nor people, neither error nor sin, neither sex nor age bind them. ‘From Him and through Him and to Him are all things.’”*² – H. Bavinck

In anglophone Bavinck studies there has been little focus on Bavinck’s doctrine of election and even less on election as it relates to ethics.³ The fleshing out of this doctrine includes key elements in the relationship between God, self, and the world, namely predestination and providence. As such it is, advocates for a particular understanding of history, the lives of creatures, the problem of evil, the destiny of man, the rhythm of daily life, suffering, and most importantly for this project, ethics. Over the course of Bavinck’s writing, election is not only connected to ethics, but it is the foundation for all ethical activity by human agents, and as such it is the first “pile.”

¹ Bavinck, “Praedestinatie,” 12; see Appendix A, ccxvi.

² “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation” (1892), Box 346, Folder 345, 1-19, 15.

³ Mattson indirectly spends two pages on election discussing the nature of Bavinck’s lapsarianism (see Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 175-176); Sutanto, “Divine Providence’s *Wetenschappelijke* Benefits: A Bavinckian Model,” in *Divine Action and Providence*, eds. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2019), 98-117; Andries D. R. Polman, *De Praedestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn* (Franeker: Uitgever Wever, 1936), 83, 139, 220, 267, 293-294, 308, 322 Polman cites Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics* to bolster his argument in several places, but does not engage directly with his arguments; see also, Bolt and van Keulen, “Introduction to Herman Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics*,” in *RE I*, xxxii.

The main argument of this thesis is that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics cannot simply be explained by a single doctrine but is best viewed as hinged by a multiplicity of doctrines—or as I put in the introduction, that several “piles” hold up Bavinck’s systematic theology home in Amsterdam. This chapter explores the doctrine of election as the first “pile.” In other words, the relationship between dogmatics and ethics is a distributed relationship and election facilitates one connection between dogmatics and ethics. If this is the case, one would suspect that when Bavinck discusses election, he would necessarily draw it into conversation with ethics, issues of divine and human agency, moral culpability, and human freedom. For these are the various hinges that connect the doctrine of election to ethics. Indeed, Bavinck does so. Bavinck discusses “election” as the first objective cause of all ethical activity because it precedes the other “piles” in the *ordo salutis*. As such, it is logically prior to the other “piles,” nonetheless — it still remains one “pile” along the way of salvation and is therefore part of our distributed relationship.

Election as a “pile” that connects dogmatics and ethics will become clear across two parts. The first engages Bavinck’s readings of Zwingli and Calvin on the doctrine of election. Bavinck perceives both Reformers as intimately connecting ethics and election, such that election is the foundation for ethical living. The main aim of this section is to display that Bavinck perceives a close relationship within the forebearers of Reformed theology between election and ethics. A close reading of chapter three of Bavinck’s dissertation on *De Ethiek van Ulrich Zwingli* will prove illuminating.⁴ Following Zwingli, I turned to consider how Bavinck perceives a connection between election and ethics in Calvin. The pair culminate in recognizing an intimate relationship between election and ethics, such that election is perceived as facilitating ethics.

The second portion of the chapter inspects Bavinck’s 1918 speech on predestination, in which he places election in direct conversation with ethical issues. The main contours of the speech reveal theological continuity between younger and older Bavinck. The section on Zwingli displays early, student era Bavinck, the writings on Calvin span the middle of his career, while the 1918 speech is right at the end of his productive life. The 1918 speech then allows us to see continuity between Bavinck’s articulation of the relationship between ethics and election and that of Calvin. It also demonstrates positive engagement with the philosophy of the day.

⁴ “De Grondslag van het Christelijk leven: De Verkiezing,” in *EUZ*, 34-46.

What the chapter details is how Bavinck always perceived election and ethics to be intimately related and this connection to be a key contribution of the Reformed tradition. It is also clear that this is an unaltered position across Bavinck's life – that is, he consistently perceived the doctrine of election to be linked to the ethical life. At the outset it will be helpful to position Bavinck's doctrine of election in relation to the history of Reformed theology. This will necessitate a preliminary discussion, in which we make use of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* to shape Bavinck's teaching on election and predestination in a dogmatic context.

I. Election and *Reformed Dogmatics*

In the history of Reformed theology, the doctrine of election is closely linked with providence, predestination, and God's counsel. Its scope includes both the beginning and the end, the *pactum salutis* and the last things. Reformed theologians have typically placed providence, predestination, and election under the doctrine of God, within the divine counsel, or the doctrine of creation. This is due to the influence of Boethius and Augustine.⁵ In his *Reformed Dogmatics* Bavinck treats providence, predestination, and election under the doctrine of God. He also treats providence in the doctrine of creation and election in the person and work of Christ.⁶ In his two abridgments of *Reformed Dogmatics* (*Magnalia Dei* and *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*) he treats providence alongside creation, election under the doctrine of God, and predestination under the covenant of grace.

According to David Fergusson, Protestants have typically prioritized predestination over providence, with providence being the means to the ends determined by predestination.⁷ This is not so for Bavinck. Following Augustine, Bavinck perceives predestination as a subordinate category to providence. According to Bavinck, Augustine places election and reprobation under providence, with predestination as the means to the ends determined by providence. In this manner, predestination is always aimed towards salvation. Election is then accomplished by the means, that is Christ, who was himself predestined.⁸ In Bavinck's account, providence relates to the universe as a whole while predestination has in view the eternal

⁵ *GD2* II, 370-371, 388; *RD* II, 360, 375; David Fergusson, *The Providence of God: A polyphonic approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 61, 108.

⁶ The theme of providence does occur throughout volume 4 of *RD* in his discussion on the work of the Spirit, but he primarily appropriates the work of providence to the Father.

⁷ Fergusson, *The Providence of God*, 63.

⁸ *GD2* II, 372-373; *RD* II, 363.

state of individuals with election as its culmination.⁹ In this manner, the counsel of God is “the master concept” which provides the unity to providence, predestination, and election.¹⁰ Predestination is distinguished from providence in its relation to the eternal state of creatures, while providence concerns the affairs of the world, together they are driven by the “divine thought” of election.¹¹

Bavinck’s articulation of election has two features worth drawing attention to. First, it is interesting to note that little has been made of Bavinck’s decision to make Christ the object of election. Karl Barth’s similar theological move has drawn significant investigation.¹² The German theologian, Otto Weber, noted that there are similarities between Barth and Bavinck’s articulation of election.¹³ Weber suggested that Bavinck utilized formulations that could have supported those of Barth.¹⁴ Nonetheless, there has not been a flurry of interest in Bavinck’s doctrine of election. Perhaps this is on account of his concession that it is simply the norm of the tradition.¹⁵ He also makes little of Christ as the object, whereas Barth makes much of this teaching.

⁹ *GD2^e* II, 388 [Dutch/Latin: *Gelijke Zwingli het uitdrukte: est autem providential praedestinationis veluti parens*]; *RD* II, 375, 377, 399. “As Zwingli put it, ‘Providence is as it were the parent of predestination.’”

¹⁰ *GD2^e* II, 409; *RD* II, 392.

¹¹ *GD2^e* II, 425; *RD* II, 404. Following, the Leiden synopsis Bavinck considers election then in two ways. First, it is considered from the beginning. This he typically refers to as predestination, though there is some incongruity here, with him occasionally referring to it as election. Second, election is viewed from the end. This is the elect as they have been called forth in time, the crown of the divine counsel. See *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae/Synopsis of Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation: Volume 2, Disputations 24-42*, eds. Henk van den Belt, Reimer Faber, William den Boer (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 24.9-10.

¹² Paul Nimmo, *Barth: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2013), 65. “His doctrine of election is arguably the most innovative and most contested writing of his theological career.”

¹³ Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik* II Bände (Neukirchen – Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972).

¹⁴ Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, II, 480n9 [German: *Bavinck braucht Formulierungen, die sich denjenigen K. Barths nähren*]; Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, II, 485 n. 7. Weber even laments that Barth did not call upon Bavinck for support.

¹⁵ *GD2^e* II, 423; *RD* II, 403; Bavinck makes reference to Leiden Synopsis 24.24: “Together with all the ancient authors and many great authors of the Reformed Church, in this decree of election, we assign the foremost place to Christ as Head and Redeemer of the Church” (see *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 24.24).

This point of continuity between Bavinck and Barth does not entail that their formulations are interchangeable.¹⁶ For Barth, there is both a “yes” and a “no” in election and this dialectic distinguishes him from Bavinck. Christ is then both the elect and the reprobate man; he is the representative for the elect and the reprobate.¹⁷ Contra Barth, Bavinck situates Christ as the representative only for the elect with the church as elect in Christ.¹⁸ Bavinck likely does not precede Barth in amplifying the role of Christ’s election because of his engagement with the Dutch ethical theologians.¹⁹ In particular, early in his theological career Bavinck thoroughly engaged with the thought of Netherlands Reformed minister and ethical theologian Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874).²⁰ Bavinck perceived Christ as the centre of de la Saussaye’s system. In describing de la Saussay’s thought, he wrote, “Christology must no longer be a chapter, as it has been, but must become the living principle (*levensbeginsel*) of all dogmatics.”²¹ Likely, Bavinck’s engagement with de la Saussaye Christologically oriented doctrine of election kept him from approaching Barth’s position.²²

There are other notable differences between Barth’s and Bavinck’s formulations of election. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the continuity and discontinuity of their articulations, at least two points will help clarify why Bavinck has been overshadowed by Barth on this front. Much like Bavinck, for Barth the doctrine of election is located within his discussion on the doctrine of God. Both treat the doctrine after the divine attributes. Barth’s placement nonetheless is unique, he also treats election

¹⁶ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2.

¹⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 163, 167.

¹⁸ *GD2^e* II, 423; *RD* II, 403.

¹⁹ Harinck and Winkeler, “The Nineteenth Century,” 475-476. Harinck and Winkeler suggest the Dutch ethical movement had some influence on Karl Barth through the writings and sermons of H.F. Kohlbrügge (1803-1875).

²⁰ See Bavinck, *De Theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye: Bijdrage tot de kennis der Ethische Theologie* (Leiden: D. Donner, 1884); The Dutch ethical movement though a progeny of Schleiermacher is more clearly a descendent of the *Réveil*. The generation that followed the *Réveil* perceived it as lacking intellectual rigor and therefore sought to harness the ethos of the movement, but provide it with intellectual and conceptual structure. Moreover, the prior generations reliance on super-naturalist theological answers were no longer viable and required updating (see Harinck and Winkeler, “The Nineteenth Century,” 458, 475).

²¹ Bavinck, *De Theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 1-8, 43-47.

²² Bavinck, *De Theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye*, 47, 94.

separately following his treatment of the reality of God, which is a radical relocation of the doctrine.²³ Bavinck takes a more traditional road, considering election within his section on the divine counsel. Therefore, first Barth's unique placement of election has drawn more attention to it over Bavinck's traditional approach. Additionally, Bavinck's doctrine of election does not make determinative claims on God's being. According to Barth, God is the one who loves in freedom, election makes that so. Paul Nimmo writes of Barth, "God would not be God without this act of election: it represents a divine *Self-determination*."²⁴ Unlike Bavinck, Barth's formulation makes it such that election is determinative of God's being.²⁵

As noted above, the object of election is Christ and the elect in their union with Christ. Jesus Christ as the God-man functions in two different roles in Bavinck's conception of election. He is both the mediator, the cause or foundation of election, and the object of election. He is the purpose of election, while also being the one who is elect. Nevertheless, Christ is not the "*causa impulsiva, movens, meritoria*." Rather, this is the will of the Father.²⁶ In this manner, Christ is only the cause of election, because election is realized in and through him. This is so in the same sense as an arrow is the cause of a wound, but its fundamental cause is the aim and strength of the archer.

The second feature of Bavinck's doctrine of election worth drawing attention to is his organicism within his articulation of the doctrine. Bavinck's organicism will be discussed in a later chapter, but it also comes to the fore in his discussion on election. This is not because the divine action of election is organic, rather it is because the object of election Jesus Christ and the church are organically one.²⁷ One then sees here the organic features of: (1) unity in diversity, (2) the priority of the whole over the parts, (3) the governing role of a living-force idea, (4) teleological orientation, and (5) balance of mechanical and teleological description.²⁸

²³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I-IV eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley and others (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), II/2.

²⁴ Nimmo, *Barth: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 65.

²⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2, 76.

²⁶ *GD2* II, 421-422; *RD*, II, 401-402.

²⁷ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 81.

²⁸ See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 29.

By further considering the object of election, the church, we may delineate the various organic components. As the object of election, Christ and the elect are joined in one and the same decree—a decree with a teleological orientation. Election is the decree that is governed by the divine idea, which is then developed across the ages.²⁹ This teleological description takes on both mechanical and organic forms. Bavinck writes in *Christian Worldview*:

And viewed from the highest standpoint, the whole world is an organic unity, upheld by one thought, led by one will, and directed to one goal – one “organon” [ὄργανον] that is also a “machine” [μηχανή] and a “machine” [μηχανή] that is an “organon” [ὄργανον]; a *building*, that *grows* and a *body* that is *built*; a work of art from the Supreme Artist and from the Master Builder of the universe.³⁰

A brief foray into the church will help facilitate the broader structure of the thesis. In chapter five, I turn to consider the dual ontology and activity of the church more fully, but some initial details are necessary to help frame Bavinck’s conception of election as it relates to the organism and machine of the church. According to Bavinck, the church is both organism and institute.³¹ In his depiction of the church, Bavinck mixes organic and mechanical metaphors in his discussion of the church it is an organism that is built, and a building that grows.³² The church as organism and institute are the respective organic and mechanical congruent teleological parts, which take on a teleological end in developing into the elect in the kingdom of God—with both the organism and institution having been called into existence at the same time by God, and having the same end in God.³³

These two ontologies (organism and institution) perpetually interact with each other and draw one another towards the teleological end of the building up of the body.³⁴ As Bavinck puts it, “Christ was chosen by God to be the head, and the church his body; together they must grow into a full man, in whom every

²⁹ *GD2*^e II, 425; *RD* II, 404.

³⁰ *CWV*, 92.

³¹ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 193. As noted by Eglinton, the church is institute in two ways: first, it is institutional in its structure and governance, second through its possession of the means of grace. Absent from Eglinton’s discussion is the consideration of institution as mechanic. See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 144-154.

³² *GD2*^e, II, 425 [Dutch: ...eeuwig bestek van dien tempel, dien Hij in den loop der eeuwen bouwt en waarvan Hij zelf de Kunstenaar en de Bouwmeester is. Aan den bouw van den tempel is alles ondergeschikt en dienstbaar]; *RD*, II, 404.

³³ *GD2*^e IV, 367; *RD* IV, 340.

³⁴ *GD2*^e IV, 358 [Dutch: Beide zijn met elkander gegeven en werken voortdurend op elkander in]; *RD* II, 332.

member has his own place and fulfils his own task.”³⁵ The individuals are not to be viewed as aggregate divergent parts, but as a single organism. These parts act upon each other reciprocally, such that it self-organizes into a hierarchal institute. The church is not reducible to its mechanism (which is to say, to its life as an institute). Nor is the church reducible to its charismatic activity (which is to say, to its life as organism). Neither precludes the other. Both modes of activity are required for the church, both Word and Spirit.

It is necessary to consider at least two facets of the organism of the elect: first, the unity of the organism and the logical priority of Christ; and second, the diversity of the organism and the question of the whole preceding the parts. First, the organism finds unity in the confession of Christ – the church is elect in Christ.³⁶ It is in the church’s *unio mystica* to Christ that they are members of his election. This union is founded upon the church’s profession of Christ’s name. According to Bavinck, because the church is elect in Christ, one must consider Christ’s election as logically prior to the election of the church.³⁷ Yet, because the church is elect in Christ, they too are part of this decree.

Bavinck makes clear the church’s *unio mystica* with Christ through the use of biblical imagery. Christ is the head, the church is the body. Therefore, just as the Christ is the head of the body, the church’s election is linked to Christ’s. One might suspect that there would be a stronger emphasis on the whole in Bavinck’s articulation of election, such as in Schleiermacher.³⁸ However, Bavinck straightforwardly states that his articulation should not be understood strictly in reference to whole without reference to the

³⁵ *GD2*^e II, 425 [Dutch: Christus is door God verkoren tot Hoofd, de gemeente tot zijn lichaam; en samen moeten zij opwassen tot een volkomen man, in welken ieder lid zijn eigen plaats bekleedt en zijn eigen taak vervult]; *RD* II, 404.

³⁶ *GD2*^e II, 423; *RD* II, 402-403.

³⁷ *GD2*^e II, 423; *RD* II, 403.

³⁸ Schleiermacher discusses the doctrine of election primarily in two places, first in an 1819 essay of his, see Schleiermacher, *On the Doctrine of Election: With Special Reference to the Aporisms of Dr. Bretschneider* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 53, and again in his *Christian Faith* (see Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* I-II, trans. and eds. Catherine L. Kelsey, Terrence N. Tice, and Edwina Lawler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), II, §115-120). Schleiermacher is distinct from Bavinck in that he gives priority to the whole, rather than the particular. Thus, Schleiermacher desires to discuss “the church” rather than the “individual”, for it is in relation to the whole that the individual receives their identity. Nonetheless, in both accounts Schleiermacher follows what he calls the “Calvinian formula,” thus their respective articulations as a whole should not be set in juxtaposition to one another.

particulars, as it is in Schleiermacher and others.³⁹ In Bavinck's understanding of election, God is concerned with the parts (particular people) and the whole (the organism viewed as a whole). He writes:

And so it is not an accidental and random aggregate, but an organic whole that is known by God in election, and that has been saved in Christ's redemption... And it is precisely because the object of election is a perfect organism, that is why it cannot be imagined otherwise, but as a firm and definite decision of God. Whereas in an aggregate the number of parts does not matter.⁴⁰

Bavinck's articulation of the doctrine of election situates him within the tradition of Reformed orthodoxy and shows his close alignment with Augustine in the ordering of providence, predestination, and election. For Bavinck, the crown of predestination is election. Christ is the object of election, but not the *causa impulsiva*, and his people are the object of election in *unio mystica* with him. According to Bavinck, Scripture also teaches that election concerns both the whole and the parts. The elect develop organically and mechanically into the edifice of the kingdom of God.⁴¹ "Election is the divine idea, the eternal blueprint of the temple that he builds in the course of the ages and of which he is the supreme builder and architect... the entire history of the world and humankind works together for the coming of the kingdom of God."⁴²

Initially, election as a "pile" that connects dogmatics and ethics has not been made clear. In turning to Zwingli and Calvin I begin to draw this relationship out.

II. Election and Ethics: Zwingli and Calvin

The main aim of this section is to argue that Bavinck perceives a close relationship between election and ethics in the theology of Zwingli and Calvin. Bavinck's primary interaction with Zwingli was as a theology student at the University of Leiden. Bavinck switched his dissertation from the *Afscheiding* to the *Ethics of Ulrich Zwingli* on account of the recommendation of one of his professors Abraham Kuenen's who suggested

³⁹ *GD2* II, 422; *RD*, II, 402. Bavinck lists Schleiermacher, Lipsius, and Ritschl as having this issue.

⁴⁰ *GD2* II, 425 [Dutch: En zoo is het niet een toevallig en willekeurig aggregaat, maar een organisch geheel, dat in de verkiezing door God is gekend en in de verlossing door Christus is behouden... En juist, omdat het object der verkiezing een volmaakt organisme is, daarom is zij zelve niet anders te denken dan als een vast en bepaald besluit Gods. In een aggregaat is het aantal deelen geheel onverschillig]; *RD* II, 404; The language of "aggregate" likewise demonstrates Bavinck's participation in philosophical discourse. This is drawn from A.W. Schlegel and is meant to be a dismissive comment (See Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 184).

⁴¹ *RD* II, 399-405.

⁴² *RD* II, 404-405.

that Zwingli's ethics had the greatest degree of harmony for the common man.⁴³ Bavinck's doctoral adviser Jan Scholten was likewise pleased with the selection because Zwingli's ethics were grounded in "complete determinism" (much like Scholten himself).⁴⁴ Important to the background of the chapter then is Scholten's *De leer der Hervormerde Kerk*, in which Scholten reimagined the doctrine as mechanical determinism in a world of cause and effect.⁴⁵ Bavinck's articulations of the role of election is than a radical departure from the mechanical determinism of his doctoral supervisor.

Perceptively, Eglinton argues for a shift from Zwingli to Calvin following his dissertation.⁴⁶ Initially, the young Bavinck judged Zwingli to be a theologian that would be useful to his own theological development. The theological insights that Bavinck begins to trace out of Zwingli in his dissertation become surpassed and supplanted by Calvin, therefore in this chapter it makes sense to pair them as significant theological dialogue partners in Bavinck's development. Below I begin with Zwingli, and then proceed to Calvin, with whom Bavinck engages with greater frequency across his life. The first portion then will present a close reading of chapter three of Bavinck's dissertation, titled "Foundation of Christian Living: Election." The second will demonstrate the relationship Bavinck discerns between the election and ethics in Calvin, from Bavinck's speeches on Calvin. The two sections culminate in recognizing an intimate relationship between dogmatics and ethics, such that election is perceived as facilitating all of ethics.

"Foundation of Christian Living: Election"

As a student pondering his eventual choice of dissertation topic, a letter from Bavinck to his friend Snouck Hurgronje said that Scholten had told him, "[The topic] is a nice subject, especially to demonstrate the connection between Zwingli's doctrine of election and his ethics."⁴⁷ This is a telling statement. It informs us that this very connection was at the forefront of Bavinck's mind as he commenced doctoral studies. Bavinck believed the doctrine of election to be the bedrock of the ethics of the Reformers. In the opening line of the third chapter Bavinck writes, "Despite all the differences and struggles, all the Reformers, Luther, as well as

⁴³ *BCB*, 96-98; "Dakboekjes" (1878), Box 346, Folder 65, entry December 13 [Dutch: Terwijl ik ook door hem tot de besteming gebracht werd om een dissertatie te schrijven over de "Afscheiding"].

⁴⁴ *BCB*, 97.

⁴⁵ See also Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 13-18.

⁴⁶ *BCB*, 101.

⁴⁷ *BCB*, 97; it may also be noted that Bavinck's account of Zwingli's ethics is architectural in nature exploring several doctrines (sin, anthropology, election, faith, sanctification, the law and imitation of Christ).

Zwingli and Calvin, agreed that the foundations for religious and moral life lay in the eternal election of God.⁴⁸ In his early reading of the development of Reformed theology, the doctrine of election was critical to the ethical reform of the 16th century. What was this doctrine for Zwingli?

Zwingli most fully articulates his doctrine of predestination in conjunction with providence in a series of sermons published as *de Providentia Dei* (1530).⁴⁹ According to Bavinck, in *de Providentia Dei*, Zwingli develops his doctrine of predestination from the concept of God as the highest being, but it does not remain philosophical. Providence must necessarily exist because a supreme being would carry out his supreme good. For Zwingli, this supreme good is predestination. He writes, “Predestination is itself the end of providence.”⁵⁰ In this manner, predestination via providence is intimately connected to all of life. Through predestination Zwingli guides the discussion back to the practical significance of the doctrine for life.⁵¹

In the young Bavinck’s view, Zwingli’s articulation of predestination borders on determinism, which he thought threatened to obscure its ethical value.⁵² Bavinck writes, “[Zwingli’s] God concept sometimes seems to be robbed of its ethical character; the distinction between the moral and the physical world is not always preserved, and the different ways that God works in the one and the other is obscured.”⁵³ Unlike the other Reformers, Zwingli does not uphold secondary causes. For Zwingli, God is active; humans are passive. God is the primary and only cause; humanity is his “organ and instrument” but remains passive. Despite this, he noted that Zwingli was hesitant to attribute God as the cause of sin, for God “is above the law, and is free of all affects and free of all sin.”⁵⁴ While faith will be treated in the next

⁴⁸ *EUZ*, 34 [Dutch: Ondanks alle verschil en strijd, stemden alle Hervormers, Luther zoowel als Zwingli en Calvijn, daarin overeen, dat zij voor het godsdienstig en zedelijk leven den grond slag legden in de eeuwige Verkiezing Gods].

⁴⁹ Ulrich Zwingli, *Huldreich Zwingli’s Werke* VIII vols., ed. Johannes Schulthess and Melchior Schuler (Zürich: F. Schulthess, 1828-1842); Zwingli, *On Providence and other essays*, ed. Samuel M. Jackson and William John Hink (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1983).

⁵⁰ *Zwingli’s Werke*, III, 283 [Latin: Praedestinatio imo est ipsa providentia].

⁵¹ *EUZ*, 34; *Zwingli’s Werke*, IV, 140-141; Zwingli, *On Providence*, 229.

⁵² Bavinck is not alone in this assessment. See, for example, Fergusson, *The Providence of God*, 81-84.

⁵³ *EUZ*, 36 [Dutch: Het Gods begrip schijnt soms van zijn ethischen inhoud beroofd; het onderscheid der zedelijke en der physische wereld niet altijd gehandhaafd, en het verschil in de wijze waarop God in gene en in deze werkt wel eens uit het oog verloren te worden].

⁵⁴ *EUZ*, 36 [Dutch: Want God staat boven de wet, en is van alle affecten en alle zonde vrij].

chapter it is notable that Bavinck's own articulation of divine activity moves creatures from passive to active, in other words humans do not remain passive but experience freedom in activity.

According to Bavinck, Zwingli's understanding of both providence and predestination were influenced by Stoicism. Bavinck's later dialogue partner Calvin deemed Zwingli's articulation "immoderate" and "paradoxical." In the eyes of Bavinck, by 1531, Zwingli himself had become unhappy with his own formulation.⁵⁵ However, Zwingli could not rid himself of it because of the indispensable role providence played in his doctrine of faith. Faith is central in the confession of God's eternal election and the comfort found therein. Faith is central because it is God's gracious will, which bestows such faith. However, faith when viewed from the standpoint of ethics was problematic because he understood humans to be entirely passive. This issue, according to Bavinck, Zwingli never addresses head on, but is scattered throughout his writings.

Bavinck identifies three objections to Zwingli's doctrine of election that Zwingli attempted to address: (1) that it involves a loss of human agency, (2) that this lack of agency leads to ethical negligence, and (3) that it makes God the author of sin. Zwingli addresses the first objection by appealing to the power of the Spirit. The Spirit does not impede ethical activity, but rather brings greater ethical activity and a pursuit of the good. In his commentary on Matthew, Zwingli writes, "The Spirit of God is perpetually at work in the faithful, like a millstone that is on a mountain, which is pushed down by the power of the wind. Let us not forget, that we are an instrument of divine operation, we are employed to the degree that God wills."⁵⁶ According to Zwingli man's ethical activity, empowered by the Spirit, is then not that of Sisyphus perpetually pushing a boulder up hill, but rather it is like a boulder perpetually rolling down the hill. Rather than impeding human agency, election empowers it for humanity is driven by the Spirit to perform the work of God.

However, if humans are driven by the Spirit, their ethical inactivity appears to remain in the hands of God. The second objection, then, is that divine providence appears to become an excuse for ethical slothfulness. To this objection, Bavinck notes, Zwingli is "less cordial." Zwingli argues that the one who

⁵⁵ *EUZ*, 37-38.

⁵⁶ *Zwingli's Werke*, VI, 215 [Latin: Spiritus Dei perpetuo operatur in piis, similis molae in monte positae quae venti impulsu movetur. Meminerimus nos esse instrumenta divinae operationis, quibus Deus ad haec utitur quae vult effecta].

thinks and acts according to this thought has no faith or knowledge of God.⁵⁷ Zwingli writes, “For those who have the knowledge of God know that life must be ordered according to God’s will, and those who have faith know that they are elect. And the elect, knowing this, cannot help seeing that they must refrain from whatever the law forbids.”⁵⁸ Zwingli pushes back on the objection of ethical negligence by appealing to the doctrine of election. The believer who in faith believes they are among the elect, will order their life according to the will of God. By ordering their life according to any other will, reflected in ethical negligence, they reveal themselves not to be among the elect. Therefore, election is the foundation for an ethical life, as it compels the believer toward, instead of away from, ethics.

The third objection then arises: if the elect perform the will of God, does it not remain that God is to blame for the disobedience of the reprobate? Here, Bavinck perceives Zwingli as appealing to God as the punisher of sin and the one who atones for sin, as a response against this line of thinking. For Zwingli, God cannot be both the author of sin, its atoner, and its punisher.⁵⁹ He writes of Zwingli’s position:

God does not destroy, but increases our vigour and as he works through us we strive to do as is pleasing to him. Election is the foundation of all moral life, without which it is only appearance and cannot truly exist. . . . Just as election is the foundation, so it is believed to be the source of the new life in Christ. That belief is no mere opinion, but an inner experience, an unwavering trust in God and in him alone, in contrast with whatever is creaturely; the full satisfaction and perfect restoration of man. It is not hostile to good works, it is itself the highest work, and contains all work in itself; it is a principle which, with full activity and spontaneity, seeks to govern the whole man, and must reveal itself in a holy life. And that life, is what it is all about in the end.⁶⁰

For Zwingli, election is the source of the ethical life. Bavinck then argues that Zwingli does not fear that the confession of election will harm the ethical life. Rather it guarantees and strengthens it by vivifying it.⁶¹ Stated simply, there is no denying that Bavinck perceived a direct line between election and ethics in the thought of Zwingli. Yet, Zwingli’s unwillingness to adopt secondary causes — and therefore humans remained passive — naturally led to him looking to another Reformer, Calvin.

⁵⁷ *EUZ*, 40 [Dutch: minder vriendelijk].

⁵⁸ *Zwingli’s Werke*, IV, 140-141 [Latin: Qui enim Dei cognitionem habent, sciunt vitam esse componendam ad nutum Dei; qui vero fidem, sciunt se esse electos. Electi autem qui hoc sciunt non possunt non videre, quaecunque lex vetat ab eis abstinendum esse]; Zwingli, *On Providence*, 229.

⁵⁹ *EUZ*, 41.

⁶⁰ *EUZ*, 174.

⁶¹ *EUZ*, 174.

After his early dissertation work, Bavinck's interest in Zwingli seems to drop off and is replaced by Calvin. Calvin becomes in the life and writing of Bavinck one of his primary interlocutors and theological guides. Bolt argued that Calvin rather than Zwingli had a greater influence on Bavinck's ethical thoughts.⁶² Also of relevance is how closely Veenhof ties Bavinck's conception of theology and ethics to that of John Calvin.⁶³ Joustra evaluated this claim of Bolt, in light of the discovery of *Reformed Ethics*, and argued in essence that Calvin served as the main source of the various components of Bavinck's ethical imitation of Christ theme.⁶⁴ Indeed, just as Joustra connects Bavinck's imitation ideal to Calvin and Calvin's *Little Book*, in an undated archival manuscript Bavinck identifies that section of the *Institutes* as a distillation of Calvin's ethics.⁶⁵

From 1908-1909 Bavinck delivered a series of speeches on the life, legacy, and theology of Calvin in honour of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth. In a manner suiting Bavinck's own irenic, international, and cosmopolitan spirit, this lecture was delivered on the global stage including Detroit, Chicago, New York, and London.⁶⁶ In the "Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*," Bavinck lays out what he perceives to be the key themes in Calvin's theology. The essay has strong continuity with Bavinck's speech at the 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, which was published subsequently as a short book

⁶² Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 30.

⁶³ Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie*, 461. He suggests Bavinck draws this from the Reformed tradition namely Calvin, with Scripture possessing religious-ethical content; Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010). Canlis argument for Calvin's relation to mystical theology via the "ascent of the soul" has some consonance with my own project.

⁶⁴ Joustra, "Following the Way of Jesus," 61.

⁶⁵ "Ethiek" (no date), Box 346, Folder 197. The section title is "Schets van de Gereformeerde Ethiek" (Sketch of Reformed Ethics) [Dutch: Van. De Geref. Ethiek: de Hervormers Luther (Luthardt), Zwingli (Bavinck), Calvin (Lobstein) vooral Instit. III cap. 6-10].

⁶⁶ See Parker, "Herman Bavinck's 'The Leading Ideas of Calvin's *Institutes*,'" *The Confessional Presbyterian* 17 (2021): 23-32.

titled *Johannes Calvijn*.⁶⁷ “The Leading Ideas of Calvin’s *Institutes*” is distinct in its own right and has not previously been examined in Bavinck studies.⁶⁸

Bavinck argues that “the core and essence” of the *Institutes* is the “grace of God in Christ,” which is the very essence of Christianity.⁶⁹ This theme intersects with certainty as he traces the grace of God in Christ to certainty in salvation, “religious-ethical” certainty, and certainty of the heart through the testimony of the Spirit.⁷⁰ Bavinck perceives him as intimately connecting religion and morality, doctrine and life, faith and works. There is also concentrated focus on Calvin’s conception of the divine will. This too flows from the grace of God in Christ. Here, he turns his attention to Calvin’s articulation of election. Election and the ethical life are not opposed to one another. Election, the grace of the gospel, does not lead to spiritual malaise but rather “it awakes self-consciousness” and spurs the heart and the moral life to attain its greatest value “in [the] light of eternity.”⁷¹ Thus in Calvin’s *Institutes*, Bavinck discerns that there is harmony in election and ethics.

This was not the only time that Bavinck spoke about Calvin’s ethics. In his speech “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations,” he writes of the beauty of Calvin’s ethics, the religious-ethical influence of the Reformation, and he argues that the

⁶⁷ Herman Bavinck, *Johannes Calvijn: A lecture on the 400th anniversary of his birth: 10 Juli 1509-1909* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1909).

⁶⁸ It is also intriguing to note the existence of a few notebook pages in the Herman Bavinck archive on Ernst Troeltsch’s 1907 essay titled “Prädestination.” It appears that Bavinck only took notes on part I of this essay. Although undated his notes would have to have been written after July 1907. This is when the first of the two Troeltsch essays on predestination were published. These notes are among his material that was utilized for his 1908-1909 speeches in America on Christianity and Calvinism. Interestingly, in this essay Troeltsch aims to bring predestination directly into conversation with practical life. Bavinck’s interest in the speech could be nothing other than keeping up with the field of theology. Nonetheless, it is interesting that he took notes on this essay, especially with Troeltsch contention that it is confidence in election that animates ethical activity (see Notebook on “*Praedestinatie I Troeltsch*” (n.d.) box 346, folder 371; see also Ernst Troeltsch, “Prädestination,” *Die Christliche Welt. Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Gebildete aller Stände* 30 (July 1907): 712-716; Troeltsch, “Prädestination,” *Die Christliche Welt. Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Gebildete aller Stände* 31 (August 1907): 736-741.

⁶⁹ Parker, “Herman Bavinck’s ‘The Leading Ideas of Calvin’s *Institutes*’,” 29.

⁷⁰ Parker, “Herman Bavinck’s ‘The Leading Ideas of Calvin’s *Institutes*’,” 28.

⁷¹ Parker, “Herman Bavinck’s ‘The Leading Ideas of Calvin’s *Institutes*’,” 31

Reformation introduced an entirely new religious-ethical principle.⁷² Bavinck writes, “The individual becomes a partaker of salvation, not by sacrament and priest and Church, but by personal faith. Religion is thereby removed from the circumference to the *centrum*, the heart of man, and becomes personal and individual.”⁷³ This brought about a change in the relationship between religion and ethics. In a brief section in his *Reformed Ethics*, Bavinck writes, “For Calvin, good works are the fruits of faith and thus of election. Faith, which itself flows from election and regenerates us, is the root of all good works... A tree is known by its fruit, and the goal of election is holiness of life.”⁷⁴ Election is generative to ethics. For Protestants, the “ethical life is not an aggregate of good works, which each by themselves deserve a stipulated reward; but one organic whole, growing from one principle and developing itself according to one law.”⁷⁵ The impact of this is felt, according to Bavinck, most powerfully among “Calvinistic nations.”⁷⁶ What was it about Calvinism that brought about such a great reformation in ethics? Bavinck put it this way:

Calvinism gave a peculiar character to the religious life. ... The difference is that in the religious life, as it reveals itself in Reformed circles, as well as in doctrine, the sovereignty of God stands foremost. Not the love of the Father, as in many modern circles; not the person of Christ, as among the Moravians; not the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, as among the Anabaptists and Friends; but the sovereignty of God, in the entire work of salvation and over the whole expanse of the religious life, is here the starting point and ruling idea. That sovereignty is the divine in the divinity, and the unity, in the several operations of the three persons of the adorable Trinity.⁷⁷

In this, he appeals to Calvinist’s theological vision of who God is as sovereign. Accordingly, as those “Elected by God, [the Calvinist] recognizes in himself and in all creatures nothing but instruments in the

⁷² “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation”, 1-19, 6; see also Bavinck, “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations,” in *Proceedings of the Fifth General Council, Toronto 1892* (London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1892), 48-55. The latter is a truncated account of Bavinck’s speech. This full source is available in the Herman Bavinck Archive and remained hitherto unexplored in scholarship on Bavinck; see also *BCB*, 183-187.

⁷³ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 7.

⁷⁴ *GE*, 251; *RE I*, 369.

⁷⁵ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 8. Emphasis original.

⁷⁶ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 14.

⁷⁷ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 15. Emphasis original; Bavinck’s identification of “the sovereignty of God” as the foremost feature of Calvin’s *Institutes* did meet some resistance from one of his former students, who suggested that it did not allow “the full light to fall on the blessed relationship between Father and child” (see Polman, *De Praedestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn*, 386).

Divine hand.”⁷⁸ This perspective according to Bavinck wrought about a great ethical change because it led not to just the reformation of the individual, but all spheres.⁷⁹ Therefore, the Calvinist views herself as having a divine vocation and seeks instruction from Scripture. As Bavinck formulates it:

For the Word of God is not only the fountain of the truth of salvation, but also the norm of the whole life; not only glad tidings of salvation for the soul, but also for the body and for the entire world. The Reformed believer continues therefore “*ad extra*” that reformation, began with himself and in his own heart. The conversion of his soul is not aim and end, but the beginning and starting point of his new life.⁸⁰

Bavinck views the ethical life of the “Calvinist” believer as rooted in the sovereign work of the Triune God. This work transforms man *ad intra*, resulting in a faith that extends *ad extra* to the world. This “theological vantage point” gives the Calvinist a particular perspective of God, the world, and humanity. According to Calvin, the ethical life attains its widest and highest sense under the theological vision of humans as instruments of the divine.

Election involves an ethical calling. The connection that Bavinck envisions between election and ethics in Calvin is perhaps clearest in his work “Calvin and Common Grace.”⁸¹ There, Bavinck understands in Calvin that election is revealed in faith. Faith is not momentary. Rather, it is in faith that God communicates himself to the individual throughout their entire life. Therefore, the believer is compelled to bring all things into relation with God. In particular, believers strive to bring their life into conformity with the divine will.⁸²

As Bavinck put it in “The Future of Calvinism”:

Calvinism has always promoted a vigorous moral life. History has shown that the confession of God's sovereignty and of the absolute dependence of the creature is not only not harmful, but greatly conducive to morality. The truth is that predestination includes also the predestination of means, and election always presupposes an end at which it aims. Election involves a destiny, a life-work, a moral calling. Hence moral life among Calvinists has always been marked by activity and

⁷⁸ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 15-16.

⁷⁹ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 15.

⁸⁰ “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation,” 16-17.

⁸¹ Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace,” trans. Geerhardus Vos, *The Princeton Theological Review* 7 (1909): 437-465.

⁸² Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace,” 461-462.

energy, by a restless striving to bring everything under the discipline of the law of God, and by so doing to make it subservient to His glory.⁸³

Bavinck's vision of Calvinism was one that sought to bring all of life into accordance with the divine will of God. This divine will is rooted in election and this election was not infertile but ethically fruitful. Just as in Zwingli, there is a direct line to ethics in the doctrine of election. The presence of this teaching in Zwingli and Calvin allows us to see both that the Reformed tradition perceived a connection between election and ethics, and that Bavinck perceived a close connection between the two.⁸⁴ Moreover, that election in Calvin evoked an ethical calling that pervaded all of life. We turn now to consider the connection between election and ethics in Bavinck's 1918 speech on predestination.

III. Bavinck's "Praedestinatie" (1918)

On Wednesday, February 20th, 1918 Herman Bavinck—by this time 63 years old—delivered a speech on the doctrine of predestination.⁸⁵ It is unknown exactly where Bavinck delivered the speech. It was common for Bavinck to give addresses during this time to the N.C.S.V. (*Nederlandsche Christen Studenten Vereeniging*, the "Dutch Christian Student Association"), the Anti-Revolutionary Party, or various ecclesial audiences.⁸⁶ Nonetheless the broader context provides some background to the speech. On Feb. 20th, 1918, a single headline appears on nearly every newspaper: "de oorlog" ("the war"). The First World War, which had begun in 1914, and would not end until November of 1918, preoccupied the Dutch nation. The optimism of the previous century had come to a halt, and questions around the origin of evil became highly pertinent. The origin of evil takes centre stage in the address, whereas in Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* it is only peripheral.⁸⁷ Four years earlier, in a speech at the outset of the war years, Bavinck admitted, "We are in a great embarrassment with this war, and do not know how to place it in our rational, moral, Christian

⁸³ Bavinck, "The Future of Calvinism," trans. by Geerhardus Vos, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 5 (1894):1-24, 5.

⁸⁴ See also *GE*, 204; *RE I*, 293. This is not to suggest that Zwingli and Calvin were monolithic figures. Zwingli and Calvin's articulations remain distinct on account of primary and secondary causes. Humans remained passive for Zwingli, but in Calvin he thought they were able to reach activity.

⁸⁵ See Appendix A — 1918 Speech on Predestination.

⁸⁶ The NSCV Archive did not produce any record of the address. The Herman Bavinck archive casts doubt on it being the N.S.C.V., namely because the speeches that were given at the N.S.C.V. have affixed at the top those four letters. This is absent from "*Praedestinatie*."

⁸⁷ *RD II*, 241-245.

worldview.”⁸⁸ Reflecting on war, evil, and suffering in this address, Bavinck attempted to attend to this “great embarrassment.” The speech has five sections: (1) The problem of unity and diversity, (2) the problem of evil, (3) the hope of immortality, (4) correcting caricatures, and (5) predestination as a source of certainty and comfort.

Bavinck begins his lecture by noting one of the most significant problems facing mankind at the turn of the 20th century, the issue of unity and diversity, an issue that could also be presented as the universal and the particular or, the one and the many. He perceives this question as being wrapped up with fundamental questions of spirit and matter, being and becoming, the nature of philosophy as a science (*globus intellectualis*) and the struggle between mechanical and organic worldviews. These problems signal Bavinck’s participation in the 19th and 20th century philosophical discourse.

From the side of unity, Bavinck surveys a number of philosophers.⁸⁹ In the wake of Kant, Bavinck perceives the emergence of another group of philosophers whose work proceeded not from unity, but from the idea of diversity. For these philosophers, reality is composed of, he writes, “independent beings absolutely distinct from each other.”⁹⁰ Everything is mechanical, aggregate, separated, undepicted diversity. In other words, not the single organic substance of Spinoza, but the monism of Leibniz.

Bavinck perceives that proceeding from absolute unity or superlative diversity ultimately does not resolve the problem of the one and the many. The aggregate diversity lacks unity; the faux unity is in truth uniformity. Therefore, he presents a solution, namely the unity-in-diversity of the divine idea, executed by the divine will. As Bavinck put it, “Christianity provides the solution in the wisdom and will of God: unity

⁸⁸ Bavinck, *Het probleem van den oorlog* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1914), 7 [Dutch: Wij zitten met dezen oorlog in groote verlegenheid, en weten hem geene plaats te geven in onze redelijke, zedelijke, Christelijke wereldbeschouwing]. The speech has been partially translated into English (see Bavinck, “The Problem of War,” trans. Stephen Voorwinde *Banner of Truth* (July-Aug 1977):46-53.). In the speech, Bavinck looks at what attitude Christian ethics should take towards war.

⁸⁹ He mostly provides one sentence summations of their work pulled from Kantian philosopher Rudolf Eisler’s work. Bavinck is particularly utilizing Eisler’s section on “Eenhiet” (see Rudolf Eisler, *Wörterbuch Der Philosophischen Begriffe* 2 vols., 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin, E. S. Mittler und sohn, 1899). This should not be seen as a wholesale suggestion that Bavinck did not read philosophical primary sources. His engagement with Hegel and Schopenhauer later in the speech reflects an intimate knowledge of their systems, which would be difficult to reproduce with merely second-hand knowledge (see also “Naturphilosophie” (1915-1916), Box 346, Folder 395.

⁹⁰ “*Praedestinatie*,” 4; see Appendix A, ccx.

and multiplicity to the thinking, system; if the world is presently a system of thought, its unity and diversity are given in her; called into being through God's will, his holy moral will."⁹¹ Bavinck perceives this true unity-in-diversity as only being present in Christianity, in the wisdom and will of God. Thus, just as the divine thought is unity-in-diversity, the reality of the world is too. This is a classical Bavinckian move: unity-in-diversity *ad intra* leads to unity-in-diversity *ad extra*.⁹² Moreover, we might see its consonance with Calvin's articulations of the divine will's relation to ethics, as detailed above.

In the second section, Bavinck turns to the origin of evil. If in essence, the world is called into existence through God's will according to God's thought, what does one do with the problem of evil? By the end of the nineteenth century, confidence was waning in the doctrine of providence, and approaches to the question "tended to stress our lack of knowledge" and appealed to a future hope. The traumas of the First World War destroyed the remaining confidence.⁹³ One may see the effect of this trauma in Bavinck's more direct approach to the origin of evil in relation to God's providence in this speech. His approach to the question of predestination thus becomes distinctly ethical. Surveying the various philosophies and their solutions to the issue of evil, he discerns them as all proposing an ethical distinction in the "act of the will."⁹⁴ This he perceives as nothing other than a return to the age-old discussion of Augustine and Pelagius. Bavinck's concern was that should humans be viewed as disparate individuals *à la* Pelagianism, we will fail to explain the pervasiveness of sin, leading in turn to a split between the ethical and the psychological. Moreover, he claims that Pelagianism is contrary not just to every "pious confession," but all human experience.⁹⁵ Taking the side of Augustine, he judged mankind to be a cohesive whole. He writes:

Christianity here gives reconciliation and resolution, in the wisdom of God's council. Such a terrible phenomenon as sin, which enters into all things, etc., cannot be extracted from God's council. Then the world would be beyond his control. Then randomness, chance everywhere, the end and purpose of the world uncertain. All people would be independent, autonomous, acting in arbitrariness. Atomism, pluralism, anarchy.⁹⁶

⁹¹ "Praedestinatie," 4; see Appendix A, ccx.

⁹² Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 68, 81.

⁹³ Fergusson, *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach*, 208-210.

⁹⁴ "Praedestinatie," 6; see Appendix A ccxii.

⁹⁵ "Praedestinatie," 6; see Appendix A, ccxii.

⁹⁶ "Praedestinatie," 6; see Appendix A, ccxii.

In his view, then, Christianity ultimately provides the greatest harmony to the world. Thus, we find Bavinck conceiving of the world as a unity-in-diversity, which reflects the unity-in-diversity of the Trinity. This unity-in-diversity is rooted in the council of God. It ought to be recalled that it was ultimately this pursuit of harmony that led him to Ulrich Zwingli, and harmony he ultimately found in Calvin's theology. Now his argument progresses one step further.

In the third section of the speech, Bavinck argues that there is not only unity-in-diversity in this life, but also in the afterlife. Therefore, Bavinck pulls this thread of unity-in-diversity through to the end-times. In other words, just as the divine life is unity-in-diversity, and this life is revealed in the unities-in-diversity of creation, so too in the after-life there is unity-in-diversity. He writes, "We must hereafter accept that there is a difference of fate in the lottery of existence in the future, in much greater diversity than the terms heaven and hell indicate, because there are endless degrees in heaven and hell, in reward and punishment. Diversity remains."⁹⁷

In addition, Bavinck perceives the idea of immortality as a witness to its reality in the next. He writes, "Immortality stands fixed, it is an element of natural religion; humanity is destined for eternity."⁹⁸ This view, Bavinck thought, was universally accepted in practice, not in theory. This is true also for the distinction between good and evil. The longing for immortality and the witness of unity-in diversity stands as a witness beckoning the human race towards its destiny. The various experiences of our life and the disparity of the future life have the council of God as their foundation—not just for man, but for the entire world. All of life and the life to come is rooted in the divine council. Bavinck discusses the divine council here in an innovative way which will be resumed in the later section on development.

In the fourth section, Bavinck aims to communicate a vision of the doctrine of election that alleviates tensions with the freedom of man. He first combats the charge of arbitrariness and expresses that all things are systematically arranged in the divine idea. This divine idea is then executed by the divine will. At this point Bavinck necessarily re-engages the problem of evil and sin. He identifies all things with the council and will of God, while maintaining that God is not the author of evil. In this way, Bavinck should be associated with the classical Augustinian tradition.

⁹⁷ "Praedestinatie," 7; see Appendix A, ccxii.

⁹⁸ "Praedestinatie," 7; see Appendix A, ccxii.

He also resumes the discussion of the freedom of man against this backdrop. There, in his notes, Bavinck cites Scottish theologian William Hastie, drawing on Hastie's view that the liberty of indifference is rejected by all Reformed theologians. The Reformed, he thought, understood the liberty of the will as the ability "to act in accordance with its own determinations and independently of external compulsion or co-action; and their view has been corroborated by the whole tendency of modern science." This view, Hastie also posited, was "consistent with divine foreordination."⁹⁹ Thus, following Hastie and the Reformers, Bavinck takes a positive conception of freedom—one that roots the evil of sin with man.

In the final section of the speech, Bavinck's notes take on an outline form with six points.¹⁰⁰ These are each intimately connected to faith and may be summarized as dealing with the *certainty* and *comfort* of faith. The *certainty* of faith is that prior to all thinking, willing, and doing, Bavinck believes that in our self-consciousness, we possess certainty of ourselves, the world, and God.¹⁰¹ On account of the *certainty* of faith we trust God, even in turbulent times. Through faith, rooted in election, we attempt to align all our thinking, feeling, willing, and doing in accordance with the will of God. The *certainty* of faith introduces a harmony into world- and lifeview. Christ's victory over sin and death provides the greatest certainty of the harmony of the world. This faith, however, is not bare. It is an open hand that receives and in turn acts. It finds its eternal security in the action of God and drives forward in new life toward God and neighbour.¹⁰²

Through the person and work of Christ believers may partake in the "settlement of God's kingdom" over Satan and the world, and participate in his will such that all thinking and doing is in line with God's governance of the world. Bavinck writes, "through knowing, we shall do bold deeds. The confession of *praedestinatie* fosters a moral, active life." This active life is expanded in Bavinck's doctrine of sanctification, in the imitation of Christ, and the indwelling of the Spirit. Importantly, Bavinck envisions that knowledge results in action — I frame this in the thesis as *theological* thinking and loving.

⁹⁹ William Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 256-257.

¹⁰⁰ "Praedestinatie," 11-12; see Appendix A, xi-xii.

¹⁰¹ The certainty of faith is rooted in external and internal revelation. It is rooted in the correspondence between Word and Spirit. Bavinck seems to be pulling from his book (see, Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, trans. Harry der Nederlanden (St. Catharines: Paideia Press, 1980), 24-26); "Praedestinatie," 11; see Appendix A, xi.

¹⁰² See Bavinck's sermon "The World Conquering Power of Faith," in *Herman Bavinck Preaching and Preachers*, trans. and ed. James Eglinton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), 67-84.

Finally, election also provides *comfort* in times of uncertainty. Here, Bavinck returns to the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1: “What is your only comfort in life and death?” There is a conscious dependence, then, on the providence of God. For all the activities of the world are as Bavinck writes, the, “ongoing, unfolding, development of God’s glory in his creatures, from lower to higher, through nature, ethics. *Electie* the crown!” The end to which the predestined are being drawn is the crown of election. The elect participate as free active ethical agents, not agents earning their salvation, but as children doing the will of their Father. As such, election serves as a “pile” connecting dogmatics and ethics.

The final line of the speech is: “From, through, and to God are all things. God is all in all.”¹⁰³ A clear allusion to Romans 11:36. This motif summarises Bavinck’s theological program and indeed can be pictured across this chapter: all things are from (predestination), through (providence), and to (election). This Romans 11:36 motif will be explored in depth in the sixth chapter. Thus, the speech concludes drawing the hearer definitively towards the sovereignty of God and the pre-eminence of election in relation to ethics.

Considering that Bavinck gave this speech towards the end of his life, a brief excursion may be taken to consider what is “new” about its handling of election. First, in this speech, Bavinck brings the divine council into direct conversation with modern philosophy—an innovative development in his approach to election. He writes, “Reason - Will the foundation and roots of all things (Hegel and Schopenhauer) combined. And then as a council: idea and will of a wise, holy, and righteous God, who will justify himself, on whom we can rely.”¹⁰⁴ Bavinck perceived Hegel and Schopenhauer as philosophically useful to his articulation.¹⁰⁵ He does not appropriate their two distinct systems, but rather sees them both as gesturing towards a divine council, which is ultimately perfected in the system of Christianity. Hegel largely

¹⁰³ “*Praedestinatie*,” 11-12; see Appendix A, ccxv-ccxvi.

¹⁰⁴ “*Praedestinatie*,” 8; see Appendix A, ccxiii.

¹⁰⁵ Bavinck has been more closely linked with Schelling than Hegel (see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 28-31). This makes Hegel’s appearance here interesting. Hegel may be utilized in lieu of Schelling here Bavinck because Hegel has surpassed Schelling historically (see Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 11. “He [Hegel] was a tortoise among hares; and when all the hares had squandered or consumed their energies, he alone trudged, slowly but surely, over the finish line. Like all victors, he then rewrote history from his point of view, as the tale of his own triumph.”

shaped the philosophical discourse at the beginning of the 20th century, and Schopenhauer the end of the 19th.¹⁰⁶

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of the World*, Hegel posits that the fundamental argument of his philosophy is that reason governs the world.¹⁰⁷ It is through the world that Hegel's Absolute realizes itself. According to Bavinck, Hegel's reason is an estranged version of the theological concept of providence.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Hegel sees reason as governing the world according to the divine plan.¹⁰⁹ His historicism requires a teleological explanation to all things. Thus, history becomes the execution of the divine plan. And it is this aspect of Hegel's historicism that Bavinck co-opted—although Bavinck's own conception of the reason that governs the world was vastly different. For example, in his understanding of Hegel's articulation God *becomes* the world.¹¹⁰ For Bavinck, the execution of the divine council does not end in the world, but in the world to come. Bavinck's God is personal and independent of the world. His God is being not becoming.¹¹¹ Earlier in the speech Bavinck references Hegel's reason, writing that “*Vernunft* is nothing, becoming all things.”¹¹² According to Bavinck, Hegel's God is realized in the world. This is not so for Bavinck, for whom the divine idea of God (rather than God himself) is realized in the world.¹¹³ He co-opts Hegel's divine reason only so far as this reason steers all of reality toward the ends which God has determined.

¹⁰⁶ Beiser, *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy: 1860-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4, 13. “In Germany in the late 19th century, it was more than a mood. Pessimism had now become a philosophy, a whole worldview.” Beiser pins the prevalence of this worldview primarily on one individual Arthur Schopenhauer, who he suggests “was the most famous and influential philosopher in Germany from 1860 until the First World War.”

¹⁰⁷ Georg Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955), 28; Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of the World History: Introduction*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 27; see Beiser, *Hegel* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 68, 69.

¹⁰⁸ “*Praedestinatie*,” 8; see Appendix A, ccxiii.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, 77/67; Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of the World History*, 67. See Beiser, *Hegel*, 270-271.

¹¹⁰ *POR*, 11, 11n25.

¹¹¹ See also Eglinton, “To be or to become – That is the Question: Locating the Actualist in Bavinck's Ontology,” in *The Kuyper Centre Review: Volume 2- Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 105-125.

¹¹² “*Praedestinatie*,” 3; Appendix A, ccix.

¹¹³ *RD I*, 244-245.

In *Über den Willen in der Natur*, Schopenhauer argues that “the will is the ultimate cause of all organic phenomena in nature.”¹¹⁴ For Schopenhauer this will is not transcendent, but immanent: there is one monadic will within all things. However, in his view, Schopenhauer rejected both God and teleology, such that there was nothing divine behind the world and our existence.¹¹⁵ While Schopenhauer denied the reality of the supernatural in Christian doctrine, he wholeheartedly affirmed the reality of evil and suffering.¹¹⁶ This presented Schopenhauer with a problem: why continue to exist in a world abounding in suffering, but without prospect of divine redemption? Schopenhauer’s pessimism argued that suffering was the result of an unquenchable and relentless cosmic will. In Schopenhauer’s concept of the cosmic will, Bavinck discerns a counterpart version of Reformed conceptions of the divine will. In Hegel’s reason and Schopenhauer’s cosmic will, Bavinck gestures towards a fully orbed conception of the divine council within philosophy. This is not to say, of course, that Bavinck was Hegelian or a student of Schopenhauer. In his use of Hegel and Schopenhauer, rather, Bavinck pointed to two of the most significant philosophers of the previous century as gesturing towards the divine council and decree, which he saw as subversively fulfilled in Reformed theology.¹¹⁷

The second portion of the speech that may be considered “new” is Bavinck’s approach to predestination through ethics. In the wake of the terrors of the First World War that shaped the second decade of the 20th century, reflections on providence, election, and predestination required a shift from the more familiar methodological approach found in the *Reformed Dogmatics*. In this speech, Bavinck broaches the question through ethics. This ethical approach attempts to alleviate concerns of the problem of evil while seeking to retain both the freedom of man and the providence of God. For Bavinck, election is thus decidedly about God’s action, predestined in eternity and realized in time. This dogmatic locus draws our attention unreservedly toward God as the agent in salvation and towards an understanding of God as the primary agent in the ordering of history. For Bavinck, God elects to redeem and redemption affects a change. God’s election does not render the human a completely *passive* subject, but rather election fashions the human to be an *active* agent. This connection is facilitated by faith and the operation of the Spirit. Thus,

¹¹⁴ Beiser, *After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 80.

¹¹⁵ Beiser, *Weltschmerz*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Beiser, *Weltschmerz*, 7.

¹¹⁷ “*Praedestinatie*,” 8; see Appendix A, ccxiii.

in election God's glory is unfurled in the creature as they participate in the unfolding development of God's divine idea through God's will, his holy and moral will.

In this speech, Bavinck connects dogmatics and ethics through the doctrine of election. Over the course of Bavinck's intellectual development, he regularly points towards this rapport. In his dissertation in 1880, Bavinck identifies the doctrine of election as the foundation of Reformed ethics. There he writes, "Despite all the differences and struggles, all the Reformers, Luther, as well as Zwingli and Calvin, agreed that the foundations for religious and moral life lay in the eternal election of God."¹¹⁸ In this 1918 speech, Bavinck writes, "The council of God is the foundation, support, source of morality, and of the moral nature of man."¹¹⁹ Strikingly, these two statements were made nearly 40 years apart, and yet remain remarkably consistent.¹²⁰ Bavinck is explicit that the foundation for all ethical activity by humans is the divine council, which serves as its foundation because election is the root of faith.¹²¹ And faith is the source of the new life of the Christian. The unity of dogmatics and ethics is "born in faith" in the conceptual framework of Bavinck's organicism. Election draws our eyes to God as the active agent in salvation, but this agency through faith does not make believer's passive participants. Rather, it spurs us on towards ethical activity and this idea will be taken up in the chapters that follow.

Conclusion

As this chapter draws to a close, it is important to note a few brief points regarding Bavinck's handling of election in *Reformed Ethics*.¹²² After an opening discussion in distinguishing the "twin disciplines" of dogmatics and ethics, the very first doctrine Bavinck's *Ethics* introduces is election.¹²³ There, Bavinck does indeed connect election to the spiritual and ethical life of the Christian. As he affirmed, "The first objective

¹¹⁸ EUZ, 34 [Dutch: Ondanks alle verschil en strijd, stemden alle Hervormers, Luther zoowel als Zwingli en Calvin, daarin overeen, dat zij voor het godsdienstig en zedelijk leven den grond slag legden in de eeuwige Verkiezing Gods]; see also EUZ, 173-74.

¹¹⁹ "Praedestinatie," 9-10; see Appendix A, ccxiii-ccxiv.

¹²⁰ In his *Gereformeerde Ethiek* Bavinck gestures toward the importance of predestination/election in relation to ethics. Election appears particularly in conjunction with assurance. See GE, 179-180.

¹²¹ GICR, 97-98.

¹²² GE, 215; RE I, 310. Oddly this reference to election is missing in the English edition.

¹²³ GE, 47; RE I, 22.

cause of the spiritual life is election.”¹²⁴ In this context, the spiritual life is the ethical life fixed to the “pile” of election.

The primary way that Bavinck engages the topic of election in his *Ethiek's* is through discussions related to the assurance of the believer provided in the perseverance of the saints.¹²⁵ The question of assurance in Reformed theology, he writes, hinges on election as the fountain of all benefits.¹²⁶ And yet it is not election to which one should appeal to for assurance. Rather one should look toward the doctrine of perseverance of the saints for assurance. There is no knowledge of one's election in the head or heart apart from faith, because absolute assurance cannot be obtained through good works.¹²⁷

Summarising this chapter, we can assert that Bavinck connects election and ethics. This can be seen in the background of his theological heritage with Zwingli and Calvin. He clearly follows in the footsteps of Calvin in his articulation of the divine will and its relation to ethics. Over the course of the chapter election has not only considered dogmatically but ethically as important in relating the two disciplines. Bavinck provides a succinct summary of the relationship between election, perseverance, and ethics in *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*:

The certainty of salvation, based on God's promises of keeping the saints and planted in the hearts of the believers by the testimony of the Spirit, is a powerful means of making believers pursue sanctification, without which no one will see God. God does not compel them but acts with man in a reasonable manner; He does not make them passive in a false sense, but through his promises and exhortations, he stirs them to walk in the good deeds He has prepared for them; He sanctifies them through the truth (Joh. 17:17; 15:3).

Far be it, then, that faith in the preservation of God would make the true believers prideful and worldly-care-free; rather, it is a root of true humility, childlike fear, true godliness, patience in all strife, ardent prayers, steadfastness in the cross and the confession of truth, as well as steadfast joy in God; and that the contemplation of this benefit is an incentive to them for the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints demonstrate.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *GE*, 180; *RE I*, 253.

¹²⁵ *GE*, 151; *RE I*, 204-205; *GE*, 260; *RE I*, 384; *GE*, 265; *RE I*, 390-391; *GE*, 267; *RE I*, 395; *GE*, 280; *RE I*, 414.

¹²⁶ *GE*, 251-252, 254; *RE I*, 370, 374-375.

¹²⁷ *GE*, 259; *RE I*, 382-383; *GE*, 279; *RE I*, 412.

¹²⁸ *GICR*, 160.

In Bavinck's view, election does not lead away from ethics, but toward a steadfast pursuit of God in an ethical life.

An additional point may be made at this juncture: the 1918 speech also affirms current trends in Bavinck studies. Foremost among these is Eglinton's proposal that Bavinck should no longer be viewed as a bifurcated figure, but rather as one living out his Reformed calling in a shifting world. As mentioned in the introduction, it had been previously argued (in American appropriations of Bavinck) that he was split between orthodoxy and modernity, or, put differently, between dogmatics and ethics. The 1918 speech suggests that Bavinck utilized his theology to undergird his ethical writings. It adds to the call by scholars to see Bavinck as "orthodox *yet* modern" and to perceive "tensions" in Bavinck—a tension that might be appropriately perceived as between theology and the shifting conditions of society.¹²⁹ The chapter also provides some "development" in Bavinck's articulation of the doctrine of predestination between *Reformed Dogmatics* and the 1918 speech. Nonetheless, in line with Eglinton, the overall consistent nature of his writing does not suggest a departure from Reformed theology. Bavinck's ethical writing should not be associated with a movement away from the faith he confessed throughout his life.

This chapter provides our Amsterdam home with its first "pile" — election. The "pile" of election played an important role in excavating our canal such that we might see two things: (1) that previous accounts of the relationship between the dogmatics and ethics, which have limited themselves to a single doctrine have overlooked the potential of "election" as an additional relationship. To this extent, the relationship between the two must be viewed as multi-"piled." (2) Dogmatics then takes up the task of describing the activity of God in election, wherein humans are *passive* moral subjects, while God is *active*. Ethics, takes up the description of ethical activity as the result of election, wherein humans are *active* moral subjects. In the chapter, that follows the pile "faith" will be investigated. Faith has its starting point in the gratuitous activity of God in predestination, its perseverance in providence, and fulfilment in election.

¹²⁹ van den Belt, "One, Two, or Even More Bavincks: Tensions in his Theology."

Chapter Three: Faith — Undergirding All Knowledge

“But the word faith has a much larger meaning than just this salvific meaning. In a general sense, faith is used in all of our human life. We cannot do without it for a moment... Faithfulness, truthfulness, and the un-deceptiveness of God is the unshakeable ground upon which all men stand, whether they think God exists or not.”¹ – H. Bavinck

“God, the world, and humanity are the three realities with which all science and all philosophy occupy themselves. The conception which we form of them, and the relation in which we place them to one another, determine the character of our world and of life, the content of our religion, science, and morality.”² – H. Bavinck

In this chapter, faith is considered as another “pile” in the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. In Bavinck’s summaries of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, he states that dogmatics and ethics “are the same” from the vantage point of the regenerate subject.³ What does Bavinck mean when he suggests that from the lens of the regenerate subject, the two disciplines are the same? This is the question that I strive to answer in this chapter. More broadly, the chapter provides an overview of Bavinck’s understanding of faith. Bavinck perceives faith to be an organ that undergirds all of human knowledge, such that all humans (regenerate and unregenerate) begin from the starting point of faith. Therefore, in Bavinck’s system we will arrive at the conclusion that dogmatics and ethics (from the vantage point of the subject) are fundamentally connected by faith.⁴

When Bavinck writes of these disciplines as “the same” it is on account of the regenerate subject who participates in them through faith, as that individual pursues the pilgrimage of a life with Christ. This

¹ Bavinck, “Geloof en aanschouwing,” *De Bauzin* 50, no. 42 (1902): 1-2 [Dutch: Maar het woord *geloof* heeft een veel ruimere, dan alleen deze zaligmakende beteekenis. In gansch algemeenen zin komt geloof in heel ons menscheijk leven te pas. Wij kunnen er geen oogenblik buiten... De trouw, de waarachtigheid, de onbedriegelijkheid Gods is de onwankelbare grond, waarop alle menschen staan, hetzij ze aan Gods bestaan gelooven of niet].

² *POR*, 70.

³ “Untitled” (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47-48 [Dutch: Als men op ’t terrein van ’t subject blijft, dogm. & ethiek laat geboren worden uit ’t geloof, is geen onderscheid]. English: If one remains in the terrain of the subject, dogmatics and ethics are born from faith, there is no distinction.

⁴ Faith’s salvific significance is made more explicit in the chapter that follows.

will be inspected in two movements: (1) faith as *a priori* to all of the sciences, including the science of theology; (2) faith as undergirding the harmony of the world in the Christian world- and lifeview.

What do I mean by regenerate subject? In his early theological writings, Bavinck did not think that a human could perform ethical activity apart from the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit. The unregenerate individual could not perform the task of theology on account of the fundamental importance of salvific faith to the task. This appears clearly in “The Science of Holy Theology” where he writes, “There is no such thing as a *theologia irrogenitorum* (theology of the unregenerate), a form without content.”⁵ In this respect, Bavinck’s pietist leanings shine forth. In the centuries prior there was a controversy between Orthodox and Pietist Lutherans over who could, and who could not practice theology. In this debate, the Pietists believed that a theologian had to be regenerate, whereas the Orthodox thought it was possible to write a valid theology without regeneration.⁶

Later in the *Reformed Dogmatics* Bavinck thought that it was possible to perform the act of theology from the standpoint of historical faith (*fides historica*).⁷ Thus one might articulate theology that is true in its substance, but nonetheless not truly be knowledge of God.⁸ After all, “God gives us theology...that we might come to know Him in the face of Christ and in this way *have eternal life*.”⁹ This development allows

⁵ *OT*, 55.

⁶ Paul Tillich, *Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology*, eds. Carl E. Braaten (London: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 16; see also Pass, “Introduction,” in *OT*, 7.

⁷ *GICR*, 142-142. Bavinck lists four different kinds of faith: historic, temporary, miraculous, and saving faith. The latter is differentiated from the former in origin, psychology, and object. He describes historic faith there, as: “[H]istorical faith remains with the report and does not penetrate any deeper; historic faith sees in this message some beauty and rejoices in it but ignores its actual content.”

⁸ “Dictaat of Herman Bavinck’s Encyclopaedie d. Theol.,” 8 [Dutch: “Een theol. is iemand, die over God denken en spreken en van Hem getuigen moet. Dan moet men uit en door Hem spreken. *Theodidactos*, door God geleerden. Bekeering is eisch voor ieder, maar in verhoogde mate geldt dit voor den V.D.M.”]. In a dictated set of lectures Bavinck delivered in 1902 on the Theological Encyclopaedia he gave four requirements for the theologian (spiritual, moral, physical, and intellectual). The spiritual begins: “A theologian is someone who thinks and speaks about God and bears witness to Him. In that case, one must speak from and through Him. *Theodidactos*, scholars of God. All [people] are called to convert, but this is a greater requirement for the *V.D.M.*” Bavinck’s preference was that the theologian be a regenerate individual, but this was not necessary for the study of theology.

⁹ *OT*, 53. One might see this as an Augustinian view of the task of theology. We must *seek his face always* (Ps. 105:4). And those who live by faith (Heb. 2:4) will then see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Matt. 5:8). However, those who

room for unregenerate theologians to partake in the discipline of theology, but a barrier still remains between what is true and what is false.¹⁰ In other words, the unregenerate might participate in the field of theology, and even produce theology that is historically-true, but miss its true salvific content, Christ.

As indicated in the introduction, Bavinck understood both dogmatics and ethics to be within the field of “theology.” They are both parts in the organism of the theological encyclopaedia and are thus best practiced from the standpoint of believing faith. For Bavinck the faith of the theologian had implications for how that individual practiced the science of theology. Likewise, considering the previous chapter which explored election as pivotal to ethical activity, faith connects intimately to election. This is superlatively demonstrated in the final section of Bavinck’s 1918 speech on “Praedestinatie.” Faith finds its security in the divine activity of God. Bavinck demonstrates that faith is rooted in election and through the activity of faith believers attempt to align their lives with the will of God. As such faith facilitates harmony and invites the production of a world- and lifeview.

In the first part we will look at the role of the subject in the sciences. All sciences proceed from the standpoint of the subject. Not just from the perspective of the subject, but all sciences begin *a priori* from a position of faith. This will allow us to see that faith plays an intimate role in the connection between dogmatics and ethics by virtue of them undergirding the subject as it approaches both sciences. True theology has its starting point in the subject, the believing subject, the subject who has been given faith

are unregenerate will not behold God – but will see him simply in the form of a servant, see Augustine, *The Trinity* (New York: New City Press, 2012), Book I, c. 5-28. Therefore, one might see the form of the servant of Christ and partake in the task of theology, but not correctly behold him in the form of his divinity; Polman, *De Praedestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn*, 19-20. “Bavinck already pointed out in the nineties of the last century the great significance of the study of Augustine for Reformed thought, but the harvest remained meagre.”

¹⁰ This movement toward the practitioner of theology as not having to be regenerate may also explain the development in Bavinck’s later ethical work of beginning with a section devoted to “philosophical” ethics. Just as dogmatics belongs to theology so does ethics. Therefore, Bavinck may have been keen to acknowledge a form of ethics that exists outside of regenerate ethics. In this way, one might indeed practice the “content” of ethics, but it will lack its true content in the imitation of Christ. In congruence with this, just as Bavinck draws upon modern philosophy in his dogmatics, philosophical ethics might play a similar subordinate role (see also Bavinck, *Filosofische Ethiek*, ed. by Dirk van Keulen (Amersfoort: Uitgeverij De Vuurbaak, 2021), 10. In addition to this, one must take into consideration Bavinck’s reflections on Schleiermacher’s “philosophical” ethics (see *RE I*, 15).

through the operation of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Faith is not the source of theological knowledge, but the organ the Holy Spirit works through.¹² We consider then the starting point of faith within the human being.

In the second part, I turn to consider how faith plays a fundamental role in the cultivation of a Christian world- and lifeview. *A priori* faith undergirds all of the activities of humans in the sciences, but also outside of the sciences. A world- and lifeview that does not take faith into consideration does not harmonize reality for humans. Thus, God provides the harmony the world longs for, and faith facilitates this for mankind in his world-and lifeview. As such, faith is turned upon the horizon of the world. In other words, the gift of faith in heart *ad intra* results in the cultivation of a faith *ad extra* in world-and lifeview.

This third section then explores Bavinck's account of how faith provides a framework for the cohesion of reality that connects God, humans, and the world. While the object of theology for Bavinck is God's wonderful works, the starting point is necessarily anthropological, that is we cannot escape the premise of science being practiced by human subjects. I now turn to consider Bavinck's reflections on faith. This will be done by examining his essay "The Science of Faith."

I. Faith as undergirding the sciences

In 1880, just after Bavinck had finished his doctoral degree at Leiden, he wrote "The Science of Faith."¹³ This work exhibits Bavinck's early reflections on the relationship between *geloven* (believing) and *weten* (knowing). Bavinck contrasts his position with two Dutch theologians of the previous generation: Johannes Jacobus van Oosterzee (1817-1882) and Jakob Isaak Doedes (1817-1897).¹⁴ Doedes saw believing and

¹¹ Ziegler, *Militant Grace: The apocalyptic turn and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 71. Ziegler states, "To confess faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ may be considered the originary practice of the Christian life. As such it recommends itself as a primary site at which to investigate the relation between the agency of the Holy Spirit and human activity." In line with Ziegler, the next two chapters explore consider faith, the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and the commencement of human activity on account of that agency in sanctification.

¹² *GICR*, 149.

¹³ Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," *De Vrije Kerk* 6, no. 11 (November 1880): 510-527. The term *wetenschap* in the 19th century signified rigorous scientific activity (see *BCB*, 35-36).

¹⁴ J. J. van Oosterzee (1817-1882) was a Dutch theologian and pastor. He was also a professor at Utrecht University from 1862-1882 teaching theology, New Testament, history of dogmatics, and philosophy of religion; J.I. Doedes (1817-1897) was a Dutch Reformed theologian and pastor. He was also a professor of theology at Utrecht University

knowing as completely separated, while Oosterzee perceived them as distinct but not able to be completely divided. Thus, for Oosterzee there existed a science of faith, whereas for Doedes this was an impossibility. Bavinck assessed Doedes as unhelpful because he eliminated the possibility of theology as a science. However, Oosterzee's articulation he perceived to be useful for his own ruminations. Bavinck believed that in order to protect theology as an independent science, a false dualism between *gelooven* (believing) and *weten* (knowing) had to be avoided.¹⁵

He considered Doedes' separation of between *gelooven* (believing) and *weten* (knowing) to be unscriptural and unchristian. It is Christianity which takes the unity of the sciences seriously according to Bavinck. Drawing from theologian Otto Zöckler he wrote, "The Christian religion is the only one of all which, through its influence in promoting culture, has favored at all the development of the *Wissenschaft*, the only one which, more particularly has seen in the recent times a natural-*Wissenschaftliche* development of serious significance."¹⁶

The concept of *Wissenschaft* is one to which we will return, but initially it will be helpful to know that in the 19th century German academy, *Wissenschaft* was a term applied to higher forms of reflective knowledge.¹⁷ *Wissenschaft* is the German cognate to the Dutch *wetenschap*. Bavinck believed that Christianity, was the singular religion that could properly facilitate unity amongst the sciences. The reason for this is twofold: (1) all knowledge is rooted in faith and therefore naturally all religions can move toward

from 1859-1888. During this time Doedes taught theology, the theological encyclopaedia, church history, the interpretation and exegesis of the New Testament, Hermeneutics, and Natural Theology.

¹⁵ Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 511-513.

¹⁶ Bavinck, "Geloofswetenschap," 514-515; Otto Zöckler, "Die Naturwissenschaft und die Wunder in der Monatsschrift," *Der Beweis des Glaubens Monatsschrift zur Begründung der Christlichen Wahrheit* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Vlg., 1879), S.451 [German: Die christliche Religion... ist von allen die einzige, welche durch ihren culturfördernden Einfluss überhaupt die Entwicklung auch der Wissenschaften begünstigt hat, die einzige, welche insbesondere in neuerer Zeit eine naturwissenschaftliche Entwicklung von wirklich ernster Bedeutung aus sich hervorgehen sah]. Otto Zöckler (1833-1906) was a German theologian who is best known for his editorial work on a theological encyclopaedia (see Zöckler, *Handbuch der theologischen Wissenschaften in enzyklopädischer Darstellung* (Nördlingen: Beck, 1883-1884). The notation of the development between natural-*Wissenschaftliche* and *Wissenschaft* demonstrates the difference between American and continental understandings of science.

¹⁷ *BCB*, xxi "It deals broadly with higher forms of reflective knowledge and is used to describe humanities disciplines like theology just as much as physics, chemistry, and biology"; see also Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not yet Exist'," 16.

organizing the sciences, (2) The Triune nature of God in Christianity further facilitates the organization of the sciences.¹⁸ As the ectypal unity-in-diversity in the enterprise of encyclopaedia imitates the archetypal unity-in-diversity of God.

In “The Science of Faith,” Bavinck picks up the Augustinian concept of faith seeking understanding: one believes and therefore seeks to know what one believes. All things build then from the edifice of faith. Bavinck puts it poetically, “For visible things, as well as invisible things, faith is the very soil of life from which the plant of knowledge (*kennis*) and of knowing (*weten*) draws its sustenance.”¹⁹ But, according to Bavinck, this faith is not foundationless. Just as all knowledge rests on faith, faith itself also rests on a particular kind of knowledge; it does not arise from nothing. Faith cannot be separated from the activity of faith; in other words *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed) cannot be divided from the *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which it is believed).²⁰ Thus faith always possess an “intellectual” and “ethical” element according to Bavinck.²¹ These two come together in “believing.” He writes, “Believing is the unity of being able to and willing to.”²²

Where does the difference between them lie? The difference lies in both the subject and object. In the subject, Bavinck understood that believing (*gelooven*) took place in the “head and heart” of man, whereas knowing (*weten*) took place strictly in the head.²³ To be sure, this requires some nuance. As Bavinck in his mature thinking would claim the intellect belongs primarily to the heart. Therefore, the distinction between knowing and believing is not a matter of location in human psychology, but rather it is the difference between knowledge that is intimate and knowledge that is impersonal.

¹⁸ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 515, 517; see also *RD I*, 368-370; Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904), 37, 59-61, 91-92.

¹⁹ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 516 [Dutch: Bij de zichtbare, zoowel als de onzichtbare dingen is het geloof de levensbodem, waaruit de plante der kennis en des wetens haar levenssappen trekt].

²⁰ Andrew Johnson, “The Implicit Dimensions of Explicit Faith: Inquiring into the Centrality of Belief by Attending to the Holistic Character of Believing,” PhD diss., (University of Edinburgh, 2020), 9-10.

²¹ *CWV*, 111-112. The ethical element of faith is the necessity of purification from sin (see for example Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book IV, c. 24).

²² Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 517 [Dutch: Gelooven is de eenheid van kunnen en willen].

²³ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 517 [Maar hierin: subjectief, dat het gelooven is een werkzaamheid van verstand en hart beiden, het weten alleen van het verstand]. English: “But in this: subjectively, believing is an activity of both the mind and heart, knowing only of the mind.”

Bavinck makes this distinction in *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*. He argues that saving faith is distinct from everyday knowledge because it is not just a knowledge (*weten*) of the head, but rather the knowledge (*kennen*) of the heart.²⁴ Importantly, in *Guidebook* he also links “believing” to the active power of love. In “The Science of Faith” there is unity with distinction; believing (*gelooven*) and knowing (*weten*) are intertwined in the psychology of the person — believing is an activity of the head and heart, while Bavinck posits knowing (*weten*) is an activity of the head.²⁵ In the object, Bavinck understood the difference to be that “believing” possessed an “invisible, moral, and spiritual” object while knowing is visible, sensual, and physical.²⁶ Thus there is a subtle difference in both subject and object in the difference between believing and knowing.

Nonetheless, all creaturely knowledge rests on presuppositions and axioms. In tracing, Bavinck’s argument of the relationship between knowing and believing in “The Science of Faith” he draws on aesthetics for its rhetorical persuasiveness.²⁷ He writes, “That I do not just consider a painting beautiful, but that it truly is [beautiful], cannot be demonstrated to those who lack an aesthetic sense. Is there then no theory of aesthetics, no science of beauty? To assert this is to suggest there is no reality that applies to all.”²⁸ Bavinck appeals to aesthetics to make room for believing as a valid form of knowing.

The purpose for his appeal to the beautiful can be made clearer by appealing to Bavinck’s essay on “Beauty and Aesthetics.” In “Beauty and Aesthetics” he draws on Augustine’s articulation of God as the true,

²⁴ *GICR*, 155.

²⁵ Bavinck is utilizing two different ways of expressing “to know” with *kennen* and *weten*. They both express different kinds of knowledge; *kennen* indicates an intimate personal knowledge, while *weten* indicates impersonal knowledge.

²⁶ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 519 [Dutch: en objectief, dat het voorwerp van gelooven onzichtbaar, zedelijk, geestelijk is van aard en het voorwerp van het weten zichtbaar, zinnelijk, fysisch].

²⁷ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 40, 73-87. The Romantics made beauty the criterion or the means of knowing the true and the good. Beiser argues that aesthetics was “the perfect incarnation of subject-object identity.” Indeed, this subject-object identity being grasped in the aesthetic is found in Schelling’s *System des transcendentalen Idealismus*.

²⁸ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 520 [Dutch: Dat ik eene schilderij niet slechts voor schoon houd, maar dat zij dat werkelijk is, laat zich niet demonstreeren aan wie alle schoonheidsgevoel mist. Is er daarom nu geen schoonheidsleer, geen wetenschap van het schoone? Te beweren, dat er geen voor allen geldende bewijzen zijn voor het werkelijk].

the beautiful, and the highest good.²⁹ If these three can be ascribed to God then they bear a supersensory and spiritual character – yet all three belong to the world of intelligent things and can be known by man.³⁰ Returning to our present essay, we may draw the conclusion that Bavinck perceives in aesthetics a science that can illustrate that all sciences rest on faith. Just as beauty can be known and studied – God can be known and studied. Both sciences rest on faith, but Christian theology is the science of faith *par excellence*.

Relevant to this thesis, in “The Science of Faith” Bavinck positions faith as a connecting point between dogmatics and ethics. Faith connects the dogmatic and ethical world because it is the organ within humans which facilitates this connection. Bavinck writes, “The moral world demands in us a moral organ, to correspond with it in order to perceive and know (*kennen*) it.” This organ is the organ of faith; the same organ which enables us to acknowledge the reality of our self and the reality of God enables us to perceive the moral world.³¹ To make this argument, Bavinck put forth a two-fold meaning of faith in relation to morality: (1) faith is both that which is necessary in order to speak about morality, (2) but also faith is that organ which allows humans to embrace the moral world.³² Therefore, faith facilitates both the content and the appropriation of that content.³³ Faith is then necessary for the connection between dogmatics and ethics.

On account of the centrality of faith at the centre of the human person every science has faith as its foundation.³⁴ For this reason theology not only has a rightful place among the sciences, but it is an independent science. “Faith says again and again... God is the Hypothesis on which all things rest and without whom, in the end, nothing can be explained.”³⁵ This basic contention of faith undergirding the

²⁹ Bavinck, “Beauty and Aesthetics,” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt. trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 245-260, 255-256; see Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book I, c.2.8; Bavinck, “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good,” trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *TBR* 2 (2011): 133-170.

³⁰ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book VIII. Augustine sees the truth, goodness, and love as objective absolutes that may be appealed to in order to lead individuals toward an understanding of God.

³¹ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 521 [Dutch: Maar de zedelijke wereld eischt in ons een aan haar corresponderend zedelijk orgaan, om haar waar te nemen en te kennen].

³² Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 522.

³³ Faith is not the source of this content however, merely the organ or conduit of the moral source.

³⁴ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 522. Bavinck has a section here that is reminiscent of Zwingli with faith uniting the personality of man.

³⁵ Bavinck, “Geloofswetenschap,” 527 [Dutch: Maar het geloof zegt altijd weer... God de Hypothese is, waarop alle dingen rusten en zonder welke er ten slotte niets kan worden verklaard].

sciences and Christian theology's unique place amongst the sciences is a theme revisited by Bavinck throughout his academic writing. In this essay, then faith is rooted in the centre of man, an activity of his head and heart and is both intellectual and ethical. On account of the centrality of faith in the human person we may assert that faith is an additional "pile" that connects dogmatics and ethics. Not to be forgotten here is the *precis* from chapter one, which identified that we may not split man in half by attributing dogmatics and ethics to different faculties — both belong to the "pile" of faith.³⁶

II. Bavinck's Mature Thought on Faith

In the first volume of the second edition of his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck gives concentrated space to writing about faith. The same main themes that are present in his early work on faith "The Science of Faith" permeate this later work: (1) all science begins in the subject, (2) Christian theology has always taken its starting place in the believing individual, (3) Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit is the operative source and not the subject itself.³⁷ Therefore, truth can only be known through faith as the Spirit operates on the human through faith. Faith is then not the source, but the organ of truth.³⁸ In Scripture, the internal principle of theological work is the channel of faith, but faith occurs through the illumination of the Spirit. As such, properly speaking theology does not begin with man, the subject, but God, the object and author of faith.

First, we will consider the argument found in Bavinck's mature thought, namely, that all sciences begin with the subject. In starting with the subject, all sciences take up presuppositions that are equivalent to faith-based propositions. Because of this, faith undergirds all scientific activity; all sciences begin *a priori* from a position of faith. This manoeuvre makes space for Christian theology as the science *par excellence* because theology has its starting point in faith. This view has often led to Bavinck being charged with giving too much of a priority to the subject.³⁹ In this respect, though, Bavinck argues that Christian theology should not be considered subjective, precisely because the believing subject (the subject who has been given faith) is given faith through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not the source, but the organ the Holy Spirit works through.

³⁶ *GE*, 47; *RE I*, 22.

³⁷ *RD I*, 564.

³⁸ *RD I*, 565.

³⁹ On this criticism, see Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 7-12.

The Holy Spirit and the Realization of Faith

The religious faith of the subject has its object, ground, and origin solely in God. In the Reformation the role of the intellect in faith was hotly debated.⁴⁰ In Bavinck's view, following the damage wrought by scholasticism, faith became more of an intellectual assent, rather than a fruit of grace. Therefore, protestants made a distinction between "saving" and "historical" faith.⁴¹ Historical faith was a cognitive knowledge of the truth, while saving faith was a submission to Christ and a participation in Christ and his benefits.⁴² Bavinck wrote:

This much is certain: faith in Reformation theology was not a matter of knowing a number of doctrinal truths but consisted in the soul's union with the person of Christ according to the Scriptures and with Scripture as the word of Christ. Saving faith was again religious through and through. Its object was the grace of God in Christ; its foundation the witness of God in his Word; its author the Holy Spirit. In every aspect it was religiously determined.⁴³

Faith was wrought in humanity by divine action through the union of the soul to the person of Christ. Faith thus acted as an organ in man's heart through which the head and heart were regenerated. This transformation of the head and heart captures our attention in chapter four. Bavinck's articulation of faith parallels his experience of professing confessional assent in Zwolle, but then taking time to examine the fruit of his soul's union with Christ before proceeding to the Lord's Table.⁴⁴

For Bavinck (as seen in chapter two), Calvin gave the clearest articulation of the certainty of faith. "Faith is "certain", "firm", "full and fixed," more "certainty" than "apprehension," "heartfelt confidence and assurance."⁴⁵ This kind of certainty was challenged by Kant in the Enlightenment. Kant's theory of certainty

⁴⁰ See for example, Steven Ozmet, "The Interpretation of Medieval Intellectual History," in *The Age of the Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 1-21.

⁴¹ *RD I*, 572.

⁴² Johnson, "The Implicit Dimensions of Explicit Faith," 12.

⁴³ *RD I*, 573.

⁴⁴ See Parker and Clausing, "Introduction," in *SOP*, xxii-xxiii.

⁴⁵ *RD I*, 574; J. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book I. c.7, 5; Book II, c.2, 8; Book III, c.2, 14ff; Book III, c.14, 8; Book III, c.14, 24.

in *Critique of Pure Reason* was a challenge to all of theology.⁴⁶ Where Bavinck's vision of faith created harmony between the head and heart, he saw Kant's threefold certainty as having created a false dualism in the head and heart of man.⁴⁷ For Bavinck, the head and heart both assess morality (in believing) and therefore are not split. For Kant, religious certainty could only be postulated through moral certainty, through the will. Alternatively, for Bavinck, both the intellect and the will are involved in morality.⁴⁸ Bavinck argues Kant's moral certainty, which was Kant's pathway toward religious belief, is the weakest of his three forms of certainty. In Bavinck's view, there is no need for a moral certainty to secure religious belief, but rather in religion believing is equal to certainty itself.⁴⁹

To overcome this apparent Kantian dualism of head and heart, Bavinck appeals to a selection of his forefathers: Augustine, Aquinas, Zanchius, and Bonaventure. He demonstrates in turn how each operates with a similar tri-fold category of understanding, believing, and opinion.⁵⁰ Therefore, rather than responding directly to Kant, he inspects how the historic church responds to the difference between these three categories and what ultimately determines the difference between them. Ultimately, the final proof is that God alone is the cause of faith. Humans believe voluntarily as God bends the will and prompts belief with the intellect.⁵¹ The final ground of faith is God's action.

In rooting the answer in divine action, Bavinck follows Calvin and the Reformers in appealing to the testimony of the Holy Spirit.⁵² He writes, "Scripture acquires certainty as God's own Word with us by the testimony of the Holy Spirit."⁵³ It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit which seals the Word upon the human heart. As Bavinck writes, "It is he [the Holy Spirit] who makes faith a sure knowledge that excludes

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn (New York: Colonial Press, 1899), Methodology, II, 3. Kant argued for three kinds of certainty: (1) empirical certainty (known through sense perception); (2) logical certainty (intuitive, discursive); (3) moral certainty (based on the ethical destiny of humanity; i.e. (1) thinking, (2) knowing, (3) believing.

⁴⁷ *RD I*, 576.

⁴⁸ *RD I*, 576.

⁴⁹ *RD I*, 577.

⁵⁰ *RD I*, 577.

⁵¹ *RD I*, 579.

⁵² Cornelius van der Kooi, "The Appeal to the Inner Testimony of the Spirit, especially in H. Bavinck," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 2 (2008): 103-112, 105.

⁵³ *RD I*, 583.

all doubt.”⁵⁴ This is not a private revelation (and therefore still subject to the charge of being subjective) but because of the universality of the Holy Spirit, faith is something all believers experience. This testimony is united with the other works of the Spirit (all those benefits acquired by Christ). This testimony is not a new revelation, but it unites the objective revelation received by believers in Scripture.

Accordingly, in this instance Bavinck responds to Kant by an appeal to the work of the Holy Spirit in the organ of faith. Just as objects of knowledge must be approached through the subject, theology must be approached through the same. However, what gives theology its certainty is not a category—“a state of the mind”—in the subject, as Kant would have it. Rather, the certainty of faith rests on the grounds by which it is produced — and that is the work of God.⁵⁵ Rather than ostracizing theology, this roots it as an activity of the human subject. In Bavinck’s view, this is advantageous to theology as it accounts for the discipline’s unity with the other sciences because all objects of study must be approached through the lens of the subject.⁵⁶ Humans are richly linked with the objective world, for which reason they are a microcosm of

⁵⁴ *RD I*, 584.

⁵⁵ Sutanto, “Herman Bavinck and Thomas Reid on Perception and Knowing God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 1 (2018): 115-134, 128-129, 132. Sutanto provides a reading of Bavinck and Thomas Reid that demonstrates that they traversed this Kantian boundary in a different manner from one another. He asserts that Bavinck’s epistemology should be considered “Reformed-organic-realism” or simply an “organic epistemology.” Bavinck traversed the subject and object dilemma by maintaining that there is a fixed epistemological gap between the subject and the object. How does this correspondence then occur for Bavinck between subject and object; between the content of our consciousness and the object of our knowledge? Sutanto demonstrates that Bavinck bridges the subject and object gap in his *Reformed Dogmatics* and other writings identifying three guiding propositions (1) the organic ontology of creation. Creation is organically linked “an interconnected whole that resists” both chaos and uniformity. In this way man is physically, ethically, sensorially etc. organically linked with creation and there is a correspondence between the whole and the parts. (2) The work of divine providence. The eternal counsel weaves an organic web in which all dimensions are connected. The work of divine providence rests on the presupposition the correspondence between subject and object. (3) The ongoing revealing activity of the Logos. The activity of the Logos sustains this organic connection. Sutanto summarizes it like so, “Subject possesses an accurate mental representation of object only if (1) subject and object are parts of a larger organic and created whole which (2) reflects an organic decree in the mind of a Triune Creator (3) while a revelatory connection is sustained between subject and object by the work of the second Person.” These three tenets of Bavinck’s epistemology allow for Bavinck to traverse the bridge between subject and object.

⁵⁶ *RD I*, 586. “All life and all knowledge is based on a kind of agreement between subject and object”; see also Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 101-121.

the organic macrocosm.⁵⁷ Humans are in a reciprocal relationship with the world, in which they are both a part of the world and distinct from it. God created this connection with the world and fosters this connection, such that humans as subjects might have knowledge of objects.⁵⁸ All human cognitive activity that bears witness to the truth bears witness to the divine activity of the Spirit.⁵⁹

This connection between the human subject and the objective world is damaged by the fall but is reclaimed in redemption. Therefore, just as the “selfsame Logos who made all things in and outside of human beings” is the source of the continuity between subject and object, the Spirit is also the source and agent of all intellectual and ethical life. This operation of the Spirit takes a higher form in the intellectual, ethical, and religious life of people.⁶⁰ On the human side, we must absorb the truth into ourselves and make it our own. For Bavinck, this is precisely how one experiences ethical freedom. In the first chapter of *Christian Worldview*, Bavinck suggests that one can only experience freedom as one imbibes the truth. In the closing paragraph of the book, he grants that in Christ, the truth enters believers, becomes their own “spiritual property; through a living and true faith” and as Christ becomes theirs and they Christ’s, they are on the path of freedom.⁶¹

Thus word and deed, or faith as contemplation and action, are both witnesses to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through the means of Scripture in the organ of faith. As Bavinck writes, “Just as the thoughts of God are objectively embodied in the world and derived from there by the human spirit, so also the word of revelation was first fully described in Holy Scripture in order subsequently to be sealed in our hearts by the witness of the Spirit.”⁶² The human spirit simply bears witness to the truth. The testimony is

⁵⁷ *RD II*, 67.

⁵⁸ One might have in mind here particularly Schelling (see Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 139-141). This also has consonance with Romanticism: (1) The organic ontology of creation invokes a romantic-esque expansion of Kant’s organicism. (2) For the romantics, the organic concept of nature possessed its own natural purpose. For Bavinck the living-force which pervades all of nature providing it teleology transcends nature, but is also immanently present within nature. (3) For the romantics the bridge between subject and object is traversed through the self-consciousness of this living force. We might see a revelatory connection akin to this in Bavinck with the ongoing revelatory activity of the Logos.

⁵⁹ *RD I*, 587.

⁶⁰ *RD I*, 587.

⁶¹ *CWV*, 133.

⁶² *RD I*, 588.

not a “new revelation” but rather “causes us to understand the truth that exists outside and independently of us as truth and therefore confirms and seals it in the human consciousness.”⁶³ Thus the objects of human knowledge are attested to on account of the subject affirming what it recognizes as truth on account of the Spirit.

If faith is dependent on the divine action of the Holy Spirit, does it become arbitrary? Bavinck puts forth a threefold argument for faith being principled. First, there is no deeper ground for revelation than the *Deus Dixit* (“God has said it”). But if one must put forth an argument then one should level the playing field. Neither the believer nor the unbeliever has a deeper ground than revelation. This is because both belief and unbelief are rooted in the heart.⁶⁴ According to Bavinck, all humans are on a level playing field in respect to their convictions.⁶⁵ Revelation is the ground for all the complexities of the human experience, various cultures and all the disparate sciences.⁶⁶

Second, the testimony of the Spirit is universal to the *Christian*: the Spirit is the same Spirit to all believers. As Bavinck writes, “What really causes us to believe is not the insight of our intellect, nor a decision of the will, but a power that is superior to us, bends our will, illumines our mind, and without compulsion still effectively takes our thoughts and our reflections captive to the obedience of Christ.”⁶⁷

Bavinck and Kant at least agree, then, on one proposition. Faith is not the conclusion of a logical syllogism.⁶⁸ Thus one cannot rationalize oneself into belief in God. Intellectual proofs serve the role of demonstrating faith, from the perspective of faith, but in and of themselves are insufficient to create faith. They solely demonstrate its reasonableness. Therefore, Bavinck argues that proofs are only compelling

⁶³ *RD I*, 588.

⁶⁴ *RD I*, 590.

⁶⁵ In this respect, this is an argument of philosophy of revelation.

⁶⁶ See Brock and Sutanto, “Preface to the Annotated Edition,” in *POR*, xvi-xvii.

⁶⁷ *RD I*, 590; “Herman Bavinck’s ‘Head and Heart’,” trans. Gregory Parker Jr. *Modern Reformation* 30, no. 5 (Nov/Dec. 2021): 10-13, 13. “According to the Reformed confession, the Holy Spirit’s operation of grace is irresistible, but it is so because it is both gentle and sweet. It does not compel, but inclines. It does not make slaves, but volunteers. And God is the Master of the human heart, because He is almighty love.”

⁶⁸ *RD I*, 592.

within the framework of faith.⁶⁹ Faith “is rooted for Bavinck in the mysterious depths of the regenerate heart.”⁷⁰

The dualism that Kant introduced between head and heart, is perceived for Bavinck to be one of flesh and spirit, of the old and new man. His third point is framed accordingly. Opposition to faith occurs in both the intellect and the will, in other words, faith does not arise out of the naturally fallen heart and head. In order for faith to arise the Spirit must regenerate both the heart and head. Faith does not arise from humanity but is wholly the work and gift of God.

Alongside of Augustine, Bavinck believes faith is the organ that leads to understanding, therefore, all of theology is the “product of Christian thinking.”⁷¹ Thinking, which begins in the individual Christian, develops alongside the organism that is the church. Like all disciplines, theology had a birth and a subsequent growth and continues its development into today. Just as it is the Logos who provides harmony for subject and object, according to Bavinck it is the same-self Logos that it is at the centre of theology. Theology thus acts as a harmonizing science—one that nurtures a link between the church and the world, and religion and science.⁷² As the Holy Spirit works in the head and heart of man, the entire human is regenerated and this regeneration is of a religious-ethical kind. In this manner, Christianity is a religion that attends not only to belief, but also to living for and serving God; it is a religion of both head and heart. It is both a theological *thinking* and a theological *loving* executed by a harmonious agent.⁷³

⁶⁹ Bavinck’s argument here has consonance with Schumacher’s argument on the rationality of faith (see Lydia Schumacher, “The Lost Legacy of Anselm’s Argument: Re-Thinking the Purpose of Proofs for the Existence of God,” *Modern Theology* 27, no.1 (January 2011): 87-101.).

⁷⁰ *RD I*, 592.

⁷¹ *RD I*, 609.

⁷² *RD I*, 606; see also James Eglinton and Michael Brautigam, “Scientific Theology? Herman Bavinck and Adolf Schlatter on the Place of Theology in the University,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7, no. 1 (2013): 27-50.

⁷³ The two-fold taxonomy of “theological thinking and loving” I develop from primarily three sources of Bavinck, although I believe it to be consistent with the rest of his corpus. In “The Science of Theology” (as identified likewise by Eglinton, see *BCB*, 137-138) Bavinck develops the idea that theology must remain theological, in contrast to succumbing to secularizing forces. This theme of *theological* theology likewise penetrates the heart of his understanding of the theological encyclopaedia. Alongside of this, Bavinck develops the necessity of theology being an activity of “reflection” in “Reading, Thinking, Speaking” and “loving” in “Faith and Love.” These three sources allow a template for considering the activity of theology to be one which both captures the intellect and will, the head and the

The Habitus of Faith

Bavinck believed that through “faith seeking understanding,” one could develop a *habitus* of believing reflection.⁷⁴ In Augustine’s *The Trinity*, the six analogies of the Trinity in the psychology of the human bring the reader to a fully formed vision of the *habitus* of faith. The first analogy is the triad of mind, knowledge, and love with the goal of this triad as unlearning the love of things that are not the highest good. The first triad unlearns, while in the second triad of memory, understanding, and will the human relearn the love of God. This movement of unlearning and relearning might be pictured as regeneration. The third triad of talent, learning, and use involves the actualization of the unique capacities of the human. One might envision here the act of theology. The fourth and fifth triads involve the sense (sight, the object seen, attention) and imagination (memory of perceptions, comparison, mental image), which is where theology becomes lived. The initial issue—that of not perceiving God as the highest good—begins in these fourth and fifth triads. The sixth triad includes memory, understanding, love of self properly oriented it includes memory, understanding, and love of God as the highest good.⁷⁵

In both of Bavinck’s distillations of *Reformed Dogmatics*, *Magnalia Dei* and *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion* he begins asserting an answer to the philosophical question: “What is man’s highest good?” Bavinck positions the books as providing an answer into the inquiry of the highest good or *summum bonum*.⁷⁶ In these two books he provides the same answer: “The highest good of man is God, and God

heart, the whole of the person in theological thinking and loving. See Bavinck, “Reading, Thinking, Speaking,” transcribed by Gregory Parker Jr. *Modern Reformation* 30, no. 1(2021): 13-16, also Bavinck, “Faith and Love,” trans. and eds. by Gregory Parker Jr. *Triquetra* (Spring 2022), 1-3.

⁷⁴ *RD I*, 616.

⁷⁵ Lydia Schumacher, “Augustine’s Psychological Analogies and the Practical Dimension of Knowing God,” *Contemplative traditions, theory, and practice*, Sankt Ignatius College, filmed December 12-15, 2019. Video of lecture, 20:58. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6H4pYJN90I>.

⁷⁶ Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, 91. The question of the highest good had been a central philosophical problem since antiquity and indeed each of the various schools of philosophy had offered their own answer. In the 20th century, the question had lost none of its relevance. Kant, Fichte, and the Romantics each had posed the question and offered answers in the previous century. The question was first posed by Cicero, but by the time Kant had begun to work on it, the question primarily had two ideas in mind. First, the highest good had the final end in mind. It could not be an intermediate end. Second, it had to be a complete end. That is nothing more could be added to the end to give it greater value.

alone.”⁷⁷ One has to look no further than the surrounding paragraphs to find the influence for this statement is that of Augustine.⁷⁸ Bavinck argues that humans are created in the image and likeness of God and in spite of sin is aware of his divine beatific calling and heavenly destination. As humans interact with the world around them, they find nothing that can satisfy their heart. Accordingly, the only place that humanity might find rest for their hearts is in God.⁷⁹ However, in order for our hearts to find rest we must acquire knowledge of this God and that is what Bavinck’s writings are meant to help unfurl — the knowledge of God. The one who possesses knowledge of God possesses eternal life and therefore the highest good for humans is to know and be known by God; to delight in and make use of all things in light of him.⁸⁰

For this reason, in the reordering of the highest good all of life becomes an arena in which the human as the image of God, can ascend to be more and more like the image of its maker. The sixth tripart of memory, understanding, love of self is transformed into the memory, understanding, and love of God. Lydia Schumacher puts it aptly, “The ultimate purpose of learning to develop a [*habitus*]... Is to help us to make a seamless transition to eternity, to learn to enjoy God, and to appreciate his goodness and the fullness of it to the greatest possible extent in the present life, so as to maximize the experience of him for eternity.”⁸¹ Therefore in an Augustinian framework, as one lives out one’s life oriented by the highest good of God, one develops a *habitus*, a sense of memorizing being themselves. In other words, the cultivation of this *habitus* is a rediscovery of “being human” as first intended by God. This leads to the enjoyment and appreciation of God in this life, which ultimately leads towards a higher experience of God in the life to come.

⁷⁷*TWWG*, 1; *GICR*, 1.

⁷⁸ *GICR*, 15; *RD II*, 112-113. Bavinck also links this idea to Augustine: In the West Augustine adopted calling God the “supreme being” and wrote that “God’s being is identical with his attributes. God is the highest, best, most beautiful, and most perfect being, than which nothing better can be or be thought.”

⁷⁹ St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (Penguin Books, 1961), 1.

⁸⁰ See also Parker and Clausing, “Herman Bavinck: A Theologian for the Church,” in *GICR*, 1-13, 5-6.

⁸¹ Schumacher, “Augustine’s Psychological Analogies and the Practical Dimension of Knowing God,” 20:12; See *Een Leidse Vriendschap: De briefwisseling tussen Herman Bavinck en Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1875-1921)*, eds. J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck (Ten Have/Baarn: Passage, 1999), 110-112, 110. Bavinck writes this almost exactly on February 8, 1883 to his friend Snouck Hurgronje. He writes, “Theology is, it seems to me, knowing God.” This is then connected to the question of, “how do I attain eternal life?”

According to Bavinck, this *habitus* of believing reflection is the exercise of true theology. God regenerates the maligned head and heart, the intellect and will, and orients it back to himself. In the *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck parses the distinction between faith and theology like so: faith focuses on the “that”, “the central object” (Christ), it is “personal,” while theology focuses on “the *why* and the *how*,” in that it expands outwards from the centre object to the circumference and works towards “objectifying the object.”⁸² As such, faith and theology work in tandem: faith provides the impetus for theology and theology requires faith to remain true theology.⁸³ Faith energizes this study and nourishes the head and the heart that the Spirit has regenerated.

Dogmatics and ethics fall under the banner, then, of faith seeking understanding with faith providing the impetus and content for both dogmatic and ethical work. Dogmatics and ethics expand what is in seed form in faith. In early theology, Bavinck notes, the two disciplines were often viewed as the same activity:

In an earlier age the two of them could be easily interchanged, because theology and dogmatics plus ethics were virtually synonymous. But today theology has become the name for a whole cycle of disciplines. The distinction therefore now leaps out at anyone considering the topic. Nowadays theology encompasses a multitude of sciences, which a simple believer does not even know by name.⁸⁴

Bavinck’s observation that theology has undergone a dramatic expansion, morphing from a single discipline into an interrelated system of disciplines, is important to his views on the *habitus* of faith as undergirding theological activity. To understand this, though, we must consider it within a particular setting: his views on the theological encyclopaedia, which will be attended to in the sixth chapter.

Throughout “The Science of Faith” Bavinck continues to develop an understanding of faith. Faith undergirds all of human experience both inside and outside of the church. Faith is the foundation for all

⁸² *RD I*, 616; One is left to wonder what Bonhoeffer would make of this distinction in light of the “How?” / “Who?” distinction in his Christology. “How?” is the question of the serpent/fallen Adam. “Who?” the true question one must ask before Christ. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works: Berlin: 1932–1933*, vol. 12, ed. Carsten Nicolaisen, Ernst-Albert Scharffenorth, and Larry L. Rasmussen, trans. Isabel Best, David Higgins, and Douglas W. Stott, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 299–360.

⁸³ One may surmise that historic faith remains at the circumference (“why and how”) and never penetrates to the centre (“that”).

⁸⁴ *RD I*, 615.

scientific activity, which is why Bavinck argues that the science of faith, theology, is the superlative science. On account of the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit faith is accompanied by certainty. Moreover, faith possesses a content that is developed alongside of the community of the church.

Thus far, this section has advanced Bavinck's view of faith as undergirding the sciences. If all sciences are undergirded by faith, then there is no reason to exclude faith from science, but rather theology becomes the science of faith *par excellence*. The sciences that belong then to theology, namely dogmatics and ethics are therefore intimately connected by the "pile" of faith. These above themes will be further developed in the chapter that follows on, which engages directly with the operative role of the Holy Spirit in faith the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart and head of humans moving them from *passive* to ethically *active*. We transition in the next section to discussing how faith not only undergirds the sciences but facilitates the production of an all-encompassing world- and lifeview.

III. The production of an All-encompassing World- and lifeview

In the nineteenth century, philosophy was suffering an "identity crisis", in which the fundamental nature of the discipline was brought into question.⁸⁵ Prior to this, as Beiser indicates, the "idealist tradition" found comfort in philosophy as a "complete system of the sciences, an *encyclopaedia*, which would assign each science its special place in the general body of knowledge."⁸⁶ Such was the idea of philosophy championed by Johann G. Fichte in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, followed by Friedrich von Schelling in his *System der gesamten Philosophie*, and then encapsulated by Hegel in his *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.⁸⁷ After the 1840s, however, the supremacy of philosophy in the academy was no longer held to be true. Philosophy was no longer the brooding mother hen, holding the sciences together. Rather, she had become an empty nester.

Alongside philosophy in the nineteenth century, theology too was having an "identity crisis."⁸⁸ Bavinck attempted to respond to this crisis.⁸⁹ In the space that remains in this chapter, I will attend to

⁸⁵ The term "identity crisis" was utilized first by Herbart Schnädelbach, *Philosophy in Germany, 1831-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 5, 67.

⁸⁶ Frederick Beiser, *After Hegel*, 15. (Emphasis mine).

⁸⁷ Beiser, *After Hegel*, 15-16.

⁸⁸ *RD*, I, 19. In the Netherlands, this crisis can be seen in the 1876 Higher Education Act, in which theology faculties were turned into religious studies departments, albeit whilst retaining the name "theology" (*godgeleerdheid*).

⁸⁹ *CWV*, 29.

Bavinck's understanding of a world- and lifeview as it relates to his understanding of faith. Indeed, Bavinck's deployment of theology as the *Universalwissenschaft*, his construction of a *Wereldbeschouwing*, and the essence of the encyclopaedia as *Wissenschaftlehre* are all clear markers of his participation in this conversation.⁹⁰ The concept of world- and lifeview was latent in Bavinck's early work "Geloofswetenschap." In this work Bavinck, negotiates three categories: thinking, being, and acting. The relationship between these three categories comes to the fore in his later work, *Christian Worldview* (1904).⁹¹

⁹⁰ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 39n38. Pass notes the numerous locations of Bavinck's citations of Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. 1, 5-6; vol. 2, 17, 19, 29, 30, 79ff, 124ff. This is significant for Pass' argument of Trendelenburg being indebted to Schelling, and Pass ties Schelling to Bavinck in line with the reading of Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 32-33; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 123-150. Sutanto connects Bavinck's epistemology to that of Hartmann; Manuscript "Untitled" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5. Bavinck's perception of the theological encyclopaedia as akin to philosophy, and theology as the *UniversalWissenschaft* is stimulating. Bavinck writes: "Philosophy would only be *UniversalWissenschaft*, according to Kant's *Streit der Facultäten* if it investigates everything freely, while law, theology, and medicine practice positively." [Dutch: De filosofie zou alleen Universal Wissenschaft zijn, die volgens Kant *Streit der Facultaten* alles vrij onderzoekt, terwijl jur. theol.h en med. practich in positief zijn]. But it is not philosophy, but theology that Bavinck places as the *UniversalWissenschaft*; see also Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

⁹¹ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 39n38. Pass notes the numerous locations of Bavinck's citations of Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*, vol. 1, 5-6; vol. 2, 17, 19, 29, 30, 79ff, 124ff. This is significant for Pass' argument of Trendelenburg being indebted to Schelling, and Pass ties Schelling to Bavinck in line with the reading of Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 32-33; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 123-150. Sutanto connects Bavinck's epistemology to that of Hartmann; Manuscript "Untitled" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5. Bavinck's perception of the theological encyclopaedia as akin to philosophy, and theology as the *UniversalWissenschaft* is stimulating. Bavinck writes: "Philosophy would only be *UniversalWissenschaft*, according to Kant's *Streit der Facultäten* if it investigates everything freely, while law, theology, and medicine practice positively." [Dutch: De filosofie zou alleen Universal Wissenschaft zijn, die volgens Kant *Streit der Facultaten* alles vrij onderzoekt, terwijl jur. theol.h en med. practich in positief zijn]. But it is not philosophy, but theology that Bavinck places as the *UniversalWissenschaft*; Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2. In the German University the nature of the university, the organization of knowledge, the unity of theology's various parts, and theology's relationship to the rest of the traditional faculties were all problems facing theology. "In the German tradition, these problems bear the collective name of theological encyclopaedia (*theologische Enzyklopädie*)." The same issue faced Dutch universities.

The harmony of the human personality is a conception Bavinck returns to with some frequency. The development of a world- and life view is a natural outcome that follows on the heels of the development of the human personality. The Augustinian or alternatively, Bavinckian soul is restless until it finds its rest in God.⁹² For this reason, Bavinck understood all humans to be in the process of attempting to harmonize their experience of reality.⁹³ The individual human personality is a combination of both internal and external forces developing in both a centripetal and centrifugal fashion.⁹⁴ Just as the human body develops organically with appendages not being attached mechanically, so the psychology of the human unfolds gradually through natural growth.⁹⁵ Such that, Bavinck would assert that the human embryo contains the whole person –the child, the father, and the old man.⁹⁶ The human person develops outward from the embryo and as it develops into a child at the centre the human personality forms “with its rational and moral self-determination, with its thinking and willing, with its own judgment and freedom.”⁹⁷ While the embryo contains the whole person, Bavinck would also argue that humans are just as much a product of their environment.⁹⁸ In this way, the organic development of the human relies on a centripetal and centrifugal movement, he writes:

The cooperation of these two factors also brings about a development that moves in the direction of the periphery towards the centre.) This means that, in general, the organism first takes in the outside world, feeds on what it likes in it, and then, nourished and strengthened by this, unfolds and expands its inner life. Development consists of "*Selbterhaltung*" and "*Selbstentfaltung*"; man first takes in, physically and mentally, what suits him and is necessary for his existence in his environment, and then himself grows and matures through this, expands and affects his environment. He first conserves in order to be able to expend afterwards; he gathers in order to scatter; he eats in order to live; he enriches himself from the past in order to be able to work for the future; he is conservative in order to be liberal. The more man, like every organism in general, absorbs the past, the environment, the outside world, the nurturing forces in his environment, the

⁹² Parker and Clausing, “Introduction,” in *GICR*, 5-6; Bavinck, “The Christian Faith,” in *What is Christianity?* trans. and ed. Gregory Parker Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2022), 72; The idea of the harmonized personality is deeply Bavinckian and it connects to the production of a world-and life view. Earlier in the chapter, Bavinck described Zwingli’s perception of faith as providing harmony to the human personality, see *EUZ*, 57-58.

⁹³ *CWV*, 22. The restlessness of the human soul is rooted in the discord introduced by sin.

⁹⁴ Bavinck, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1916), 138-139.

⁹⁵ Bavinck, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd*, 135-136.

⁹⁶ Bavinck, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd*, 136.

⁹⁷ Bavinck, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd*, 139-140.

⁹⁸ *CWV*, 116-117.

stronger and richer he becomes internally, the more he grows in body and soul, he becomes a human being, a personality who needs his own place and sphere of influence, who works back on his environment and who can and must assert himself alongside and against others.⁹⁹

The development of the human person thus relies on both inner and outer stimuli to bring forward the human personality. The human personality nonetheless does not remain simply receptive, but becomes active in engaging its environment. One form this engagement takes is the attempt to synthesize the reality of the human experience.

Bavinck himself is a superlative example of this as a “centripetal scholar,” that is one who has a vision for connecting all of knowledge into a cohesive and unifying system.¹⁰⁰ Yet we may also rightly acknowledge that Bavinck — along with all humans — was “centrifugal” and in this way his own personality presses upon the world. The human personality develops a world- and lifeview to bring harmony to the various facets of the human experience. While God provides the objective harmony it is the subjective faculty of faith that facilitates this harmony for mankind.¹⁰¹

Faith provides the harmony for the self, the sciences, and facilitates a comprehensive social imaginary.¹⁰² Accordingly, faith seeking understanding does not lead strictly to theology, but it leads

⁹⁹ Bavinck, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd*, 138:

[Dutch: De samenwerking van deze beide factoren brengt verder eene ontwikkeling tot stand, die zich beweegt in de richting van de peripherie naar het centrum '). Daarmede wordt bedoeld, dat het organisme in het algemeen eerst de buitenwereld in zich opneemt, zich voedt met wat daarin van zijne gading is, en vervolgens, daardoor gevoed en gesterkt, zijn innerlijk leven ontvouwt en uitbreidt. Ontwikkeling bestaat in „Selbterhaltung" en „Selbstentfaltung"; de mensch neemt eerst, lichamelijk en geestelijk, in zich op, wat in zijne omgeving hem past en voor zijn bestaan noodig is, en dan komt hij zelf daardoor tot groei en wasdom, breidt zich uit en werkt op zijne omgeving in. Hij verzamelt eerst, om daarna te kunnen uitgeven; hij vergadert, om te verstrooien; hij eet, om te leven; hij verrijkt zich uit het verleden, om te kunnen arbeiden voor de toekomst; hij is conservatief, om liberaal te kunnen zijn. Naarmate de mensch toch, evenals ieder organisme in het algemeen, het verleden, het milieu, de buitenwereld, de voedende krachten in zijne omgeving in zich opneemt, wordt hij zelf innerlijk sterker en rijker, groeit hij naar lichaam en ziel, wordt hij mensch, persoonlijkheid, die een eigen plaats en sfeer van invloed behoeft, op zijne omgeving terugwerkt en zich naast en tegenover anderen kan en moet doen gelden].

¹⁰⁰ *BCB*, xviii; Burke, *The Polymath*, 6-7.

¹⁰¹ *CWW*, 52. “The human being finds no rest until God becomes *his* God and *his* Father... Even for the deepest thinker, there is no justification thanks to the concept [of Hegel]; it is only from faith.”

¹⁰² *CWW*, 34, 46.

towards a comprehensive world- and lifeview.¹⁰³ Faith then is open to the world as it seeks to harmonize reality. As a polymath of this sort, Bavinck understood that in cultural and intellectual terms the “ground was shifting beneath his feet.”¹⁰⁴ Bavinck industriously strove to construct a cohesive system or world- and lifeview. As Brock, Eglinton, and Sutanto write, “[Worldview] is an attempt to unify the self, the head and heart, on the ground of a primary agreement between religion, science, and philosophy. A world and life view means, in brief, faith seeking understanding.”¹⁰⁵

For Herman the human personality develops throughout the various stages from infant, childhood, into maturity. The development of a world- and lifeview acts accordingly through the *habitus* of faith as one navigates the world in the process of imitating and remembering Christ. Faith facilitates the harmony of the individual personality that undergirds the production of the Christian world- and lifeview culminating in the kingdom of God. Importantly, the harmonizing role of faith in the production of a world- and lifeview is mirrored by the harmonizing role of theology among the sciences. In faith seeking understanding the agent opens up to the world as an active theological agent.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at the “pile of faith” as a subjective foundation for all of the sciences. We also inspected the role of the human subject in the sciences, demonstrating that for Bavinck, all sciences begin *a priori* from a position of faith, and as such, all sciences are faith-sciences. In that setting, theology emerges as the faith-science par excellence. This allowed us to begin to see the close connection that faith provides for all the sciences, but in particular dogmatics and ethics. This “pile of faith” supports our systematic theology home. Theology has its starting point in the subject, the believing subject, the subject who has been given faith.

In the first chapter, we considered Herman Bavinck as a man of faith. He was placed within the social imaginary of the age of mobilization with ancient regime tendencies. From this starting point we were able to see that his reflections on faith were not a distant intellectual activity, but that they coincided with an intimate knowledge of the life of faith. His faith was all-encompassing, as such was not strictly oriented

¹⁰³ Bavinck, “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good,” 135. The human personality has its telos in the kingdom of God.

¹⁰⁴ *BCB*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *CWV*, 11.

toward theology, but was interested in organizing and framing all of society around faith.¹⁰⁶ Faith then frames and permeates all of the activities of the Christian life, but in particular this allows us to see a natural connection between his dogmatic and ethical work. Rather than seeing them in antithesis with one another they ought to be viewed as the activity of *faith seeking understanding*, including the inevitable tensions.

In his early work “The Science of Faith” Bavinck makes an illuminating claim, that is *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed) cannot be divided from the *fides qua creditur* (the faith by which it is believed). This links the intellect and the will, or the head and the heart in the activity of believing. Therefore, faith functions as a “pile” which connects what Christians confess about God with the activity of their lives. Dogmatics and ethics then are not unique on account of the subject, but on account of the object. Faith then is an additional “pile” that connects dogmatics and ethics. This becomes more profound when one recognizes that Bavinck connects the activity of belief with love.¹⁰⁷ In light of Bavinck’s appropriation of Augustine, theology as a discipline begins to take the shape of humans formed in head and heart to delight in and love God and love neighbor — theological *thinking* and *loving*.

In the third part, we considered how faith plays a fundamental role in the *christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (Christian worldview). *A priori* faith undergirds all of the activity of humanity in the sciences, but also outside of the sciences. A world- and lifeview that does not take faith into consideration does not harmonize reality for humans. Therefore, God provides the harmony the world longs for, and faith facilitates this for man in his world- and lifeview. Faith is not restricted to the head or heart, nor is it restricted to the individual, rather faith is holistic and pervades all aspects of the believer’s life. Accordingly, this third section explored how faith provides a framework for the cohesion of reality that connects God, self, and world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *BCB*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ “Faith and Love,” 1-3.

¹⁰⁸ A fruitful avenue to expand this study would be to consider how Bavinck’s nephew, Johan H. Bavinck, amplifies and nuances Herman’s connection between faith and world- and lifeview. Johan, developed this concept further in his work *Persoonlijkheid en Wereldbeschouwing* (J. Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en Wereldbeschouwing* (J.H. Kok: Kampen, 1928); forthcoming English translation, see James Eglinton, *Personality and Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2023). Like Herman, Johan saw an intimate connection between personality and worldview and he advanced this further through the inclusion of the idea of worldvision (*wereldvisie*). The first aspect of worldview that Johan introduces is that of progress and this development is rooted in the diversity of personality and environment. It is not hard to imagine a conscious advancing of his uncle’s neo-Calvinist imaginary (6-8, 174).

These three sections build on each other, such that one is able to view Bavinck as a man who relates intimately to the faith he expositis across his lifetime in various ways. He argues that not just theology, but all sciences begins in faith. Thus, while theology has its starting point in faith, this is not what makes it unique; theology's origin and object is what makes it unique. All men relate to the sciences through the subject and possess *a priori* assumptions. Therefore, all sciences are linked by faith and this rather than excluding theology posits theology as the premier science. In the academy, the harmonizing and unifying role that faith plays for the discipline of theology is mirrored in the human personality through the development of a world- and lifeview.

We briefly looked at the role of the Holy Spirit as the author of faith, and thus faith is not the source, but the organ the Holy Spirit. The Spirit applies the benefits of Christ, set aside by the Father in election. The role of the Holy Spirit in the relationship of dogmatics and ethics will be further explored in the chapter that follows. There we will consider how the Holy Spirit in the divine operation of regeneration moves humans from passive to active moral agents. This will establish for us a framework through which to see that ethics as the transformed human, whose head and heart are regenerated through the activity of the Holy Spirit, placed into union with Christ, and vivified through this union toward a life of hallowed and hallowing love.

Chapter Four: The Reformation of *Hoofd en Hart*

“Although not the head, but the heart is the centre of man. There he dwells himself, this is his inner-chamber; in the heart man is first honest with himself. The head is the entrance and the waiting room; the heart is the temple, the sanctuary of man. Only he who has won the heart has the man. Wherefore the Lord demands first our heart, and then also intellect and all strength.”¹ – H. Bavinck

“Christians are anointed as prophets, priests, and kings... They believe; therefore, they speak and confess the name of Jesus before men... As priests... they offer sacrifices of praise, of thanksgiving, of adoration, and exaltation... As kings they fight against three great enemies. Those enemies are their own flesh, the devil, and the world.”² — Jan Bavinck

In this chapter, the thesis turns to consider the transformation of the head and the heart by the Holy Spirit as it relates to humans as *passive* and *active*. As was shown in the first chapter, several of Bavinck’s brief statements of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics engaged this exact topic:

In dogmatics, man is *passive*; they receive and believe; in ethics they themselves are active *agents*.³

The dogmatics is a word from God to us, from the outside, from the top to the bottom of us; we work *passively*, listening, allowing ourselves to be operated on. In ethics: what will become of us, if God works in us in this way, what will we do for him? We are *active*, precisely through the deed of God to and within us, we are praising, appreciating, and thanking God.⁴

The dividing line does not pass between faith and works, credenda and agenda, rest and work, God and man, salvation and life, intellect and will, individual and community, but between people as *passive* and *active*...⁵

Dogmatics describes Sunday, *passive*, rest

¹ Bavinck, “Hoofd en Hart,” in *Christophilus. Jaarboekje Nederlandsch Jongelings-Verbond* (1892): 71-75, 75; Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 10-13. Two handwritten manuscripts of “Hoofd en Hart” are available in the Herman Bavinck archive (see “Hoofd en Hart” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 114.

² Jan Bavinck, *Heidelbergsche Catechismus: In 60 Leerredenen Verklaard*, Deel I (J.H. Kok: Kampen, 1903), 203-205.

³ *RD*, I, 58.

⁴ *GE I*, 47; *RE I*, 22.

⁵ Manuscript “Untitled” (no dates), Box 346, Folder 227, 47-48.

Ethics ” ” workdays, *active*⁶

At least three of our four sources identify (to varying degrees) that the difference between dogmatics and ethics runs through the difference in the human subject as *passive* and *active*. This movement of humans from *passive* to *active* requires three other “piles” to surface, that of regeneration, sanctification, and *unio mystica* with Christ. This important detail should not be neglected in considering the movement from passive to active in humans: in Bavinck’s understanding of human psychology, we are not strictly passive or active as it relates to normal human activity.⁷ For example, students in a classroom are both passive and active.⁸ The soul is both passive and active (with sensation it is passive, whereas with perception it is active).⁹ Feeling is both passive and active (in emotions and affection it is passive, whereas in the will, these are activities of the soul).¹⁰

The distinction between *passive* and *active* divides the twin disciplines of dogmatics and ethics. In relation to the works of God (as studied in dogmatics), humans are entirely passive. Humans become active (as studied in ethics), however, through this work of God.¹¹ The organ of faith as a receptive organ facilitates the continued interplay between God and humans in the Christian life.¹² I recall here what was already discussed in the previous chapter, there Bavinck’s vision for a unified head and heart, *contra* Kant, via the harmony of the personality in faith. This chapter builds on that by providing an understanding of how the human person moves theologically from *passive* to *active*. This movement is a depiction of the divine activity of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, by which the creatures eternal *unio mystica* with Christ is realized

⁶ “Untitled Loose Papers” (no date), Box 346, Folder 56.

⁷ *RD* III, 116; This is true also of Schleiermacher (see Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §9); Ziegler, “The Adventitious Origins of the Calvinist Moral Subject,” 220. Ziegler summary of Calvin is apt here, “This is confirmed all the more by Calvin’s account of the gracious regeneration of human being – and concomitant recreation of the human moral agent – in the advent of salvation.”

⁸ Bavinck, *De opvoeding der rijpere jeugd*, 214.

⁹ Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie*, 51, 69, 86, 92, 151; *Foundations of Psychology*, 56-57, 93, 116, 124. 205-206.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie*, 67; *Foundations of Psychology*, 89;

¹¹ Of course, the academic discipline of dogmatics and ethics are both creaturely activities, thus when considered from the perspective of the creature in this thesis dogmatic is framed as theological *thinking*, and ethics theological *loving*. Dogmatics describes however the activity of God, while ethics describes the activity of regenerate humans.

¹² See later discussion in this chapter on sanctification.

in time and having acquired the benefits of Christ in the Spirit (justification, sanctification, adoption, etc.) they live active ethical lives.

In the first section, we consider Bavinck's *hoofd en hart* leitmotif by looking at his 1892 essay on the relationship between these two faculties. This particular source has remained hitherto unexplored in scholarship on Bavinck. In this essay, he attempts to clarify for the reader the relationship between the head and the heart. Therein Bavinck presents the heart as the spiritual centre of man. As such, the transformation of the heart results in the transformation of the head and facilitates the movement of humanity from *passive* to *active* creatures.

In the second, Bavinck's psychology is further explored through facilitating a dialogue between Anthony Hoekema's 1948 dissertation on the primacy of the heart in Bavinck and Cory Brock's work on Bavinck's appropriation of Schleiermacher. This brings a corrective to Hoekema and allows us to better envision Bavinck's understanding of the faculties that compose the head and the heart.

In the third section, this leitmotif is submerged within an account of Bavinck's theological anthropology through the *munus triplex* (threefold office) vision – which he later links to head and heart. This supplies us with a redemptive framework (the origin, fall, redemption, and destiny of humans) to facilitate discussion on the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating humans, uniting them to Christ, and moving them from *passive* to *active* ethical agents. This ethical agency is unfurled through the vision of humans as prophets, priests, and kings. In this respect, we glimpse the anthropological narrative of redemption and the *munus triplex* of Christ theme, as they relate to the calling and destiny of mankind as the image of God.

As such, this chapter forms an important part in my account of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics in considering how the activity of God on behalf of man transforms and informs the activity of man on behalf of God. This will yield a clearer understanding of Bavinck's conception of the transformation of head and heart and ultimately the relationship between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics. In this chapter then, the "piles" regeneration, sanctification, and *unio mystica* are approached. We begin with an entrance into Bavinck's vision of the transformation of the head and heart.

I. Bavinck's "Hoofd en Hart" (1892)

Hidden in the 1892 work *Christophilus. Jaarboekje Nederlandsch Jongelings-Verbond*, the yearbook of the Dutch Youth Association, is a contribution attributed to "W." Bavinck, listed in the table of contents as "Hoofd en

Hart” (Head and Heart).¹³ The Dutch Youth Association was a society of young men between the ages of 18 and 35 formed in Amsterdam in 1853 as a result of the *Réviel*.¹⁴ The Dutch Youth Association later merged with the Young Men’s Christian Association (Y.M.C.A). As such, the audience was composed of young men wrestling with the intersection of theology and life in their late modern social context.¹⁵ When one arrives at page 71, where the article begins, the work is actually by an “H.” Bavinck.

In the first portion of the essay, Bavinck pays specific attention to the role Scripture attributes to the heart. He suggests that believers in the West often attribute merely the affections of our soul to the heart, whereas Scripture also gives it priority as an organ of cognition. He perceives a sociological distinction between Eastern and Western frameworks in approaches to the psychological faculties. He argues that while the Western framework gives priority to the head at the expense of the heart, the East grants primacy to the heart at the expense of the head. Significantly, Bavinck seems to posit that the Eastern framework is more rooted in Scripture: the Bible itself, he argues, gives priority not to the head, but to the heart.¹⁶

In the second portion, Bavinck draws upon the German Idealist philosopher Johann Fichte to argue in favour of the heart and the head working together in science. In his *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), Fichte wrote, “The kind of philosophy one chooses thus depends on the kind of person one is.”¹⁷ In that work, Fichte argues that the character of the person is integral to the philosophy the individual produces. Bavinck continues this idea here, but with specific application to the notions of heart and head. The heart of an individual, he argues, is integral to the output of the head, to the extent that there is no such thing as “neutral” philosophy or science.

¹³ Bavinck, “Hoofd en Hart,” 71.

¹⁴ The *Réviel* was an international revival of Reformed thinking in the nineteenth century. Within the Netherlands it was cultivated and promoted by Willem Bilderdijk. In 1906 Bavinck wrote a positive biography on Willem Bilderdijk (see Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als Denker en Dichter* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1906).

¹⁵ Taylor, “Religious Mobilizations,” 294. These associations are one example of new mobilised forms of association.

¹⁶ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 10-11.

¹⁷ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 11; Johann G. Fichte, “[First] Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*,” in Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and other writings*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 20.

Because it is practiced by humans—as practitioners with hearts—all science is undertaken from a particular vantage point.¹⁸ To argue otherwise, Bavinck believed, is to disrupt the unity of the individual human—a unity that manifests itself in the power of the heart in science. In science, it is often the heart, rather than the head, that must be compelled. Indeed, it is the heart that wins the head. In making this case, Bavinck appeals to Schopenhauer and Kant—both of whom spoke of a rebirth that must take place in the human subject. For this reason, Bavinck suggested, we must give priority to the heart in science, because “intellect and will are not suspended in the air, nor can they move to their heart’s content; they are bound to and rooted in the inner nature, in the heart of man.” Echoing Scripture, Bavinck writes of the heart as being like a tree: if planted well, it will develop good fruits. Nonetheless, in the absence of spiritual and moral renewal, even the brightest mind can be a “dangerous tool.”¹⁹

Bavinck then returns to the importance of the head. In this respect, he focuses on thinking which is the activity of the “conscious.” There, he argued that “thinking” remains one of the most significant activities of the human mind.²⁰ “Consciousness” then seems to be an activity of the head, and acts as the “waiting room” of man. The head provides access to the human personality and serves as the “royal road” that God himself walks as his word works in believers. After all, faith comes through hearing (Rom. 10:17).²¹ In the final section, Bavinck considers the question of what is more central: the head or the heart.

Although not the head, but the heart is the centre of man. There he dwells himself, this is his inner-chamber; in the heart man is first honest with himself. The head is the entrance and the waiting room; the heart is the temple, the sanctuary of man. Only he who has won the heart has the man. Wherefore the Lord demands first our heart and then also intellect and all strength.²²

Ultimately, the human subject is led by the heart. Just as the continual pulsing of the (physical) heart keeps the man alive, it is through the (figurative) heart that God pursues man. The short article closes by

¹⁸ *RD I*, 156.

¹⁹ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 12; cf. Bavinck, “The Christian Faith,” 72-73. Bavinck uses the organic imagery of a tree to describe then both the cultivation of the Christian mind, but also the Christian life.

²⁰ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 12. An easy connection can be envisioned here between “Hoofd and Hart” and Bavinck’s 1880 essay “Geloofswetenschap” in which faith has both an intellectual and ethical element — here the renewal of the heart facilitates the ethical renewal of humans, which linked to the head results in faith seeking understanding.

²¹ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 12-13.

²² Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 13.

considering the operation of the Spirit in humans. Because the Holy Spirit works in humanity “gently and sweetly” and as the “master of the human heart” he does not coerce, but inclines the heart toward himself, “because he is almighty love.”²³ In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that transforms humanity, beginning in the heart and proceeding to their head, moving them from *passive* to *active*.

As such, Bavinck argues that Scripture presents the heart, rather than the head, as the centre of the spiritual life of humans.²⁴ The heart is nothing less than the “principle, the root, the focal and midpoint of life, and of all the activities of the soul.”²⁵ This theme of the precedence of the heart remains constant throughout Bavinck’s theological program. This early essay is matched by statements in his *Reformed Dogmatics*:

...the heart, according to Scripture, is the *organ* of man’s life. It is, first, the centre of physical life but then also, in a metaphorical sense, the seat and fountain of man’s entire psychic life, of emotions and passions, of desire and will, even of thinking and knowing. From the heart flow “the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). This life, which originates in the heart, then splits into two streams. On the one hand, we must distinguish the life that embraces all impressions, awarenesses, perceptions, observations, thoughts, knowledge, and wisdom. Especially in its higher forms, the central organ of this life is the *mind* (*nous*). This life further embodies itself in words and language. On the other hand, the heart is the seat of all the emotions, passions, urges, inclinations, attachments, desires, and decisions of the will, which have to be led by the mind (*nous*) and express themselves in action.²⁶

²³ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 13; cf. J. Bavinck, *Persoonlijkheid en Wereldbeschouwing*, 40.

²⁴ It is interesting to note that modern psychology posits that we intuit, emote before we think and that we rationalise back to our intuitions, in other words, the head follows the heart. See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 32-61; Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 57.

²⁵ Bavinck, “Head and Heart,” 10-11; The heart is also the centre of man for Willem Bilderdijk (see Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als denker en dichter*, 119. “For Bilderdijk, therefore, the heart is the centre of man; from it are the channels of all life; it is the source of the knowledge for the intellect and also the root of the will.”

²⁶ *RD* II, 556-557. On the uniformity of these views between the first and second editions, see *GD1*^c, II, 538; *GD2*^c, II, 598). See also Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie 2e* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1923), 50-51; Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, *TBR* 9 (2018): 1-252, 100, 218. See also, heart: 11, 21, 26, 38, 47, 72, 74, 100, 101, 126, 184, 189, 194, 198, 206, 213, 214, 215, 217, 218, 222, 241. See also, head: 20-21, 23, 71, 100, 101, 187, 222, 241.

Notably, these views remain unchanged across the first and second editions of his *Dogmatics*. The agent is then transformed by the Spirit *ad intra* into a theological agent living out of her redeemed heart in theological *thinking* and *loving ad extra*.

II. The primacy of the heart and the faculties of Bavinck's psychology

Hoekema's 1948 thesis on Bavinck's account of psychology focused particularly on the question of what was determinative of human nature: "What is the ruling centre in man, which ultimately determines all that he thinks, says, and does?"²⁷ Hoekema explores this historically, scripturally, and psychologically. First, he introduces Bavinck's articulation and then relates his articulation with other theologians. Then he compares Bavinck's articulation with that of Scripture. Lastly, Hoekema offers his own interpretation of the heart, heavily leaning on Bavinck, while bringing it into conversation with the psychology current to his own day. Hoekema concludes that Bavinck's understanding of the heart – and not the head – as the ruling centre of man is a correct reading of Scripture.²⁸

Hoekema defines "heart" as follows: "By the term heart is meant the inner core of human personality; the organ of thinking, feeling, and willing, as well as the seat of sin, of faith, and of spiritual renewal."²⁹ Importantly, he sees heart and soul as used interchangeably by Bavinck. Moreover, although it is not precisely synonymous with "soul," sometimes ego does overlap with it in Bavinck's usage.³⁰ The various faculties of psychology undergo a shift in Bavinck's lifetime, but the primacy of the "heart" remains central to his understanding of human psychology.³¹

Bavinck's articulation of human psychology can be viewed as unfolding across his corpus in two stages. In the first stage, Bavinck's early psychology adopted three psychological faculties (thinking, feeling, willing)—an approach to psychology that Bavinck associated with the philosophy of the eighteenth

²⁷ Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," xv; This chapter adds to Hoekema's work by bringing it into conversation with modern scholarship on Bavinck, including archival material. Hoekema relegates the faculty of feeling to that of emotions, rather than recognizing its Romantic heritage (see Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," 200).

²⁸ Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," xvii. Primary or primacy indicates that it is the "ruling centre of man."

²⁹ Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," xvii.

³⁰ Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," xvii.

³¹ Pass, "Reading Bavinck's Ethics," 462. In Pass' stellar review he relates how Bavinck's conception of the psychological faculties developed across his lifetime.

century.³² In his unfinished and youthful *Reformed Ethics*, he writes, “It is the same single and entire *I* which thinks, wills, and feels.”³³ This is also how the philosophy of mind is summarized in Bavinck’s early article on the “Conscience.”³⁴ In Bruce Pass’ review of the English translation of *Reformed Ethics* he insightfully notes, this threefold faculty is pruned down to two prior to the turn of the century: the faculties of knowing (*kenvermogen*) and of desiring (*begeervermogen*).³⁵ Bavinck rejects feeling (*gevoel*) as an independent faculty because of the “unwelcomed consequences the faculty would have on the conceptualization of faith.”³⁶ In his conception of human psychology feeling (*gevoel*), then, is the thing that is shifted the most.

The second stage is represented by his *Beginselen der psychologie* (1897) where feeling has been placed under the faculty of knowing (*kenvermogen*), in order to become a type of knowing.³⁷ In this revised arrangement, feeling is a type of knowledge that is immediate, that precedes all thinking and reflection and is passive.³⁸ As observed by Brock, Bavinck identifies two definitions for the faculty of feeling (*gevoelvermogen*): “(1) feeling is an immediate consciousness of pleasure and unpleasure, occurring prior to reflection; (2) the state wherein the soul is wholly passive, being acted on by an external object.”³⁹ Bavinck submits the faculty of feeling under knowing, because its opposite—feeling as an independent faculty—has

³² Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, 61-62.

³³ *GE*, 62-63; *RE* 47-48. For dating *GE*, see page 24n35.

³⁴ Bavinck, “Conscience,” trans. Nelson. Kloosterman *TBR* 6 (2015):113-126, 124; “Het Geweten,” in *De Vrije Kerk* 7 (1881): 27–37, 49–58.

³⁵ Pass, “Reading Bavinck’s Ethics,” 462.

³⁶ Pass, “Reading Bavinck’s Ethics,” 462.

³⁷ Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 62-63; Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, 82.

³⁸ Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 63-64; Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, 83. One could note here how the first two stages might be influenced by the psychology of Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher embraced a three-fold philosophy of mind (feeling, thinking, and willing). Faith most properly belongs to feeling (hence the feeling of absolute dependence). This threefold faculty, however, is always intertwined as one’s internal existence (feeling) becomes external in thinking/doing. (See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §1-6). Thus, in Bavinck’s first iteration of psychology, the human necessarily has passive (internal) and active (external) components. In the second stage, he subtly moves both away from and towards Schleiermacher. For Schleiermacher feeling (*gevoel*) is intertwined with both thinking and willing. Bavinck moves feeling under knowing (*kenvermogen*). He does not give it independent status. Feeling, in other words, is not thinking (*denken*), but it does belong to the knowing (*kennen*) capacity. For Bavinck’s criticism of Schleiermacher’s threefold faculty see *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 70; *Foundations of Psychology*, 93.

³⁹ Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 144.

anthropological and ethical consequences: namely, the ethical becomes disconnected from the physical, accompanied by the loss of harmony in the psychical life, which, he believed, would lead to Pelagianism, rationalism, and mysticism.⁴⁰ In other words, for Bavinck, how one understands human psychology has implications on the other sciences—ethics and aesthetics, theology and philosophy, and even how one understands the various loci in dogmatics.⁴¹

At this juncture, careful attention should be paid the significance of Brock’s work in identifying Bavinck’s appropriation of Schleiermacher’s grammar of feeling.⁴² Brock draws out the more positive movement towards Schleiermacher’s thought in Bavinck’s second stage. Specifically, Brock recognizes how Bavinck emphasizes the importance of the self-consciousness. Much like Schleiermacher, Bavinck’s account of self-consciousness gives immediate knowledge of the self, world, and God. Additionally, one might consider how Bavinck’s “grammar of piety” has consonance with Schleiermacher’s.⁴³

In Bavinck’s earlier stage he argued that faith was anterior to feeling.⁴⁴ Yet in *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1908), Bavinck argues that immediate self-consciousness, which is understood as a function of feeling (*gevoel*) – therefore belonging to the faculty of knowledge – precedes faith as the unity of real and ideal being.⁴⁵ In other words, prior to all thinking and doing, humans are aware of themselves, the world—a harmony facilitated by God in the human experience. The differences to be noted between these early lectures in ethics and Bavinck’s later publications reflect the delicate development of Bavinck’s philosophy of mind.⁴⁶

The mature Bavinck then distinguished two faculties of the heart: *het kenvermogen* (the faculty of knowing) and *het begeervermogen* (the faculty of desire).⁴⁷ Amidst the faculty of knowing there were two

⁴⁰ Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 69; *Foundations of Psychology*, 92.

⁴¹ Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 69; *Foundations of Psychology*, 92.

⁴² Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 145-147.

⁴³ By “grammar of piety” I mean the transformation of the head and heart in Schleiermacher captured in the the abiding consciousness of being in relation to Christ — a permanent condition of mind and heart (*Gemütszustände*). See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 116n2; Julia Lamm, *Schleiermacher: Christmas Dialogue, The Second Speech, and Other Selections* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014), 44-45, 57-62; *RD IV*, 60-61.

⁴⁴ *RE I*, 53-4; *GE*, 67.

⁴⁵ *POR*, 63-69.

⁴⁶ See also Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 142-146

⁴⁷ Hoekema, “The Centrality of the Heart,” 24.

levels: a higher (*intellectus*), and lower (*sensus*) faculty of knowledge. While animals possess the *sensus*, they do not possess the higher *intellectus*. Angels and humans possess both the *intellectus* and *sensus*.⁴⁸ The higher *intellectus* encapsulates the intellect (*verstand*), reason (*rede*), and feeling (*gevoel*).⁴⁹ Importantly, then, belonging to the higher level of knowledge is the faculty of feeling (*gevoel*).⁵⁰ These higher faculties of knowledge are what connect humanity to the invisible and infinite. Where in the human person does Bavinck locate this higher knowledge? While one might anticipate the head, his location is in the heart. He writes, “The presentation of Scripture roots both the intellect (*verstand*) and will in the heart of man; and in it God has laid eternity (Eccl. 3:11).”⁵¹ The heart is where the faculty of knowing is positioned. If you recall from the previous chapter, this links with his conception of “believing” as an activity of intellect and will. Therefore, the theological agent thinks and loves out of the unity of the heart.

The positioning of the faculty of knowing in the heart leads us deeper in Bavinck’s psychology as it beckons us to consider the whereabouts of both the conscience and self-consciousness in relation to the head and heart. Just as Bavinck locates the faculty of knowing in the heart, so also, conscience and self-consciousness are placed there.⁵²

In Bavinck’s 1881 article on the conscience, he roots the conscience in the heart. He sees Scripture as most closely associating the conscience with the heart.⁵³ In Scripture, the conscience stands as distinct from the faculties and is its own distinct feature of human psychology. The conscience arose in man after the fall. Having imposed itself on the consciousness of humanity, sin remained in conflict with the internal moral law in the heart. This moral law in the heart is not the law itself but is a subordinate norm to the

⁴⁸ In Bavinck’s account, humanity is distinguished from animals and angels. While both mankind and animals can properly be considered “organisms” animals remain beings with no higher faculties. Angels, by contrast, do have higher faculties, but are not “organisms.” As such, humanity is distinguished from both animals and angels on account of being created in the image and likeness of God. Bavinck takes a position here within a larger debate surrounding angels and their relation to the image and likeness of God (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IL: Christian Classics, 1981), I, Q. 93, 3. Aquinas argues on account of the intellect of angels that they bear the image of God more perfectly).

⁴⁹ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 161.

⁵⁰ Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie*, 55.

⁵¹ *GICR*, 15.

⁵² Brock gives significant treatment to both the conscience and self-consciousness (see *Orthodox yet Modern*, 121-170).

⁵³ Bavinck, “Conscience,” 116-117; see also *REI*, 171.

law.⁵⁴ Hence, the unregenerate conscience condemns, just as the law condemns, while the regenerate conscience points one to Christ, as it relates to Christ through promises. The conscience therefore identifies the rift between the ideal and the real, between what is and what is to come.⁵⁵ The Christian conscience continues to be oriented toward Christ until Christ becomes the content of the conscience in the kingdom of God. The law proves itself to our heart always more as genuinely divine, that it agrees with the depth of our being; therein lies the persistent proof for the truth of Christianity, that it satisfies the deepest needs and pronouncements of our conscience, and Christ fulfils to the fullest within us the law of our own personality.⁵⁶

As such, the conscience is not the source of truth. Rather, the conscience is that which exists on account of the fall's effect in disordering the human being's innate self-consciousness and God-consciousness.⁵⁷ The fall likewise disorders the human's relationship to the law such that their conscience primarily condemns them.⁵⁸ This disordering between God and self results in a moral awareness between self and the world, and self and God. As Brock indicates:

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 the conscience (the heart) is 'that domain within the person where self-consciousness occurs,' conceptually arrived at by 'self-reflection' or where one turns to oneself (*tot zichzelven inkeert*).⁵⁹

In Bavinck's mature work of *Reformed Dogmatics* he continues to relate the conscience to the heart and often presents the conscience and heart side by side.⁶⁰

Lastly, we must locate the self-consciousness in Bavinck's account of psychology. Unlike the conscience, prior to the fall, the self-consciousness was present and in harmony with God. However, the

⁵⁴ Bavinck, "Conscience," 126.

⁵⁵ Bavinck, "Conscience," 118-119; *What Is Christianity*, 66.

⁵⁶ Bavinck, "Conscience," 126.

⁵⁷ Bavinck, "Conscience," 113-114; Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern*, 138. Brock notes that this split between God- and self-consciousness "is a grammar adapted from his interactions with Schleiermacher, Vinet, and Chantepie de la Saussaye."

⁵⁸ Bavinck's positioning of the conscience's relationship to the law has consonance with Ziegler's articulation of Calvin's fallen subject (see Ziegler, "The Adventitious Origins of the Calvinist Moral Subject," 219).

⁵⁹ Brock, *Orthodox Yet Modern*, 140. Brock draws from Bavinck, "Conscience," 116.

⁶⁰ *RD II*, 73, 76, 90, 169,; *RD IV*, 34. See also *POR*, 16, 66, 117, 167, 205, 242; *CWV*, 97.

fall produced separation between God and the self-consciousness.⁶¹ Much like the conscience, self-consciousness is an activity of the higher faculty of knowing.⁶² It is so because it belongs to feeling (*gevoel*). Bavinck relates the self-consciousness to the activities of the soul and therefore it relates to the development of the personality. In the depth's of the human personality lie the movements of the human heart, such that as the personality finds harmony in God and the cultivation of world- and lifeview might begin.⁶³

Bavinck describes the self-consciousness as follows: "In self-consciousness, our own being is revealed to us directly, immediately, before thinking, and independently of all willing."⁶⁴ Not just the self is revealed here, but at the root of self-consciousness is our twofold dependence on the world and on God. This self-consciousness, however, does not create its object, but in the true sense of the meaning of revelation, the subject only perceives and receives revelation. Bavinck attempts to retain then a notion of objective revelation. Interestingly, more is implied in this revelation: just as prior to all thinking, man's self-consciousness is convinced of his own existence, he also has an indubitable awareness of the world and God. In other words, self-consciousness postulates both an absolute feeling of dependence (God) and freedom (man's relation to the world). Man feels his dependence on God, and this feeling becomes voluntary, rational, and moral, a conscious dependence and therefore freedom.

III. The Transformation of Head and Heart in Bavinck

At this point, it is necessary to submit Bavinck's psychology within a broader theological anthropology to describe the movement of humans from *passive* to *active* by the operation of the Holy Spirit. In Bavinck's *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*, he provides readers with an accessible entrance into his theological anthropology.⁶⁵ There, humanity is introduced as occupying a special place in creation as "the crown" of God's activity. This is specifically demonstrated through man's unique significance as the organism of the image of God, with a calling to reign over the earth as God's children.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *RD* III, 173.

⁶² Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 122; Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, 166.

⁶³ As noted by Hoekema, Bavinck occasionally uses soul and heart interchangeably. Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," xvii; *POR*, xxvi. The editors of *POR* suggest Bavinck regularly uses "heart", "personality", and "consciousness" "as synonyms to describe the entire faculty range of the human 'mind' (*geest*)."

⁶⁴ *POR*, 53.

⁶⁵ *GICR*, 91-96.

⁶⁶ *GICR*, 91-92.

Three features of importance need to be mentioned in this account. First, the threefold office of Christ is in mind for mankind entails a calling to be “kings of the earth”, to “cultivate” (priestly), and (prophet) “guard the garden of Eden.” Second, Bavinck notes that religion (*cultus*) and culture (*cultuur*) go together in man’s calling, for which reason, all of man’s activity—both religious and cultural—may be viewed through the lens of the image of God, in so far as its true end is in God.⁶⁷ Third, he argues that the image of God is best viewed from the perspective of plurality, with man and woman being created side-by-side as independent partners.⁶⁸ In its calling as prophet, priest, and king, humanity is called to expand and develop its dominion. This takes on separate forms, which are respectively organic and mechanical; they are living stones in the temple of God.⁶⁹ Man is animated by the breath of life toward his eternal destiny as the body of Christ in the kingdom of God.⁷⁰

Adam was earthly, possessing a natural body (*natuurlijk lichaam*), and became a living soul (*levende ziel*).⁷¹ What Adam lacked, he had to acquire by way of the covenant of works.⁷² Externally, humanity was given a distinct form of revelation: the prohibitory command. Internally, the moral law was within his heart to guide him. Humanity was created in the image of God, this image includes not only their spiritual, rational, and moral faculties and powers, but even their bodies.⁷³ Bavinck maintains that the image of God belongs to the essence of man.⁷⁴ Man’s destiny lay before him. As Bavinck put it, “His origin was divine, his

⁶⁷ These themes are more explicit in *Magnalia Dei* (see *MD*, 169-170; *TWWG*, 188-189); *RD* II, 577.

⁶⁸ See *MD*, 169-170; *TWWG*, 188-189).

⁶⁹ *RD* II, 588.

⁷⁰ The image of God then has its *telos* in the collective as the body of Christ in the kingdom of God.

⁷¹ Augustine, *City of God* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), Book XIII, c. 23. Bavinck’s depiction is similar to Augustine’s description of the human body in its various stages. According to Augustine, Adam of the “earthy earth was made a living soul.” After the fall and prior to death, the human body is earthy and “soul-informed.” After physical death, humans retains a body, but is no longer earthy, but heavenly – and therefore it possesses a distinct quality.

⁷² For an excellent overview of the covenant framework of Bavinck’s theology see Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*.

⁷³ *GICR*, 93-94.

⁷⁴ *GICR*, 94-95; This position differentiates Bavinck from Roman Catholic thinking. See Parker, “Reformation or Revolution: Herman Bavinck and Henri De Lubac on Nature and Grace,” *Perichoresis* 15:3 (2017): 81-95.

nature was kindred with the divine, his destiny was the beatific vision. But whether he would reach that destiny was made by his own choice, and made dependent (*afhankelijk*) on his own, free will.”⁷⁵

However, as noted by Bavinck, humanity succumbed to doubt in a “profoundly psychological way”—an act of unbelief that galvanized the imagination to delight with the eyes, desire in the heart, and eventually reach forth with the will and sin.⁷⁶ The conscience arose in man. Humans did not have a conscience prior to the fall because they lived in harmony with God. Bavinck wrote:

Before the fall, strictly speaking, there was no conscience in humans.⁷⁷ There was no gap between what they were and what they knew they had to be. Being and self-consciousness were in harmony. But the fall produced separation. By the grace of God, humans still retain the consciousness that they ought to be different, that in all respects they must conform to God’s law.⁷⁸

The conscience first arose in Adam and Eve after sin, and as such, it offers no peace to the sinner. Rather, it plagues the unregenerate.⁷⁹ Just as in his early article on “Conscience,” the conscience remains a secondary norm (*norma normata*) to the law of God.⁸⁰ Likewise, Bavinck argues that the human heart alongside of the conscience needs cleansing.⁸¹ Therefore, both the regenerate and unregenerate have different experiences

⁷⁵ *GICR*, 95-96.

⁷⁶ *GICR*, 97-99; We might also immediately connect hamartiology to ethics. Bavinck notes how if we remove sin from the will of man, all ethics is lost. He writes, “If sin does not have its origin in the will of the creature, but in its being, which precedes the will, then it immediately loses its ethical character, its moral character, and becomes a physical, natural, one of existence and an evil inseparable from the nature of things.” Hamartiology is intimately connected to ethics and could be position as an additional “pile”; see Sutanto, “Herman Bavinck on the Image of God and Original Sin,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18 (2016): 174-90.

⁷⁷ Xu, “Did Christ have a conscience? Revisiting the Debates on Christ’s (Un)Fallen Humanity,” *Theological Studies* 82, no. 4 (2021): 583-602, 601-602. Xu draws on Bavinck’s conception of conscience to engage questions related to Christ’s human nature. He concludes that, for Bavinck, Christ possessed a conscience but that it was silent neither condemning him before the law nor exonerating him.

⁷⁸ *RD III*, 173.

⁷⁹ *RD III*, 173, 198.

⁸⁰ *RD III*, 132.

⁸¹ *RD III*, 80.

of the conscience.⁸² For the regenerate one of the benefits of salvation is the deliverance of the conscience from its torment, with Christ's atoning death giving the regenerate peace of conscience.⁸³

The conscience therefore rests alongside the heart, in the faculty of knowing, guiding the regenerate in their ethical life.⁸⁴ As such, the conscience is the intellect ordered toward distinct action shaped by the *habitus* of faith.⁸⁵ Having imposed itself on the consciousness of humanity sin deformed humanity's nature but did not destroy their essence.⁸⁶ The mind of humanity was darkened, and the heart was inclined toward evil.⁸⁷ Accordingly, in the state of corruption humans engage the world through self-interest (*zelfzucht*) or egocentricity.⁸⁸

A Christian theological anthropology, of course, cannot end in fallenness. It must also consider the arc of redemption. Therefore, no Christian theological anthropology would be sufficient without an attentiveness to Jesus Christ. Having failed their divine calling and been thwarted from reaching their divine destiny through their sin, humans are in need of one who can fulfil that calling. This one is Jesus Christ, whose mission is articulated by Bavinck through a covenantal framework. In Christ's humiliation and exaltation in his life, death, and resurrection, he fulfils the covenant of grace. Bavinck accounts for this through the *munus triplex* of Christ:

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the three offices in the life and work of Christ cannot be separated and are, therefore, not to be split up or placed in a temporal succession one after the other. It is the case, that sometimes one, and then another office comes to the fore, such that, for example Christ's public preaching is more prophetic, his final suffering and dying more priestly,

⁸² *RD* III, 141, 170.

⁸³ *RD* III, 339, 382, 594.

⁸⁴ *GE* 130, 155; *RE* I, 167-215; *GE*, 350-351; *RE* II, 34-36; Bavinck, *Beginselen der Psychologie*, 111-112; *Foundations of Psychology*, 160.

⁸⁵ *RE* I, 187, 195.

⁸⁶ See also Augustine, *City of God*, XIII, c. 23.

⁸⁷ *RD* IV, 91.

⁸⁸ Sutanto, "Egocentricity, Organism, and Metaphysics: Sin and Renewal in Bavinck's *Ethics*," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2020): 223-240, 230. Sutanto perceptively argues for Bavinck's understanding of sin as organized around the principle of egocentricity. Not all sins proceed, *subjectively* from here - but rather all sins *objectively* can be traced back to egocentricity. Subjectively there are diverse starting points then; objectively there is one. The "I", or self replaces God as the centre.

and in his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, we are reminded of his royal office; but, in essence, Jesus has filled his three offices, always and everywhere simultaneously.

When he spoke, he proclaimed the words of God as a prophet, but he also displayed His priestly mercy and His royal power, for by His word he healed the sick, he forgave sins, he calmed the storm; He is the king of truth. His miracles were signs of his divine mission and the truth of his word, simultaneously, a revelation of his compassion for all kinds of wretched people, and proof of his reign over sickness, death, and the violence of Satan. His death was a seal of his life but also a sacrifice of perfect obedience and a willing act of power to lay down his life. In a word, his whole appearance, word and work always bears a prophetic, priestly, and royal character at the same time.⁸⁹

The whole of Christ's *munus triplex* found its climax in his death and resurrection. In his mediatorial office, Christ obtained for the elect all of the benefits of the covenant of grace. The application of redemption cannot be separated from its acquisition and thus, even now in the state of exaltation, Christ continues his *munus triplex*.⁹⁰

The benefits of the covenant of grace are applied through the mission of the Holy Spirit and then applied internally by the calling of the Holy Spirit.⁹¹ In the previous chapter, we introduced Bavinck's view that the Holy Spirit operates in man through the organ of faith. We also established that for Bavinck, faith is the foundation of all forms of knowledge.⁹² There, the head and heart was introduced as the location of disharmony or harmony introduced by various world- and lifeviews. All knowledge is external to man and is mediated to the mind through the consciousness. God's revelation only becomes man's through faith, but more broadly this is true of all knowledge: in all areas of life, knowledge begins with believing.⁹³

⁸⁹ *GICR*, 131-132; The intertwining of the offices seems to follow Schleiermacher; For a clear and condensed reading of Schleiermacher's *munus triplex* see Joshua Ralston, "Rewriting Calvin: Schleiermacher on the atonement and the priestly Office of Christ," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 75, no. 2 (May 2022): 89-103.

⁹⁰ *GICR*, 137-139; *RD III*, 498-499; Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 35-37. Ziegler identifies criticism the motif received in the nineteenth century. Alongside Barth, Bavinck stands as an additional example of a theologian who forged ahead utilizing the motif. Unlike Barth, Bavinck attempts to not elevate one of the offices over the other.

⁹¹ *GICR*, 149. An external call is not enough to "renew the heart of mankind."

⁹² *RD I*, 565.

⁹³ *RD I*, 566, 568-570. In *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck reflects on the relationship between faith as certainty, and faith in the religious sense. The two can be contrasted as knowing (immediate certainty) vs. believing (religious sense).

In Bavinck's theology he utilizes *verstand en hart* (intellect and heart) or *hoofd en hart* (head and heart) not only to draw attention to harmony and disharmony in world- and lifeview but as the locality within man of the transformation of the Spirit.⁹⁴ According to Bavinck, the head and the heart are regenerated by the Spirit through the organ of faith. The Holy Spirit works in the head and heart of man and does so because the heart is the centre of all thinking, knowing, and loving. The human heart desires both knowledge and believing—hence Bavinck's claim that true faith includes knowledge. In regeneration, we have the transformation of the head and heart and the recreation of humans into the image of God.⁹⁵ The Christian life then becomes an activity of appropriating the revelation of God in head and heart as one is transformed by the Spirit in the life of the church. As Bavinck writes in *Kennis en leven*:

Genuine theology, therefore, is always the knowledge of God; the appropriation of His revelation with head and heart... the absorption into our minds of the thoughts of God – so that, beholding His glory in the mirror of His Word, we are changed in His image from glory to glory, according to the Holy Spirit.⁹⁶

A “pile” of the movement of Christians from *passive* to *active* is the operation of the Spirit in regeneration. Theologically speaking, the fallen subject is ethically inept apart from the activity of the Spirit. Bavinck credits the movement of humans from *passive* to theologically *active* as due to the operation of the Holy Spirit because the Spirit is the author of all creaturely religious-ethical activity (including Christ's human

⁹⁴ Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap*, 35, 58, 96, 98; Bavinck, *Welsprekendheid: Eene Lezing* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1901); “Bavinck's Foreword to Eloquence” and “Eloquence” in *Herman Bavinck Preaching and Preachers*, trans. and ed. James Eglinton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017) In Bavinck's 1889 lecture on “Eloquence” he discusses *gemoed*, which is the Dutch cognate of the German *Gemüth*. Interestingly, Bavinck's foreword cites a passage from Schleiermacher's “On the Social Element of Religion” (1711). Bavinck writes of *gemoed* in several ways here: of preachers as “masters of people's *gemoed*” (19, 21), of eloquence as rooted “in the heart or *gemoed*” (27-28), the secret of eloquence is “*gemoed*” (28), true eloquence requires a moved “*gemoed*” (29, 41), eloquence must touch the “*gemoed*” (32 x2, 44), eloquence must reach beyond “*gemoed*” to the head and heart (42). Importantly, as is illustrated by “Eloquence” Bavinck does not relate this leitmotif through the cognate “*gemoed*.”

⁹⁵ *RD IV*, 108; *RD IV*, 72, 84. Bavinck also argued that the Reformed in stressed that the whole of the person including the faculties was the subject of regeneration.

⁹⁶ Bavinck, “Kennis en Leven,” in *Kennis en leven: opstellen en artikelen uit vroegere jaren, verzameld door Ds C.B. Bavinck* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1922), 240 [Dutch: Echte Theologie is daarom altijd kennis Gods; toeëigening met hoofd en hart van zijne openbaring... opneming in onzen geest van de gedachten Gods — zoo, dat wij, zijne heerlijkheid in den spiegel van zijn Woord aanschouwende, naar zijn beeld veranderd worden van heerlijkheid tot heerlijkheid, als van des Heeren Geest].

nature).⁹⁷ The believer’s heart is then regenerated resulting in saving faith—a transformation, or conversion, that results in repentance and a return to God.⁹⁸ Through regeneration, believers receive the benefits of the kingdom of heaven (righteousness, holiness, and salvation).⁹⁹ As Bavinck wrote, “God’s Spirit itself directly enters the human heart and with infallible certainty brings about regeneration without in any way being dependent on the human will” therefore, the “Holy Spirit not only impacted the human will *through* the intellect, but also that it penetrated the will directly and therefore instilled new *habitus* immediately.”¹⁰⁰

Importantly, Bavinck’s fondness of Schleiermacher’s recovery of the doctrine of regeneration must be noted as it relates to the “religious-ethical process of change” that humans undergo and his relating it to the person of Christ.¹⁰¹ We find these two emphases in Bavinck’s conception of regeneration. First, Bavinck conceives of his doctrine of regeneration as the beginning of a religious-ethical life.¹⁰² He accords conversion a religious-ethical sense, a change in heart and life.¹⁰³ What does Bavinck mean by “religious-ethical”? In his *Reformed Dogmatics*, he argues that the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is of a “religious-ethical kind” and to this he adds “it does not bypass people’s faith; it is not a voice from heaven, a dream or a vision. It is a witness that the Holy Spirit communicates *in, with, and through* our own spirit in faith.”¹⁰⁴ As such, the religious transformation results in ethical activity.

Much like Schleiermacher, Bavinck also aimed to connect regeneration to the person of Christ. He writes: “The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it certainly is the central point of the whole system of dogmatics... In it as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole religious-ethical life of Christianity. It is “the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16).”¹⁰⁵ The whole of the religious-ethical life of the believer is

⁹⁷ *RD* III, 292; *RD* I, 588.

⁹⁸ *GICR*, 153-156.

⁹⁹ *GICR*, 159.

¹⁰⁰ *RD* IV, 81.

¹⁰¹ *RD* IV, 60-61; see page 107n43.

¹⁰² *RD* IV, 139.

¹⁰³ *RD* IV, 135. Bavinck tends to describe the reformation as one with religious-ethical significance (see *RD* IV, 438). This was also displayed in the second chapter through Bavinck’s speech “The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations.”

¹⁰⁴ *RD* I, 593-594.

¹⁰⁵ *RD* III, 274.

linked to Christ. In Bavinck's depiction of the doctrine of regeneration he is ardent that we must not separate the Word from the Spirit in regeneration and in this manner we will not separate the work acquired from the work applied.¹⁰⁶ He writes, "In other words, the Spirit who works regeneration is specifically the Spirit of Christ, who has been acquired by Christ and, after Christ himself had completed his work on earth and ascended into heaven, was sent into the church and now lives and works in it and takes everything from him."¹⁰⁷

For both Schleiermacher and Bavinck conversion involves a twofold change involving self-denial and repentance. As Bavinck writes, "This indeterminate trust in God gives also the moral life its origin and strength. True conversion lasts throughout life and consists in the death of the old and the resurrection of the new, in fleeing from sin and in living according to God's will."¹⁰⁸ Both split this along lines of *passive* and *active*, while attributing the whole of the movement to the work of God. On this point Bavinck and Schleiermacher share in the wake of Reformed theology downstream from Calvin.

This spiritual renewal of regeneration consists "of those inner dispositions of humans that from ancient times bore the name *habitus* or *qualitates*."¹⁰⁹ In the previous chapter we discussed the *habitus* in relation to *faith seeking understanding*. This *habitus* is the effects of the Spirit, which themselves form an intermediary between body and soul and the activities, which spring from them in the intellect, *gemoed*, and will.¹¹⁰ The *habitus* belongs naturally to humanity, but is activated, strengthened, and re-oriented by the activity of the Spirit.¹¹¹ In the previous chapter, this was linked to Bavinck's understanding of the highest good. Indeed, the radical nature of such a transformation, which impacts the whole of the person is to some degree inexplicable according to Bavinck.¹¹²

In his *Reformed Dogmatics* Bavinck makes a distinction between regeneration conceived broadly and narrowly. Broadly conceived regeneration relates to the total renewal of the person brought about by faith

¹⁰⁶ *RD IV*, 79.

¹⁰⁷ *RD IV*, 79-80.

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, *What Is Christianity*, 42.

¹⁰⁹ *GD2° IV*, 81; cf. *RD IV*, 93-94.

¹¹⁰ *GD2° IV*, 81; cf. *RD IV*, 94.

¹¹¹ *RD IV*, 94. Bavinck cites the Canons of Dort, III-IV, art. 12.

¹¹² Bavinck, *What Is Christianity*, 71. "The working of the Spirit is so wonderful, so unfathomable, and nearly impossible to put into words."

and repentance and often equated with those terms. According to Bavinck, this broad use fell out of use following the Reformation as theologians attended to the *ordo salutis*. Narrowly conceived then, regeneration requires attending to a distinction between the activity of God (by which humans are *passive*) and the fruit of the activity of humans (by which humans are *active*).¹¹³ The regenerative activity of God is called the efficacious call, whereas in a narrow sense human are *passive*.¹¹⁴ Bavinck describes the activity of God in the efficacious call like so:

When those who are preordained by God are called in time— efficaciously... Those who are efficaciously called are also immediately, by faith, included in fellowship with Christ. They are buried, raised (Rom. 6:3ff.) and made alive with him (Eph. 2:1, 5), and conformed to his image (Rom. 8:29– 30; 1 Cor. 4:15– 16; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19). Christ lives in them and they live in Christ (Gal. 2:20). But since by his resurrection Christ was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), one can also say that they received the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 5:5; 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 5:18), that the Spirit lives in them (Rom. 8:11), and that they live in the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:2, 4– 5, 9; etc.). By faith Christ or his Spirit is the author and origin of a new life in those who are called (Gal. 3:2; 4:6) so that now they are very different, new, and spiritual people.¹¹⁵

Those who are predestined are “efficaciously called” in time, such that they experience all of the benefits of Christ. In this efficacious call believers are not just partakers in the benefits of Christ but are *unio mystica* to his person and work – therefore, they are buried and raised with Christ, refashioned in his image, and given his Spirit.¹¹⁶ As such, the *unio mystica* is an additional “pile” that connects the two disciplines. In regeneration the Christian possesses the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁷ From the inception of the covenant of grace the church

¹¹³ RD IV, 77; see also Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie*, 67; *Foundations of Psychology*, 89. “It is of course true that the human soul can be completely passive. It is that way, for example, at the moment of its creation and its regeneration... all creatures, as creatures, even at their highest level of energy and in their most forceful activity, are at the same time passive, receptive, and deeply dependent. In this sense, humans are still passive in their knowing and their activity.”

¹¹⁴ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 76. Ziegler draws upon Bavinck’s paraphrasing of the Canons of Dort to make the point that we ought not to truncate our understanding of the Spirit in the efficacious call. “The doctrine looks to signal that the human person *as such* and in toto is the object of the Spirit’s ‘omnipotent and at the same time fully intimate, wonderful and inexpressible operation.’”

¹¹⁵ RD I, 50.

¹¹⁶ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 78. Ziegler argues that the identifying the effectual call to regeneration (as Bavinck does) accents the eschatological character of faith.

¹¹⁷ RD IV, 122-123.

has existed in *unio mystica* with Christ, and now in regeneration this union is realised. Accordingly, having been united to the person of Christ the believer participates in all the benefits therein.¹¹⁸ Christ now lives and dwells in the believer. All this is given to the believer through the activity of God.

This regeneration is said to take place in the heart of humans. By it, the subject is transformed from a “natural” into a “spiritual” human.¹¹⁹ The entire human is transformed into a spiritual person by the activity of the Holy Spirit in the application of Christ and his benefits. Regeneration, therefore, is not the result of human activity, but the result of a special operation of God’s Spirit. Importantly, this regeneration by the Spirit is not a “revolution” but a “reformation.” How is this so? No substance is added to humans. The whole person is regenerated in thought and deed, purpose and direction, ideas, and activities.¹²⁰

This spiritual life has its origin in God the Father, is acquired by and united to Christ, and is applied and nourished by the Spirit. “The life of spiritual persons, also after its origination, cannot for a moment be separated from God and his fellowship; in the same strict and particular sense in which this life is from God, it also is through and for him.”¹²¹ The human subject is utterly reformed by the activity of the Holy Spirit. At least two significant “piles” can be noted between dogmatics and ethics in the transformation of the head and the heart — *unio mystica* and regeneration.¹²²

If narrowly speaking, in regeneration God is *active* and humans are *passive*. How does Bavinck describe the fruit of God’s activity in humans, in other words, now that the subject has been vivified in their union with Christ, how does Bavinck describe theologically *active* subjects? Building on our previous chapter, we might identify that Bavinck gives a significant role to faith. He wrote, “From its very beginning, faith was two things at once: a receptive organ and an active force; a hand that accepts the gift offered but also works outwardly in the service of the will; a bond to invisible things and a victory over the visible

¹¹⁸ RD IV, 214, 250.

¹¹⁹ RD IV, 87.

¹²⁰ See Parker, “Reformation or Revolution,” 92-93.

¹²¹ RD IV, 98; Ziegler, “The Adventitious Origins of the Calvinist Moral Subject,” 221. Ziegler’s comments on Calvin may be aptly applied to Bavinck: “If belonging to sin unmakes moral subjectivity, then belonging to God anew in virtue of his utterly gratuitous saving work through Christ and the Spirit is our remaking as competent moral agents. But this transit is not mere restoration; it is rather a total transformation.”

¹²² Gleason, “The Centrality of the Unio Mystica in the Theology of Herman Bavinck,” 1. Contra, Gleason the *unio mystica* is not “the true ‘hub’ around which Bavinck’s theology turns. But it is a significant “pile” in this movement.

world; at once religious and ethical.”¹²³ Faith is religiously dependent and ethically active. This active force Bavinck also accords to his doctrine of sanctification. In Bavinck’s doctrine of sanctification humans are both *passive* and *active*.

The distinction between God as *active* and humans as *passive* is what Eglinton has called the dialectic of Bavinck’s view of the spiritual life.¹²⁴ Bavinck writes:

And the connection between the calling in this sense (active regeneration) and regeneration in the passive sense is the same as that between the Father’s speaking and our learning from him (John 6:45), between the Father’s drawing and our following (6:44), between the Father’s granting and our accepting (6:65), between the efficacious offer and our passive acceptance of salvation, between the sowing and what is sown.¹²⁵

This *passive* sense also applies to Bavinck’s distinction between justification and sanctification. This also highlights how sanctification is ethical. For Bavinck, justification is the imputed righteousness and holiness of Christ. “(Justification) is a juridical act, completed in an instant. But sanctification is *ethical*: it is continued throughout the whole of life and, by the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit, gradually makes the righteousness of Christ our personal ethical possession.”¹²⁶ As noted by Park, these two doctrines are distinct for Bavinck, while remaining inseparably connected. To put it differently, Christians *passively* receive sanctification and justification in *unio mystica* with Christ, but Christians also actively pursue sanctification. As Bavinck writes, “In justification Christ is granted to us juridically, in sanctification, ethically; by the former we become the righteousness of God in him; by the latter he himself comes to dwell in us by his Spirit and renews us after his image.”¹²⁷

¹²³ RD IV, 243.

¹²⁴ Eglinton, “On Bavinck’s Theology of Sanctification-as-Ethics,” 178.

¹²⁵ RD IV, 77.

¹²⁶ RD IV, 249; Jae Eun Park, *Driven By God: Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification in the Soteriology of Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper: Reformed Historical Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 101-131. Park examines Bavinck’s doctrine of sanctification as it relates to his doctrine of justification. Park also picks up on the passive/active distinction. Park does not connect Bavinck’s doctrine of sanctification to his ethics; Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 105-106. Much like Calvin, Bavinck emphasis both the legal and transformative language of sanctification and justification.

¹²⁷ RD IV, 249.

The *active* sense of sanctification is therefore the faith that is a living active force.¹²⁸ Faith, therefore, is a life of “continued repentance” and a presentation of “all our members as instruments of righteousness.”¹²⁹ This is the more explicitly ethical and *active* aspect of sanctification. These good works rise out of faith and are a manifestation of the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Therefore, sanctification is not just external, the setting apart of believers as having covenantal relationship with God, but internal and has “profound ethical significance.”¹³⁰ Bavinck is comfortable holding these two propositions side by side. Put simply, sanctification is a gift, both in the inward renewal, and in the outward manifestation of this gift in obedience. In his *Reformed Ethics* he frames it through the lens of religion and ethics. The religious human is dependent and *passive* as all things are given to them from God, but the same human is ethically *active* on account of the activity of God and proceeds back to God. Religion, faith, and ethics are one – but in religion the human is in union with God, in ethics Christians strive to become one with him.¹³¹

In this transformation through regeneration believers — as sanctified and spiritual creatures in Christ— now have an entirely transformed relationship to the moral law.¹³² Prior to the fall man upheld the moral law (the covenant of works), but in the fall mankind destroyed and violated the whole of the law in the one probationary command.¹³³ In the work of redemption, and therefore in fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit believers are no longer in bondage to the law, but free from it.¹³⁴ Through *unio mystica* with Christ — the one who fulfilled the law — the believer’s relationship to the law is recast. Renewed by God, and gifted a new heart, the law of the Lord is written on the hearts of believers.¹³⁵ Freed from the condemnation and curse of the law the believer now turns to the law as an empowered and competent moral agent, who is bound to it in freedom and gratitude.¹³⁶ As Bavinck writes:

¹²⁸ *GICR*, 162; see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 70, 74n98; *RE I*, 53, “We subjectively appropriate the revelation of God and enter that objectively established fellowship by faith. This faith is an act of the entire person, and it resides in the innermost centre, in the heart.”

¹²⁹ *RD IV*, 253.

¹³⁰ *RD IV*, 252-253.

¹³¹ *RE I*, 64.

¹³² *RE II*, 3-20.

¹³³ *GICR*, 85, 88.

¹³⁴ *GICR*, 124, 132.

¹³⁵ *GICR*, 138.

¹³⁶ *GICR*, 151.

For the believer, however, it still retains its authority and validity as a rule of gratitude; faith obliges far more than any threat of law to be imitators of God, to walk in the Spirit, to flee all sins, and to glorify God with the body and that spirit that are God's (Matt. 4:48; Rom. 6:1f.; 8:4f.; 1 Cor. 6:15f.; etc.). In the Old and New Testaments, the moral law is one and the same; it is included in the commandment of love (Matt. 22:37–40; Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:28).¹³⁷

Because of this in Reformed theology Christian ethics became framed by the decalogue.¹³⁸ Through the pursuit of the law the believer actively pursues the gift of sanctification that are already theirs in Christ. Therefore, believers are spurred on by the law to cultivate their sanctification and in this way make it their own ethical and spiritual possession. This law is most aptly fulfilled by the virtue of love, which remains the perfect fulfilment of the law.

In the “pile” of sanctification then, humans are both *passive* and *active*. The believer is empowered by the Spirit of Christ to pursue ethical activity. Bavinck wrote, “Sanctification, accordingly, both from the divine and human side, is an organic process. The more Christ indwells us, the more we are strengthened in faith; and the more our faith increases, the more Christ communicates himself to us.”¹³⁹ Therefore, Christians grow to imitate Christ as he strengthens their faith. “Those who are born of God increasingly *become* the children of God and bear his image and likeness, because in principle they already *are* his children. The rule of organic life applies to them: Become what you are!”¹⁴⁰

The Christian life then is oriented around a teleological definiteness – that is all things are to God. As he writes, “The final goal of moral conduct can be found only in God, who is the origin and hence also the final goal of all things.”¹⁴¹ At death, when believers finish their spiritual pilgrimage, they are

¹³⁷ *GICR*, 155.

¹³⁸ *RE II*, 94-96. Bavinck is not averse to “virtue ethics” in substance, but in principle he believed that they were best approached through the lens of the Ten commandments.

¹³⁹ *RD IV*, 264.

¹⁴⁰ *RD IV*, 255. Bavinck’s doctrine of adoption is not altogether straightforward because he writes of adoption as being *juridical* (*RD IV*, 219, 226-227), a term that belongs properly to justification. Yet he draws upon adoption (being/become children of God), to illustrate sanctification. The two doctrines — justification and sanctification — are of course intimately linked, but Bavinck mis-categorizes adoption by making it *juridical* rather than relational and therefore, because it is juridical it is unclear why it has a role in the *ethical* component of his sanctification.

¹⁴¹ *RD IV*, 264.

immediately taken up into heaven by Christ.¹⁴² Believers receive a spiritual body (*geestelijk lichaam*) that maintains a unity of self in body and soul.¹⁴³ Bavinck writes of this spiritual body:

Yet the body which the faithful receive at the resurrection does not correspond to their earthly body in external form or shape, in quantity of material components, but only in essence. It is made up of the same organic germ, from which, through all ages and under all metabolic processes, the body on earth was formed. It is also not a natural body, but a spiritual body, elevated beyond sexual life and sensual needs (Matt. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:13), immortal, incorruptible, spiritualized and glorified (1 Cor. 15:42-44) conformed to that of Christ in His exaltation (Phil. 3:21).¹⁴⁴

The unity-in-diversity present amidst humankind in the world under the headship of Christ continues in the afterlife: distinctions in gender, nationality, ethnicity, rank, gift, and calling remain. This diversity will not subtract from the unity believer's experience, but rather "all will see God's face and be like him (Matt. 5:8; Joh. 3:2; Rev. 22:4); all will know, as they are known (1 Cor. 13:12) and all will be prophets, priests, and kings."¹⁴⁵

This section of the chapter provided a broad entrance into Bavinck's account of theological anthropology by considering the human subject through the lens of the threefold office in the narrative of redemption. We traced the *munus triplex* from creation through to eschatology. This eschatological theme will be considered more thoroughly in the chapter that follows. Within this theological anthropology, I drew attention to some features of theological psychology and the movement of humans from *passive* to *active* in the context of the operation of the Spirit within man's heart. In this movement, regenerate humans become citizens of the kingdom of heaven and thus begin to live out their original calling as prophets, priests, and kings in sanctification.¹⁴⁶ The active work of sanctification also involved conformity to the image of Jesus Christ and a renewed relationship to the law.¹⁴⁷ Three "piles" were identified in the

¹⁴² *GICR*, 94-95, 197.

¹⁴³ *GICR*, 207-208.

¹⁴⁴ *GICR*, 207-208; cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXII, c.29.

¹⁴⁵ *GICR*, 211-212; cf. "Praedestinatie," 7; see Appendix A, ccxii.

¹⁴⁶ Ziegler, "The Adventitious Origins of the Calvinist Moral Subject," 214. Ziegler describes the moral subject in Calvin as making a transition "from *status corruptionis* in which genuine moral subjectivity is an impossibility to the *status gratiae* in which it becomes newly possible solely in virtue of the effective working of Christ and Spirit upon us." The moral subject in Bavinck follows the same trajectory (see *RD* II, 542-543, 551, 585; *RD* III, 66; *GE*, 178; *RE* I, 251).

¹⁴⁷ *GICR*, 167-168, 170.

movement of humans from passive to active — the key distinction between dogmatics and ethics — regeneration, *unio mystica*, and sanctification.

Conclusion

At the centre of Bavinck's theological anthropology is a system that pulsates with theological and ethical significance. Bavinck perceives the transformation of the head and heart as having both religious and ethical significance, with the heart as the seat of religion, as central to the psychological faculties, and the cultivation of the heart as critical to his spirituality and ethics.¹⁴⁸ As Bavinck put it in the first edition of his *Beginselen der psychologie*:

But furthermore, the heart is the organ of all higher, psychic life, of emotions and passions (Isa. 65:14; Hos. 11:8; Ps. 84:3; John 16:6; Acts 2:46, 7:54, etc.) of desire and will (Ex. 35:21, 29; Eccl. 1:13; Dan. 1:8; Acts 11:23; 2 Cor. 9:7, etc. Even also of thinking and knowing (Deut. 8:5; 29:4; Neh. 5:7; Isa. 32:4, 65:17; Luke 2:19; Acts 16:14), so that in each case there is discussion of thoughts and deliberations of the heart (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 73:7; Matt. 15:9; 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:12) and thinking is speaking in the heart (Gen. 8:21; 17:17; Ps. 14:2, 27:8; Prov. 23:33; Mt. 24:48)... The direction of a man's life is thus determined by the heart; it is the source and driving force of his consciousness and desire, of his mind and will; all of man's psychological activities have their starting point there.¹⁴⁹

Bavinck also sees the heart as related to the faculty of knowing (*kenvermogen*). Therefore, Hoekema's relegation of the faculty of feeling to that of emotions is misguided, in fact much of Bavinck's mature psychology thus far demonstrates some indebtedness to the grammar of Schleiermacher.¹⁵⁰ This is really no surprise with Brock's identification of Bavinck's appropriation of the feeling of absolute dependence.

In Bavinck's account of sanctification, he frames the Christian life through their teleological orientation in God. Of course, the Christian life has such a teleological orientation because of election. In Bavinck's essay "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good" there is teleological element to Bavinck's

¹⁴⁸ RD I, 266. He writes, "Religion is no mere *cultus externus* (external worship) but above all it is a *cultus internus* (internal worship), a knowing and serving of the heart"; Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap*, 77.

¹⁴⁹ Bavinck, *Beginselen der psychologie* 1e (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1897), 14.

¹⁵⁰ See Hoekema, "The Centrality of the Heart," 12, 41, 200; see also Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 70-75.

conception of personality.¹⁵¹ In the kingdom of God, the superlative spiritual community which surpasses everything temporal and earthly, the personality of each individual is fully developed in the whole.¹⁵² For both the advent of Christ precipitated the *presence* of the kingdom of God in a religious-ethical sense, while it remained *coming* in an eschatological sense.¹⁵³ Bavinck's moral activity finds its *telos* in the kingdom of God.

Bavinck's vision of personality surfaced in the previous chapter in relation to world- and lifeview. And here it returns in regeneration and sanctification. We might make recourse to the previous chapter and note the role of world- and lifeview in holding together the *passive* and *active* aspects to the human agent. For Herman faith facilitates the harmony of the individual personality that undergirds the production of the Christian world- and lifeview culminating in the kingdom of God. As such, the passive and active components of human agency find their unity superlatively in the Christian worldview.

Bavinck's grammar of piety is especially prevalent in relation to sin and conversion. For Bavinck, sin is not a state of lacking in the mind and heart, but sin does introduce disharmony in the mind and heart. On account of faith, the head and heart, becomes acquainted with harmony. Regeneration is a divine activity that vivifies the whole of man working from the heart out. As Bavinck writes:

Rebirth plants a seed in the heart (1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9) from which a whole new man emerges. It begins in a mysterious and hidden way and has its centre at the heart of man's personality, in his own self (Gal. 2:20); but from there it extends to all man's faculties, to his mind (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 4:22) and heart (Heb. 8:10; 10:16; 1 Pet. 3:4), to his will (Rom. 7:7) and affections, to his mind, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23; Rom. 6:19). A whole person is born, who—although not fully mature and still fighting against all kinds of sins of the flesh—nevertheless wishes to walk in the newness of the Spirit (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 6:4; 7:6).¹⁵⁴

Hence, the conscience likewise moves from a state of condemnation to one of exoneration and experiences peace. As the Holy Spirit works in the head and heart of man, the entire man is regenerated and this regeneration is of a religious-ethical kind. In this manner, Christianity is a living for and serving of God in

¹⁵¹ Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 124, 126-127, 148-15. Brock contends, "The logic of his argument is that a redeemed self is an organic microcosm and prime example of the objective, unified kingdom to come." Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *TBR* 2 (2011): 133-170, 142.

¹⁵² Bavinck, "The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good," 140, 143-145

¹⁵³ *RD* III, 247-248.

¹⁵⁴ *GICR*, 140.

love — a religion — but it also entails a loving of neighbour in God — an ethic that attends not only to belief, but also to living for and serving God.

Overall, this chapter and the preceding two facilitate the tectonic structure of the thesis in the identification of various “piles” that support our systematic theology home. These “piles” include: election (chapter two), faith (chapter three), regeneration, *unio mystica*, and sanctification (chapter four). These “piles” relate to the transformation of humans through the work of God (what was illustrated in chapter one as the overhaul of the city of Amsterdam from a swamp land to a series of charming canals). This chapter contributed to identifying the movement of humans from *passive* to *active* the key distinction for Bavinck between dogmatics and ethics. In the next chapter, we will consider how humans remain influenced by the activity of God, communally and therefore nourished in their faith through to their continued activity in the eschaton.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ *GICR*, 177.

Chapter Five: The Body of Christ as Active and Passive

Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 12:

Q. 31 *Why is he called Christ that is anointed?*

A. *Because he has been ordained by the Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body has redeemed us, and who continually intercedes for us before the Father; and our eternal King, who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us.*

Q. 32 *Why are you called a Christian?*

A. *Because I am a member of Christ by faith and thus share in his anointing, so that I may as prophet confess his name, as priest present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him, and as king fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter reign with him eternally over all creatures.*

In the previous chapter I introduced Bavinck's use of the Reformed theme of *munus triplex* – Christ as prophet, priest, and king – and this office as the calling and destiny of humankind. The previous chapter focused on the movement of humans from *passive* to *active* through the operation of the Holy Spirit at the individual, rather than communal, level. Therefore, in this chapter, we will consider two communal aspects for the regenerate: the *ecclesia militans* and *ecclesia triumphans* in their organic and institutional forms. My main contention is that dogmatics and ethics exists in a distributed relationship across several doctrines rather than a singular doctrine. In relating this chapter to the main thesis of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, this chapter allows us to see two additional “piles” that can be exposed in the connection between the two disciplines, namely that of ecclesiology and eschatology.

Why focus on the *ecclesia militans* and *ecclesia triumphans*? Throughout this work readers have been introduced to Bavinck's description of dogmatics as the descent of God toward humanity, centrally in Jesus Christ, but also through the divine mission of the Spirit. In the work of regeneration God unites himself to his creatures and moves humans from being *passive* to ethically *active* agents. In the activity of sanctification, these ethical agents partake in a multiplicity of communities throughout their earthly pilgrimage – family,

schools, organizations, politics, voluntary associations, etc., prior to their ascent to the Lord.¹ In the final portion of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde ethiek*, when he turns to address these communal aspects under the headings of family, community, school, church, state, and kingdom of God's people the pages are left mostly blank.² However, Bavinck does provide ample literature on the community of the church. I consider the *ecclesia militans* and *ecclesia triumphans* because it is in these communities that God's people are most prominently ethically active in their heavenly ascent toward God and on account of the abundance of clear sources. Moreover, it is as the collective image of God — as the body of Christ — that the church ascends.

In this first section, we consider the organism and the institution of the church with an eye on the *munus triplex*. By attending to the distinction between organism and institution we are given opportunity to reflect on the corporate body as *passive* and *active*. This involves considering what happens in a church service and how Christians are called to be *active* and *passive* therein. In the second section, I attend to the end of the earthly pilgrimage of believers as culminating in their glorification. We avoid eschatological questions tangential to the project by focusing on the *munus triplex*. This culminates in reflections upon the beatific vision and the kingdom of God. Throughout his writing, Bavinck relates eschatology to the highest good, however, he presents two “highest” goods for humanity. Do these conflict? Does Bavinck actually have two equally “high goods”? Are they in harmony with one another? These questions are approached in the final section. In the glorification of believers, according to Bavinck, the Romans 11:36 arc of Scripture reaches its teleological end with all things moving to God.

Together the chapter facilitates the thesis by addressing the continued operation of the Holy Spirit in the church and thus discussing the interplay between humans as *passive* and *active* in the body of Christ. Thereby establishing two further “piles” that facilitate the distributed, rather than isolated, relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

I. *Munus Triplex in the ecclesia militans*

¹ RE I, 25, 61.

² GE, 606-731; For reflections on the family see Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, trans. Nelson Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2012). See also, *De Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd*.

Bavinck's vision of humans as occupying the *munus triplex* in the Christian life is an expansion of Calvin, a nuancing of Schleiermacher, and therefore a re-imagining of the *munus triplex* in the Dutch tradition.³ Calvin limits his use of the threefold office to his Christology.⁴ By contrast, in Schleiermacher, prophet, priest, and king are present in both his Christology and ecclesiology (and therefore implicitly anthropology).⁵ Bavinck adopts Schleiermacher's "intertwining" of the threefold vision — Christ's prophetic voice is the voice of a king and priest; Christ's priestly work is the work of a king and prophet; Christ's kingly rule is prophetic and sacrificial — and nuances his application of the *munus triplex* to the church.⁶ In the Heidelberg Catechism the *munus triplex* is applied to the Christian life. He re-imagines Heidelberg then by codifying both the Christian life and ecclesial offices through the continued activity of Christ in the *munus triplex*.

Christ fulfilled the threefold office of Mediator, Bavinck explains, because it was the threefold vision that God had set forth for humanity.⁷ Man had a mind to know God (office of prophet), a hand to rule (office of king), and a heart in order to serve God (office of priest). This theme then intimately

³ Bavinck follows the Dutch Reformed tradition in this manner, but also subtly moves beyond it in his vision of *munus triplex* as applied to both the organism and institution of the church (Cf. Jan Bavinck, *Heidelbergsche Catechismus*, 202-205).

⁴ This threefold division stretches the Christian tradition. It is nearly absent from Aquinas and it does not have the theological force which it has in Calvin. Aquinas writes, "Wherefore, as to others, one is a lawgiver, another is a priest, another is a King; but all these concur in Christ, as the fount of all grace" (see *Summa Theologiae* III, Q. 22 a.1, ad.3). After Calvin's use of the motif it is no surprise that it becomes largely absent from Catholic thinking (see Calvin, *Institutes*, Book II, c.15, 3-6, 9-17). The motif was introduced to Lutheran theology through Johann Gerhard (see Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* (Berlin: Sumtibus Gust. Schlawtiz, 1866), Book IV, c.15); Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 37. Ziegler notes that the kingly office "dominates the compressed presentation of the doctrine of the threefold office" in most accounts and that prior to Barth Reformed theology neglected Christ's kingly office. Bavinck stands as an outlier to both claims.

⁵ See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §102-105. The threefold activity of Christ's mediation in Schleiermacher is first discusses Christ and is then mapped onto church practice (see, §127 — Scripture, Proclamation, Sacraments, and Prayer). See also §128-142, which may be viewed then as a further distillation of this theme. See also, Ralston, "Rewriting Calvin," 89-103.

⁶ See *TWWG*, 276-277, 314; see *RD* III, 367-368. Bavinck's nuancing is that he does not apply the *munus triplex* to the church practices themselves, but to the offices that administer them.

⁷ See also J. Bavinck, *Heidelbergsche Catechismus*, 203-204.

connects with previous chapters which explored the head and heart of man. Bavinck distils the connection in *Magnalia Dei*:

...the three offices assigned to Christ refer back to man's original calling and destiny. It is by no means accidental or arbitrary that Christ was appointed to the three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, and to no other or greater offices; rather, it is based on God's design for the human race, and therefore on human nature itself. Adam was created in the image of God, in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, that as a Prophet he might preach the words of God; as a King he might reign in righteousness over all created things; and as a Priest he might offer himself with all things to God as a sacrifice pleasing to Him. He received a head to know; a hand to rule; and a heart to encompass all in love. Man's destiny lay in the unfolding of the image of God, in harmonious development of all his gifts and powers, in the exercise of the three offices of prophet, priest, and king. But that calling has been trampled on by mankind. And that is precisely why Christ came to earth, in order to restore man's true image and fulfil his destiny. The doctrine of the three offices established a fixed connection between nature and grace, creation and re-creation, Adam and Christ.⁸

As introduced in the second chapter on election, one of the prominent features of neo-Calvinist ecclesiology is its dual ontology of the church as both organism and institution.⁹ Alongside Kuyper, Bavinck is one of the progenitors of this vision of the church— although the way this twofold ontology relates to other spheres (particularly knowledge and science) would be construed differently by them (as will be displayed in the chapter that follows on the differences between Bavinck and Kuyper's theological encyclopaedias).¹⁰ What directly follows will be a depiction of how Bavinck understood this dual ontology and the interplay between the two, culminating in a reflection upon the means of grace, namely the Sacraments. This interplay reveals a continued thread of humans as *passive* and *active* which continues through the *ecclesia militans* to the *ecclesia triumphans*.

According to Bavinck, the church always has two identities. It is an organism, the gathering of believers (and therefore *passive*), but it is also an institution, the gatherer of believers (and therefore *active*).¹¹ It is the means by which Christ continues his *munus triplex* activity on earth and the means by which

⁸ See *MD*, 315-316; see also *TWWG*, 316.

⁹ For a description of the historical development of this dual ontology see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 185-191.

¹⁰ See Abraham Kuyper, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, trans. J. Hendrik de Vries (New York: Scriber, 1898), 52-54.

¹¹ *RD IV*, 330.

he establishes his kingdom of grace that extends to the ends of the earth.¹² Bavinck views both organism and institution as participating in the invisible and visible church.¹³

As a visible phenomenon, the organism is primarily a description of the community of faith, the living humanity, that finds her headship in Christ.¹⁴ Yet it is not strictly “Christological” but, as Eglinton notes, the organic motif is employed by Bavinck “to convey the idea that through the Holy Spirit’s creative power, there exists on earth a church teeming with spiritual life.”¹⁵ The institution of the church is primarily a description of in the ministry of the Word and its offices. The ministry of the Word does not belong exclusively to the institution – all believers are called into *active* service.¹⁶ This visible church, therefore, is teeming with symbiotic life, as institution and organism interplay in a reciprocal relationship filled with the creative power of the Spirit. Just as the individual is vivified by the activity of the Spirit the Spirit is the living force that propels the church. There is, therefore, both a Pneumatological and Christological significance to the church. The church is both “charismatic” and “institutional.”¹⁷ Eglinton described the relationship of organism and institute in Bavinck as a “strict concatenation,” in which there is no hierarchy and “the presence of one always necessitates the other.”¹⁸ It is clear that the organism and institute for Bavinck interface in a dynamic mutual relationship.

This dialectical relationship between organism and institution is reciprocal and beneficial to both, with neither as primary.¹⁹ Both are subordinate to the kingship of Christ, who reigns over the church in power and grace. Having acquired redemption for his people, Christ now gathers, governs, and nourishes

¹² *GICR*, 189-190.

¹³ *RD IV*, 289, 305-306; cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, c.1, 7.

¹⁴ For a description of the “organic” features in Bavinck’s ecclesiology see Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 191-192. Various features of the organic motif – unity and diversity, unity precedes diversity, the vivification of the Holy Spirit as the driving force, and its possession of both an organic and mechanical teleology as the body of Christ and the kingdom of God permeate this chapter; see also Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 149-155.

¹⁵ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 191.

¹⁶ *GICR*, 189-190; see also Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 193-195.

¹⁷ *RD IV*, 305; see also Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 184.

¹⁸ Eglinton, “To Transcend and to Transform: The Neo-Calvinist Relationship of Church and Cultural Transformation,” in *The Kuyper Centre Review: Calvinism and Culture*. vol. 3, ed. Gordon Graham (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids), 163-184, 177.

¹⁹ *RD IV*, 332, 340; see also Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 147-149.

his people toward the accomplishment of their redemption in the church as institution.²⁰ As head over his church, Christ precedes his body. Pass notes the importance of this arrangement in acknowledging that Christ is the subject of both organism and institution. Yet the institution has subtle theological priority because of its administration of the Word.²¹

As an invisible phenomenon, the church is also a broader organism in which the whole precedes the parts. This is true not simply at a micro-level, where the individuals of a local church are parts that compose a whole local congregation. But likewise, at the level of the universal church, Bavinck presents a whole composed of a multiplicity of local churches. Both the local and universal church are the body of Christ oriented toward their *telos* of the kingdom of God.²² When first explaining the relationship between organism and institution in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck states that both the institution and the organism “have an invisible spiritual background” which is grounded in the “glorified head of the church through the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, the church participates in a triumphant reality far beyond its earthly reality in both the organism and institution.²³

In Pass’ *The Heart of Dogmatics* he notes how Bavinck’s use of *mater fidelium* is both organic and institutional. Pass argues that this is so, ultimately, because organism and institution reference the same reality: that “of the church as mother.”²⁴ In accord with Pass we might draw attention to Calvin’s depiction of the church as *mater fidelium* in order to shed further light upon Bavinck’s understanding.²⁵ Jaeseung Cha draws out four aspects of Calvin’s use of *mater fidelium*, which relate to the motherhood of the church: (1) the church is the exclusive and universal mother of the godly, that “away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or salvation”²⁶; (2) the metaphorical orphaning of Rome, that is her “unmotherliness”; (3) believers’ relation to the church is dependent upon Christ; and (4) the administration of word and sacrament, that is “the church is the common mother of all the godly, which bears, nourishes,

²⁰ *RD IV*, 371-373.

²¹ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 149.

²² *RD IV*, 373-374; see also Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 144-147. Pass argues that for Bavinck the church is itself the *telos* of Christ’s incarnation, the consummation of the incarnation.

²³ *RD IV*, 303-305.

²⁴ *RD IV*, 331-332; Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 148-149, 153. Pass also notes Bavinck’s use of *coetus*.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, c.1, 1.

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, c.1, 4; see Jaeseung Cha, “Calvin’s Conception of the Church as *mater fidelium* (Mother of Believers), Viewed through his Concept of Accommodation,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 9 (2015): 182-201, 199.

and brings up children of God.”²⁷ Strikingly, in Calvin’s depiction, the church as mother stretches across traditional neo-Calvinist lines of institution and organism.

Cha places *mater fidelium* in conversation with Calvin’s concept of accommodation, which he perceives as two-fold: God makes himself known to humans, and the method and practice by which he does so is in the church.²⁸ For Calvin, then, the church is the place in which God gathers his elect through accommodating himself to them in the ministry of the Word. Just as God took on flesh revealing himself to man, God further accommodates himself to human weakness in the activity of the church.²⁹ Viewing Bavinck’s own ecclesiology in this light might make sense of why the church as both organism and institution can be *mater fidelium*. In other words, just as believers become organically united to Christ by the Spirit, this relationship is depicted in the institution of the church, where God continues to nurture the believer. As such, the believer is *gathered* by the church (institution), and the church also *gathers* (as organism).

In *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Bavinck’s chapter on the “Means of Grace” opens by engaging this description of the church as “the mother of believers.” Bavinck writes:

The church of Christ is not just namely an assembly of the true believers in Christ, taking them in, gathering them together, and connecting them to each other; but she is also the *mother of believers*, the one who produces and nurtures them. Just like in the natural life every man is born from the intercourse of his parents and is a member of a household, of a family, of a people and of humanity, so also the believer receives from above, from God this new life only in the fellowship of the covenant of grace, that has been established with the believers and their seed. Even in the Gentile world no one comes to faith and no gathering of believers comes about except through the mission which led the church there.

The church of Christ may, therefore, be truly called the *mother of believers*; it is with all its gifts and ministries is the great means by which Christ operates to establish his kingdom of grace on the earth and extend it to the ends of the world; it is the body of Christ, not only because all believers belong to it, but also because it is the organ by which the glorified Savior continues and completes his activity as prophet, priest, and king on earth (John 14:12).³⁰

²⁷ Cha, “Calvin’s Conception of the Church as *mater fidelium* (Mother of Believers),” 184-185.

²⁸ Cha, “Calvin’s Conception of the Church as *mater fidelium* (Mother of Believers),” 192-200.

²⁹ *RD I*, 380-381; see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 144-145.

³⁰ *GICR*, 189-190. (Emphasis mine).

In this brief excerpt we can see three of the four pieces that Cha suggests are present in Calvin's handling of the church as *mater fidelium*.³¹ In connection to the church, (1) believers are welcomed in fellowship in the covenant of grace in the church and therefore assured of their salvation. (2) Absent in Bavinck, notably, is the element of polemic against Rome. (3) Believers are dependent on Christ both for the origin of the spiritual life "the believer receives from above, from God this new life", and in the church "with all its gifts and ministries", where they continue to receive from Christ. (3) The church "produces and nurtures them" as they participate in and reap the benefits of the activity of Christ as *munus triplex*. For Bavinck then, in the *gathered* (institution) *gathering* (organism) of believers God accommodates himself to human weakness in the activity of the *mater fidelium* by the continued activity of Christ. Therefore, just as he revealed himself to humanity as prophet, priest, and king – his church continues to benefit from his mediatorial office. Stated otherwise, the institution God actively descends to his organism, makes himself known, and vivifies them. In turn, the organism empowered by the activity of Christ, benefits from and continues his *munus triplex*. Bavinck expands upon Calvin then in his employment of the *munus triplex* to describe the activity of the organism of the church. But also, he advances the theology of Heidelberg by tying the activity of the church, as institution, to the *munus triplex*.

How Bavinck navigates this becomes clearer by attending to the *passive/active* distinction. What does Bavinck mean by the organism of the church as *passive*? He means this to be a theological description of divine activity. In contrast, with the rich *activity* that is taking place in the means of grace humans are *passive*. Yet the organism is *active* in another way. For example, Bavinck rejects the Roman Catholic idea of the church as a "listening church."³² In his rebuttal, the emphasis is placed back onto the organism, for the church "consists of many members with many gifts."³³ He clarifies that all believers are office bearers in the church of Christ, not in the institution but in the organism.

³¹ Cha, "Calvin's Conception of the Church as *mater fidelium* (Mother of Believers)," 193.

³² Other protestant theologians, such as John Webster have made a positive use of the church as the "listening" or "hearing" church. That is theology consists in "listening" one sits at the foot of God, Scripture, and the community of believers. And the church both privately and publicly partakes in "hearing" the Word of God – which faith comes from (see John Webster. *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); see also John Webster, "Discovering Dogmatics," in *Shaping a Theological Mind* eds. Darren Marks (New York: Routledge, 2002), 129-136); see also G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 9.

³³ RD IV, 375; Bavinck, *Herman Bavinck on Preaching Preachers*, 59. In "The Sermon and The Service," Bavinck calls for individuals to be *active* in their worship:

He acquired for everyone the Holy Spirit, who dwells in all believers as his temple (Acts 22:17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; and so forth), so that they, being anointed with that Spirit, are [made] a holy, royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). They are prophets who declare the excellencies of God, confess his name, and know all things (Matt. 10:32; 1 John 2:20, 27); priests who offer up their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10); kings who fight the good fight, overcome sin, the world, and death, and will someday reign with Christ (Rom. 6:12–13; 1 Tim. 1:18–19; 2 Tim. 2:12; 4:7; 1 John 2:13–14; Rev. 1:6; 2:26; 3:21; 20:6); and therefore they bear the name Christians, “anointed ones” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).³⁴

According to Bavinck’s theological anthropology, the Christian is prophet, priest, and king. Each believer is *active* through Christ’s threefold office as prophet, priest, and king. They are *passive* as those who receive all things from God. This resembles then the structure of *Reformed Dogmatics* to *Reformed Ethics*: in *Reformed Dogmatics*, believers are concerned with the wonderful works of God (and are *passive* in those works), in *Reformed Ethics*, believers are concerned with what they do in response to, and in the strength of, those works (and are *active*). The *munus triplex* covers both dogmatics and ethics: dogmatics is Christ as the true prophet, priest and king, and ethics is the believers’ participation in that as prophets, priests, and kings.³⁵

This threefold activity is the exercise of an universal office in which the believers’ calling in the garden as image-bearers is matched to their destiny to be those who imitate Christ by knowing, loving, and serving God for all eternity.³⁶ As organism the *munus triplex* is a sharing in an organic office as his body and this has three tasks: (1) believers are called to join the institution of the church and not attempt to be Christians in isolation; (2) believers are called to be active in the utilization of their gifts for the benefit of others; and (3) believers are called to be active in the formation and reformation of the church. Therefore,

The right concept of the public worship service is being lost. The idea that we have something substantial to do in the church service, that we are not *passive*, that we are busy and *active*, that we go there to carry out priestly work, to be occupied with Father’s business, to sacrifice in the temple of the Lord, to offer to God ourselves and all that is ours, not only to establish ourselves and to become established, but so that we and others might be truly established and built up in the most holy faith, is misunderstood.

³⁴ RD II, 562; RD IV, 375-376.

³⁵ Matthew Kaemingk, “Christology and Economic Ethics: Herman Bavinck’s Prophet, Priest, and King in the Marketplace,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 383-400. Kaemingk draws Bavinck’s *munus triplex* concisely into a discussion on economics.

³⁶ RD IV, 376. This theme, while central to Bavinck’s vision of theological anthropology is nearly passed over by Mattson (see also Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 113, 146-147).

believers express their activity in Christ toward the church through their participation in its dual ontology. All believers in the organism of the church occupy this threefold office.

Importantly, all believers are called into the spiritual battle of labour in active service for Christ according to the gifts given to them. In other words, they are called to be *active* ethical agents as regenerate individuals imitating Christ. This service unto Christ is guided by the word, both privately and corporately. Indeed, on this point, Bavinck follows classical Reformed thinking:

All services which the church exercises through its gifts and offices derive their content from and have their centre in the word that Christ gave through the apostles... that word it can be administered and be applied in many ways, in preaching, in the sacraments, in government and discipline, in confession and conduct, and many others may contain the one mark of this word, of which the *Belgic Confession of Faith* article 29 mentions three: the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure ministry of the sacraments, and the preservation of ecclesial discipline.³⁷

The ministry of the Word does not belong exclusively to the institution – all believers are called into active service.³⁸ This takes on a diversity of forms in the lives of believers. In the church it primarily takes on the threefold form of, proclamation of the Word, administration of the Word, and governing the church.³⁹

While in the organism of the church all regenerate individuals possesses the *munus triplex* as their calling and task, when we turn to the institution of the church the threefold office is split between the office of overseer and the diaconate.⁴⁰ In applying the *munus triplex* to the institution Bavinck re-imagines the theology of Heidelberg and nuances Schleiermacher's similar move. The diaconate (the ministry of mercy) takes on the office of priest, while overseers take on the prophetic and kingly role in their ministry of the Word.⁴¹ Why split the *munus triplex* between the diaconate and overseers? This is likely because of the difficulty of assigning the overseer the role of "priest" and having that connected in any way to the Catholic understanding of the administration of the sacraments.⁴² A particular reading of Calvin may suggest this line

³⁷ *GICR*, 190-191.

³⁸ *GICR*, 189-190.

³⁹ *RD IV*, 418, 421.

⁴⁰ See *MD*, 537.

⁴¹ *RD IV*, 421-422, 429.

⁴² *MD*, 536; One example of where Bavinck could have easily entertained the idea of the "office of Priest" in the Lord's Supper is picture in *RD IV*, 562-563. But he intentionally does not give the overseer that office:

The minister who blesses and distributes the bread and wine, accordingly, does this in the name of Christ and is only an instrument in his hand... - This unique linkage of the administration of the Lord's Supper to

of thinking. In the *Institutes*, while distinguishing why the Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice of propitiation (oblation) but is a celebration of thanksgiving (Eucharist), Calvin writes:

We deny that they are priests in this sense—namely, that by such oblations they intercede with God for the people, that by propitiating God they make expiation for sins. Christ is the only pontiff and priest of the New Testament: to him all priestly offices were transferred, and in him they closed and terminated.⁴³

We have previously mentioned how Calvin does not carry through the threefold office to ecclesial activity, whereas Bavinck does. It is possible to imagine Bavinck here desiring both to maintain the universal priesthood of all believers (and thus all participate in the *munus triplex* of Christ as his body), and yet also elevate to some capacity the Christological weight of the institution and therefore, preserve the priority of Word before Spirit. By attaching the threefold office to the office-bearers of the church, Bavinck also distinguishes himself from Schleiermacher's understanding of the threefold office in the life of the church.⁴⁴ Schleiermacher does not attach the threefold office to office-bearers in the church, for that would bring the focus onto the "people." Rather, Schleiermacher describes the threefold office in the activities of the church, consequently, Scripture/proclamation (prophet), sacraments (priestly), office of keys (kingly) bear the *munus triplex*.⁴⁵

An interesting component of Bavinck's assignment of the *munus triplex* in the church through the office of overseer and deacon is how this is in dialogue with Bavinck's *munus triplex* in the academy. In the academy, the theologian is prophet and priest, but lacks regality. This royal status is given to the discipline of theology herself, as queen. This introduces a potential conflict when considering the relationship of the "Doctor of Theology" to the church and academy. Bavinck's position on the relationship of the theologian to the church provides the caveat that is needed to provide harmony for his system. While this has important historical overtures to consider, within his system his decision to deny the theologian an ecclesial office facilitates consistency for the theologian's relationship to the church and academy.⁴⁶ For it allows us to

that of the Word proves that the minister acts in the name of Christ and functions as the steward and distributor of his mysteries. The Lord's Supper is a meal whose host is Christ.

⁴³ See Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, c.18, 14; Book IV, c.19, 24 Interestingly, in reference to the "ceremonies" of Rome Calvin also cuts the catholic priesthood off from any claims to regality; see also (Calvin, *Institutes*, Book IV, c.19, 27).

⁴⁴ See Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §102.

⁴⁵ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §127, 143.

⁴⁶ See *OT*, 10-14.

consider the theologian (as prophet and priest) in reference to the academy. The theologian's relationship to the church is "organic" and not "institutional."

The Doctor of Theology, then, is not an "office" in the church in the strict sense.⁴⁷ The church and the academy are distinct in their nature and purpose, for which reason one could simply distinguish the doctor and the pastor in reference to location. Nonetheless, there is unity between the two vocations by unity of the gift of the Spirit. Therefore, while the doctor is not "ecclesial office", it may broadly be conceived as one on account of the activity of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ Thus, "Doctors of the church can and ought to be considered ministers and priests of scholarship."⁴⁹ If Bavinck had indeed provided the theologian with an ecclesial office, this would have introduced a conflict within his threefold schematic as stretched across the twofold office of overseer and deacon.

Bavinck maintains that doctors have the office of priest because they serve God "day and night in his temple," with a "devotion of heart and mind to the glory of his Name."⁵⁰ Thus, like the office of the diaconate, they share in serving God, offering themselves as a sacrifice of praise. But like the office of overseer, the theologian is "a prophet who declares him and always speaks unto the honour of his name, a man of God equipped for every good work."⁵¹ The final *munus triplex* belongs to the science of theology itself, which will surface in the next chapter.

The overlap of organism and institution with *passive* and *active* and this same passive/active dynamic applying to dogmatics and ethics produces two points to highlight. First, the organism of the church at various points as passive and active demonstrates the interface of divine activity as God transforms his church and fashions them as religious-ethical agents. In this way they are passive as they receive the benefits of Christ but are active in their *munus triplex* framed worship. Second, the church as institution is described strictly as active — and this links to dogmatics. It is necessary to recognize then that Bavinck is claiming in both the institution as active and the organism as active there is a description of divine activity. In Word and Sacrament God descends to his people and in *munus triplex* worship the church ascends. Ecclesiology then is a clear "pile" that connects his dogmatics and ethics. Having identified the *munus triplex* of Christ in the

⁴⁷ *OT*, 95, 97.

⁴⁸ *OT*, 98.

⁴⁹ *OT*, 104.

⁵⁰ *OT*, 55, 141.

⁵¹ *OT*, 55, 63-64

ecclesia militans, we reach an important juncture in this chapter. How do the organism and institution interplay? To answer this, we will turn to consider Bavinck's reflections on baptism and the Lord's Supper.

II. Passive and Active: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

In Christian theology, the proclamation of the Word of God receives its confirmation in what is known as the sacraments. In Reformed theology, the sacraments are visible and spiritual "signs and seals" of the covenant of grace that serve to nourish the faith of believers.⁵² As signs and seals of the covenant of grace, the entirety of the benefits of the covenant are attached to Christ himself; they belong to believers as those in *unio mystica* with Christ. The sacraments do not add anything that is not already attached to the preached Word, and indeed require and follow the proclamation as visible "signs" of God's promises.⁵³ In the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, Christians are given visible signs of their induction and active participation in the fellowship with God and the community of believers.

According to Bavinck, the Reformed believe three important things about the signs and seals: first, God alone is the one who instituted the sacraments, and he is the "efficient cause" of the sacraments. Christ utilises human instruments to administer the sacrament, just he does in the proclamation of his Word as prophet, and rules over his church with office bearers - but he alone administers the Word in all its diversity.⁵⁴ Second, the sacrament displays before and assures believers of the actions of Christ. The Reformed tradition acknowledges the invisible action of Christ in the hearts of believers by the Spirit, but the priority is on the visible sign.⁵⁵ Third, Christ's *unio mystica* with believers is accompanied by confession on the side of the believer. In the sacrament, God makes a visible promise of his love for his people. Likewise, humans make a visible confession of their faith and love in Christ.⁵⁶ Therefore, captured in the terms "sign" and "seal" is both an earthly and heavenly reality.

The heavenly reality in baptism is the work of Christ. The earthly reality is the washing of water.⁵⁷ As mentioned in the fourth chapter, in regeneration we are immediately by faith included in fellowship and

⁵² For Bavinck's brief account of the developments of sacraments in Christianity, see *What Is Christianity?*, 26-28, 30-35, 40-43.

⁵³ *GICR*, 191-193; *RD IV*, 515.

⁵⁴ *RD IV*, 474, 533.

⁵⁵ *RD IV*, 475.

⁵⁶ *RD IV*, 475-476.

⁵⁷ *RD IV*, 519; *MD*, 533.

unio mystica with Christ. Believers are given a life-giving Spirit who lives within them and who is the author and origin of their new life, empowering them to walk according to the Spirit. As Bavinck writes, “This transformation takes a concrete form . . . in baptism.”⁵⁸ Baptism is a sign and seal of the benefit of forgiveness, regeneration, and incorporation into *unio mystica* with Christ and his people. Therefore, baptism is given to both adults and the children of believers encompassed under the expansive covenant of grace. The benefits of baptism are united to the heavenly reality of Christ. As Bavinck writes:

These benefits are all included in the fellowship with the Triune God in which the believer is incorporated by baptism (Matt. 28:19). In baptism the Father witnesses to us that he *makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs* (Gen. 17:7, 10; Acts 2:39). The Son assures us that he *washes us in his blood and incorporates us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection* (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). The Holy Spirit assures us that he *lives in us and sanctifies us to be members of Christ* (1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; Titus 3:5).⁵⁹

In baptism, believers are *passive*.⁶⁰ It is a sign and seal of their death and resurrection in Christ administered to them by Christ. It is a sign of the Father’s eternal love for his children, a sign of Christ’s mediation on our behalf, and a sign by which the Spirit assures us that we share in the benefits of Christ’s work. Believers are *passive* because it is the sacrament of regeneration and therefore, regardless of when the individual is baptized – as an adult or as an infant – it still points to the same incontrovertible reality.

Like baptism, the Lord’s Supper is a means of grace. It is undergirded by the same covenant of grace. In other words, both baptism and the Lord’s Supper point to the forgiveness of sins and the assurance believers may have that Christ is theirs, and they are Christ’s. Nonetheless, the Lord’s Supper is distinct from baptism because believers demonstrate their *activity*. In the Lord’s Supper, believers begin to participate following their own confession and grasping of the covenant of grace. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper has a distinct role in the life of the believer. It is not a sign of their incorporation into the body of Christ *at a baptism*. Rather, it is a sign of God’s continued supplication and nourishment toward those fellowshiping with Christ.⁶¹

⁵⁸ RD IV, 50.

⁵⁹ RD IV, 519. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁰ Billings, *Participation, and the Gift*, 123-125. An important distinction that might be drawn between Calvin’s own “passive/active” distinction and Bavinck’s is that Bavinck more fully embraces humans as “passive” in baptism.

⁶¹ GICR, 191-193.

Christ is at the forefront of Bavinck's understanding of the Lord's Supper. Christ is the institutor of the meal (Matt. 26:16) and believers express their *unio mystica* with him therein. Moreover, he is the administrator of the same.⁶² Thus, as was gestured to above, there is no earthly priest in this meal. This is because the Lord's Supper is not a "sacrifice" but rather, it is the "essential meal" of God's people that strengthens them.⁶³ This is distinct then from the Passover in the Old Testament. There, both a "sacrifice" and a "meal" were practiced. By contrast, the Lord's Supper is exclusively a meal.⁶⁴ This is so because Christ was the singular sacrifice (Heb. 10:11-12). In Christ's death, he takes the role of the true Passover lamb atoning for the sins of his people. Jesus is also the mediator of the sacrament. It should come as no surprise that the *munus triplex* would appear here. Bavinck writes:

In it he acts as prophet, who proclaims and interprets his death; in it he acts as priest, who gave himself up to the cross on behalf of his own; in it he also acts as king, who freely makes available the grace secured and gives it to his disciples to enjoy under the signs of bread and wine. Besides being the inaugurator of the Supper, he is also its host and administrator."⁶⁵

In his instituting of the Supper, Christ elevated the significance of the bread and wine. According to Bavinck, the Lord's Supper possesses both a heavenly and an earthly reality. The bread and the wine are the earthly reality which the church consumes. This earthly reality partakes in the heavenly reality of Christ's death, his broken body and shed blood. The Reformed argue for the spiritual presence of Christ in the bread and wine mediated by the Spirit. This meal, which begins with Christ, is administered by Christ, and points to Christ, also assures believer of their fellowship with Christ. Put differently, "In the Lord's Supper Christ comes together with his church, and the church comes together with Christ, thereby testifying to their spiritual communion (cf. Rev. 3:20)."⁶⁶ The Lord's Supper then acts as the culmination of Christian liturgy as believers ascend into Christ's presence.⁶⁷

⁶² *MD*, 535-536.

⁶³ *RD IV*, 548.

⁶⁴ *MD*, 535.

⁶⁵ *RD IV*, 562.

⁶⁶ *RD IV*, 562.

⁶⁷ *MD*, 535; "Manuscript "§20 Liturgiek" (unknown date), Box 346, Folder 227, 129-138. One can identify that Bavinck has two understandings of what constitutes liturgy. Broadly conceived, liturgy is the entire context in which worship occurs, including the cause of the occasion. This is contained in Bavinck's four-fold use of *holy*: place, person, time, action. Narrowly conceived, liturgy is the "work of religion" by which humans orient their worship

According to Bavinck, in the Lord's Supper believers are *active*. How is this so? Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and seals of the covenant of grace. Moreover, both ostensibly portray visibly the invisible promises of God and his divine activity. In the former, believers are depicted as *passive* pointing to the work of the Triune God in their regeneration. Much like the event of regeneration, baptism is administered only once. Baptism depicts the dogmatic descent of God toward the believer. In the Lord's Supper, believers partake in a meal in which they both celebrate the memory of Christ's death, but also fellowship in the resurrection and ascension of their crucified Saviour. As such, the Lord's Supper also displays the believer's *active* religious-ethical ascent to God and this fellowship includes a partaking, as if their own, in Christ's death and resurrection through eating and drinking.

Bavinck distinguishes the two in this way: in "baptism we are buried with Christ in his death and raised in his resurrection, and are therefore *passive*, but in the Lord's Supper we ourselves go into *action*, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ, and are thus fed by communion with him unto eternal life."⁶⁸ This is repeatedly administered to believers to provide assurance of their continued fellowship with Christ. Believers are *active* in the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper. This is not because it displays the work of man *contra* God, but rather because it is a sacrament of maturity.⁶⁹ In other words, the reformed envision believers partake in the Lord's Supper regularly as a meal that accompanies them in spiritual growth.⁷⁰ Baptism, then, is a sign of incorporation, and the Lord's Supper of our continued *active* fellowship with Christ. Baptism and the Lord's Supper act as a further lens to view humans as theologically *passive* and *active*. In baptism, humans are theologically *passive* agents, and in the Lord's Supper believers are theologically *active* agents.⁷¹

This theme of *passive* and *active* then sheds further light on the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. We might note from the first chapter that one of the archival slips described the relationship between dogmatics and ethics as:

Dogmatics describes Sunday, passive, rest

around the word of God. An exploration of Bavinck's understanding of liturgy as it relates to humans as *passive* and *active* would be a thought-provoking avenue of study.

⁶⁸ RD IV, 578.

⁶⁹ RD IV, 583.

⁷⁰ SOP, 29-30, 36-37, 43. The Lord's Supper is accompanied by a growing/developing confession of Christ.

⁷¹ RD IV, 578.

Ethics “-” weekdays, active

...

Dogmatics describes the objective acts God did for us.

Ethics describes how these deeds are fulfilled in us.⁷²

I might suggest here that Bavinck was perhaps careless in his notes on his description of Sunday.⁷³

Alternatively, he may have in mind ethical activity in the world. In that case, Christians are called in their religious community to rest in the Lord, but this does not exclude them from active participation in worship. This reading is possible considering the final line, especially as I displayed both of the sacraments as visible signs and seals of God’s promises toward believers. In the Word, we are given an invisible proclamation of God’s objective acts toward us. In Baptism, believers remain *passive* just as they remain *passive* in regeneration. Yet, in the Lord’s Supper believers eat and drink with the Lord, celebrating his death and resurrection and his fellowship with believers. In baptism believers are given a picture of the work of God toward man, while in the Lord’s Supper Christians receive imagery of humanity ascending and feasting with God, because of God.

III. *Munus Triplex in the ecclesia triumphans*

In this section, I turn to extend the *munus triplex* theological anthropology to its destiny in glorification to trace out the continued dynamic of *passive* and *active*. When do believers follow the ascension of Christ – the ascension foreshadowed in the Lord’s Supper – and fully realise the full benefits of Christ’s work? At death.⁷⁴ In considering glorification, we might analyse Bavinck’s framework of descent and ascent as drawn across the broad scope of dogmatics and ethics, or his theological program siphoned from Romans 11:36. Indeed, Bavinck summarised the whole scope of his theological program as such: “But proceeding from God, it descends to his works, in order through them again to ascend to and end in him. So in this method as well, God is beginning, middle, and end. From him, through him, and to him are all things (Rom.

⁷² “Untitled Loose Papers” (no date), Box 346, Folder 56.

⁷³ We might note in a separate archival piece also in the introduction Bavinck suggests that the division between Dogmatics is not between rest and work (see “Untitled” (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47-48).

⁷⁴ RD IV, 635-636.

11:36).⁷⁵ Therefore, in what follows the ethical ascent of the people of God, the beatific vision, and the kingdom of God will be explored.

In Bavinck's eschatology he continues to describe believers through the *munus triplex*. At this point the elect have ascended, and yet they remain both *passive* and *active* following their glorification. Christians are *active* in a two-fold manner: toward God and toward the saints. Fittingly, this twofold activity matches the earthly activity of the two-fold table of the law to love God and neighbour. The heartbeat of eternity is a knowing of, delighting in, and serving of God.⁷⁶ Bavinck depicts this knowing, delighting, and serving through the *munus triplex*:

While we may not be able to form a clear picture of the activity of the blessed, Scripture does teach that the prophetic, priestly, and royal office, which was humanity's original possession, is fully restored in them by Christ. The service of God, mutual communion, and inhabiting the new heaven and the new earth undoubtedly offer abundant opportunity for the exercise of these offices, even though the form and manner of this exercise are unknown to us. That activity, however, coincides with resting and enjoying. The difference between day and night, between the Sabbath and the workdays, has been suspended. Time is charged with the eternity of God. Space is full of his presence. Eternal becoming is wedded to immutable being.⁷⁷

This *munus triplex* — “fully restored in them by Christ” — enables believers to fulfil their eschatological destiny to be creatures actively delighting in, resting in, and serving God. Just as on the earthly Sabbath believers rest (*passive*) and serve (*active*) so do they in the heavenly Sabbath. Humanity's activity in the eschaton continues as the new heavens and new earth are restored in form (*forma*), but not material (*materia*).⁷⁸ In other words, the new heavens and new earth are composed of elements of the present world restored under Christ. Grace restores nature. What becomes central in eternity is religion, i.e. fellowship with God.⁷⁹ Grace precedes nature.

Humans continue to live out the *munus triplex* in the eschaton: as prophets who declare unending praise to God confessing him with their lips, as priests serving him “night and day”, and as kings reigning

⁷⁵ RD IV, 112.

⁷⁶ RD IV, 727.

⁷⁷ RD IV, 729-730.

⁷⁸ Bavinck follows Augustine, see *The City of God*, Book XX, c.14.

⁷⁹ RD IV, 722.

over the earth.⁸⁰ Believers, of course, do not fulfil Christ's office in his stead, but rather as those in *unio mystica* with him. Christ himself continues to be prophet, priest, and king in his exaltation.⁸¹

Unfortunately, the theme of ascension receives little attention in Bavinck's theological anthropology. On account of Bavinck's tidy distinction between dogmatics and ethics as that of descent and ascension, one would expect that it would play a greater role in his eschatology as it relates to the church's final ascension to God.⁸² Alternatively, nearly every reference to ascension/ascending in Bavinck's corpus found in his *Reformed Dogmatics* is a reference to Christ.⁸³

There may be a reason for Bavinck keeping ascension closely tied to his Christology: Bavinck perceives the church as needing to be spiritually formed into the body of Christ following the ascension of Christ.⁸⁴ Just as the Son of Man was aided by the Holy Spirit in his ascension, the Spirit will "lead [Christ's] church to glory by the same route."⁸⁵ This route is one of "suffering" and just as Christ was perfected in this manner, his body will be likewise perfected.⁸⁶ Therefore, one can imagine the church ascending as those formed by the Spirit. But this is the extent of Bavinck's use of ascension in his theological anthropology in *Reformed Dogmatics*.⁸⁷ As such, the theme of the church's ascension occupies no significant role in *Magnalia Dei* or *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion* either.

⁸⁰ *RD IV*, 727.

⁸¹ *RD IV*, 574.

⁸² Apart from the reference to ethics as ascension in his *Gereformeerde ethiek*, the idea remains underdeveloped (see *GE*, 47, 418, 491).

⁸³ References to man's ascension (*RD III*, 340, 443, 474, 499).

⁸⁴ *RD III*, 474; see Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, §99, 122, 158, 161, 170. Unlike Schleiermacher, he does afford it a place in his Christology.

⁸⁵ *RD III*, 499.

⁸⁶ *RD III*, 501.

⁸⁷ Bavinck does speak of Christ's continued activity as prophet, priest, and king toward his church after his ascension and therefore it indirectly relates to our themes – but again this is primarily Christological and not anthropological (see *RD III*, 475-482); Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 2. One might see consonance between Calvin's and Bavinck's views of ascension as that decisive act whereby the church begins to participate in Christ. Nonetheless, Bavinck does not give it the attention one would expect of it.

The body of Christ, however, is linked to Christ's ascension. Bavinck's conception of the ethical life, the Christian life, of course consists in the origin, expansion, and completion of Christ's body.⁸⁸ The best path forward to understanding the "ethical" ascension in Bavinck's theology is through the lens of his Christology, but what this means lacks clarity in Bavinck's thought.⁸⁹

This reading might be amplified by Bavinck's Augustinian heritage, and therefore we might envision Bavinck's ethics of ascension as a blend of the imagery of ascent and the "imitation of Christ" motif. The "imitation of Christ" motif has received significant attention from both Bolt and Joustra, so here I will focus more on the imagery of ascent via the image of God.⁹⁰ Augustine writes:

But that image of God was not made in any sense equal, being created by him, not born of him; so to make this point he is the image in such a way as to be "to the image"; that is, he is not equated in perfect parity with God, but approaches him in a certain similarity. One does not approach God by moving across intervals of place, but by likeness or similarity, and one moves away from him by dissimilarity or unlikeness.⁹¹

Of course, there is nothing in Bavinck's idea of ethics to suggest that we move in a locational manner toward God, but in a true way we approach him spiritually. Therefore, the image of God for Bavinck is *ethically* charged. It is ethically charged for four reasons, the image of God: (1) is attached to a divine calling/destiny (i.e. to be prophets, priests, and kings in pursuit of the highest good); (2) includes the *active* component of sanctification (relating to the law through Christ and imitating him); (3) includes both an individual and communal understanding; (4) is connected to the *ethical* beatific vision.⁹² In summation, the ethically charged image of God is the body of Christ conforming to the image of Christ reaching its telos on the kingdom of God.

All four are visible in the quote that follows, where Bavinck writes of the *munus triplex* as a communal image of God oriented toward God proclaiming, serving, and ruling in the likeness of God. "Only humanity in its entirety— as one complete organism, summed up under a single head, spread out

⁸⁸ *GE*, 45; *RE I*, 19-20.

⁸⁹ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 155-165. This resurfaces Pass's contention that seeing eschatology through the lens of Bavinck's Christology is not altogether clear. Pass outlines Bavinck's vision of both the first and second comings of Christ as having a Christological foundation and the Pneumatological completeness of God's children in the eschaton.

⁹⁰ I tend to Bolt and Joustra in chapter six.

⁹¹ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book VII, c.4.

⁹² *RD II*, 533, 542, 586; *GICR*, 13.

over the whole earth, as prophet proclaiming the truth of God, as priest dedicating itself to God, as ruler controlling the earth and the whole of creation— only it is the fully finished image, the most telling and striking likeness of God.”⁹³

It bears emphasizing that Bavinck’s articulation of the *munus triplex* is not restricted to the individual, but as the continuation of Christ’s work, Christ’s body occupies this organic role. The image of God develops toward the *telos* of the body of Christ (and is therefore both individual and communal).⁹⁴ As Mattson states, “Its *telos* was to be the whole organism of humanity acting as a prophet, priest, and king and ruler of the entire creation.”⁹⁵ Eternity is not fashioned for the individual alone. This harkens back to chapter two on election where in Bavinck’s conception of election, the whole has priority over the parts, even so it is an organic whole in which each part is known.⁹⁶ Here we arrive at election “the crown.” In chapter two, and above, I developed the people of God in both their organic and mechanical form as organism and institution. This has significance as we consider the continued *passivity* and *activity* of God’s people in the eschaton. We now broach the completion of Bavinck’s conception of the organism and institution in the eschaton.

Just as the *ecclesia militans* possessed a dual ontology, so does the *ecclesia triumphans*. In the *ecclesia militans* the organism and institution may be captured under the banner of *mater fidelium*. In the *ecclesia triumphans* the kingdom of God overtakes this dual ontology. The kingdom of God encapsulates both the full application of the benefits of Christ by the Spirit and is a physical kingdom. As Bavinck writes, “The kingdom of God does not come now with an external appearance but is within us (Luk. 17:20-21); it is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).” The spiritual benefits of Christ are applied to the believers.⁹⁷ At the end of the ages, humans will be “one organism” composed as the body of Christ and existing as the one catholic and *ecclesia triumphans*.⁹⁸ The whole organism of creation is restored as all things are gathered up in Christ, including the organism of the church. The organism continues to be vivified by the Spirit and indeed, it is this body which “ascends.”

⁹³ RD II, 577.

⁹⁴ RD II, 533.

⁹⁵ Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny*, 147.

⁹⁶ RD II, 404.

⁹⁷ GICR, 204-205.

⁹⁸ RD IV, 639-640.

In the eschaton the ordering of reality has been reversed; grace not only has *restored* nature but also *precedes* nature. The spiritual comes first. Following the ushering in of the spiritual kingdom, the physical kingdom follows. “The kingdom of God is first and foremost spiritual and internal, but it must also appear in an external form and be visibly established on earth (Act. 1:6-7).”⁹⁹ On the new heavens and new earth God establish his kingdom.

This eschatological shift from *mater fidelium* to kingdom of God is also followed with other changes. For example, on account of the immediacy of Christ there is now no longer any need for the ecclesial offices.¹⁰⁰ In other words, where does the *munus triplex* activity of the church distributed across the office of overseer and deacon go? While Bavinck does not directly address this query, the answer seems clear. It dissipates and all become workers in God’s temple, all reign alongside of Christ, and all confess his name. While no-one occupies the office of overseer and deacon, all partake in the activity of prophet, priest, and king. And indeed, because the means of grace have always been attached to the person and work of Christ, as signs and seals of his promises they too pass away in glory as God is all in all.¹⁰¹ After all, this three-fold office is a “universal” office held by all Christians.¹⁰² Thus, the church as organism continues to “declare the excellencies of God, confess his name . . . offer up their bodies as living sacrifices” and “reign with Christ.”¹⁰³

Bavinck also relates the origin, kinship, and destiny of humans to the *visio Dei*. In *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Bavinck states: “His origin was divine, his nature was kindred with the divine, and his destiny was the vision of God.”¹⁰⁴ He also directly connects ethics to the vision of God. This naturally connects to the earlier idea of ascension being linked to his conception of the image of God. He writes:

Christ is and remains the way to the Father, to the knowledge and vision of God (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 14:6; 1 John 3:2b). The *visio Dei* can only be achieved in the way of ethical Christian living (Matt. 5:8; 1 John 3:6). Even participating in the divine nature is not something for the future

⁹⁹ *GICR*, 205-206.

¹⁰⁰ *RD IV*, 305.

¹⁰¹ *RD IV*, 329-330. The dissolving of the offices of overseer and deacon in the new heavens and new earth (like marriage [Matthew 22:30]) seems to highlight their significance as the church images Christ in the here and now.

¹⁰² *RD IV*, 375-376.

¹⁰³ *RD IV*, 375-376.

¹⁰⁴ *GICR*, 85.

alone but a goal envisaged already by the granting of God's promises here on earth (2 Pet. 1:4) again ethically mediated.¹⁰⁵

The *visio Dei* is the ethical *telos* of Christian ethics. Are believers restricted to some sort of ethereal beatific vision? By no means. Bavinck fully embraces the restoration of both the body and the soul. Yet, this is not a denial of the beatific vision – rather Bavinck attempts to expand it. This is in complete agreement with his “grace restores nature” motif. Nature is not eliminated by grace, but rather it is unfolded to its highest degree.¹⁰⁶

Now, as we look into the mirror of God's revelation, we only see his image; then we will see him face to face and know as we are known. Contemplation (*visio*), understanding (*comprehensio*), and enjoyment of God (*fruitio Dei*) make up the essence of our future blessedness. The redeemed see God, not—to be sure—with physical eyes, but still in a way that far outstrips all revelation in this dispensation via nature and Scripture. And thus they will all know him, each in the measure of his mental capacity, with a knowledge that has its image and likeness in God's knowledge—directly, immediately, unambiguously, and purely. Then they will receive and possess everything they expected here only in hope. Thus contemplating and possessing God, they enjoy him and are blessed in his fellowship: blessed in soul and body, in intellect and will.¹⁰⁷

Bavinck's articulation of the beatific vision in broad strokes has much in common with the wide-ranging theological tradition, contra Boersma who portrays him as an outlier. Boersma perceives Bavinck's “beatific vision” to be a failure, sidelined by a focus on social activity.¹⁰⁸ Bavinck scholar Cory Brock recently responded to this critique by Boersma.¹⁰⁹ Brock's rebuttal placed Bavinck's *visio Dei* within his criticism of 19th century neo-Thomism, which displays that Bavinck's criticism of *visio Dei* were accurate articulations of neo-Thomism and warranted Protestant critiques. In particular, Brock argued that Bavinck pushed back against any dualism between the spiritual and ethical.¹¹⁰ Brock then displayed how the *visio Dei* and kingdom

¹⁰⁵ *RD* II, 543.

¹⁰⁶ *RD* IV, 722.

¹⁰⁷ *RD* IV, 722.

¹⁰⁸ Hans Boersma, *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 14, 27.

¹⁰⁹ Brock, “Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision”, *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 6 no. 2 (2021): 367-382; see also *BCB*, 195-196.

¹¹⁰ Brock, “Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision,” 369-371.

of God are coherent in Bavinck's system.¹¹¹ This section of the chapter adds to Brock's argument in favour of an adequate beatific vision present in Bavinck by exploring Bavinck's appropriation of Bonaventure. Moreover, I place this discussion within Bavinck's *munus triplex* further supplementing the connection between the *visio Dei* and kingdom of God, and as the activity of the elect is not sidelined by the *visio Dei*, but is part and parcel with it.

Following the quote above in the *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck notes that theologians are typically split on how to understand this trifold (*visio, comprehensio, fruitio*) blessedness. While some follow Aquinas and attribute this blessedness to the "intellect," others heed Duns Scotus and attribute this blessedness to the "will."¹¹² Bavinck embraces neither, and instead follows the articulation of Bonaventure. He follows Bonaventure because he weds both the intellect and the will in his view of the beatific vision.

Bavinck's alignment with Bonaventure on the beatific vision, as opposed to Duns Scots or Aquinas, is notable, if only because the field of Bavinck studies has thus far myopically focused on bringing Bavinck into conversation with another Franciscan: Thomas Aquinas.¹¹³ When Bavinck diverges from Aquinas, he finds himself in a more positive dialogue with Bonaventure.¹¹⁴ A significant area of study lays open to

¹¹¹ Brock, "Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision," 378-379, 372. Once the criticism has been set-aside Brock notes that ultimately, Boersma's issue is that Bavinck does not say enough about the beatific vision in Vol. IV of his *Reformed Dogmatics*.

¹¹² *RD IV*, 722n9-10. See also *RD II*, 190.

¹¹³ A notable exception to this is Sutanto, see Sutanto, "Gevoel and Illumination: Bavinck, Augustine, and Bonaventure on Awareness of God," *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 30, no.3 (2021): 265-278.

¹¹⁴ For example, literature surrounding Bavinck's epistemology often looks to connect Bavinck to Aquinas. Sutanto's work pushes back against identifying Bavinck strictly with Thomas (Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 75-92); For examples of where Bavinck sides with Bonaventure over Aquinas, see *RD I*, 98-99 (Bavinck prefers Bonaventure's organization of the *Breviloquium* over Aquinas' arrangement of the *Summa*), *RD I*, 406-407 (Bavinck details Bonaventure's understanding of Scripture in the "precious *Breviloquium*" after critiquing Aquinas' "intellectual" inspiration), *RD II*, 102 ("In Thomas we read.... Bonaventure says it even better..." on the divine names), *RD IV*, 722 (on the beatific vision).

understanding Bavinck's engagement with and adoption of Bonaventure.¹¹⁵ Bavinck even seemingly alludes to Bonaventure within one of Bavinck's major motifs for his *Reformed Dogmatics*:

From him, through him, and to him are all things (Rom. 11:36). But God is not drawn down into the process of history here, and history itself is treated more justly. God and his works are clearly distinguished. In his works God acts as Creator, Redeemer, and Perfecter. He is "the efficient and exemplary Cause of things through creation, their renewing Principle through redemption, and their perfective Principle in restoration" (Bonaventure). Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God as he has revealed himself in Christ; it is the system of the Christian religion.¹¹⁶

According to Bonaventure, the glory of heaven is threefold: it is "substantial, consubstantial, and accidental." The "substantial" is the "vision, enjoyment, and possession of the one highest good, namely God... they will enjoy God with eagerness and delight, and they will possess God forever." The second is the glorification of the body and the heavenly robes: this is the consubstantial blessing. According to the believer's "measure of love" on earth, the quality of this body will be altered. Lastly, the accidental glory of heaven is an "embellishment called the aureole" according to merit: martyrdom, preaching, and virginity.¹¹⁷

One can be certain that Bavinck does not embrace the specific content of this distinction, but he may follow Bonaventure's threefold distinction of "substantial, consubstantial, and accidental." The substantial would then be the beatific vision, the consubstantial the glorification of the body, and the accidental the diversity of the communion of the saints. The first of these is especially clear: the beatific vision.

Bonaventure's beatific vision grounds all things in God who is the first principle, and therefore self-sufficient and blessed in himself, but it also shapes his Christology. Christ is "in full possession" of this beatific vision.¹¹⁸ Bonaventure writes, "Since it was proper that Christ the mediator possess innocence and the bliss of enjoying [the *visio Dei*] while still being mortal and capable of suffering, he had to be at one and

¹¹⁵ Bavinck's positive engagements with Bonaventure in *RD*: I, 34, 98-99, 103, 112, 146-148, 406-407, 442, 452, 578; *RD* II, 64-65, 102-103, 113, 169, 206, 210, 298, 301, 319, 326-327, 408, 420, 427, 429, 433-434, 439, 458, 461, 482, 600; *RD* III, 139, 142, 152, 219, 426, 452, 455; *RD* IV, 722, 730.

¹¹⁶ *RD* I, 112. No source is provided in *RD*. See Bonaventure, *Breviloquim*, trans. Erwin E. Nemmers (St. Louis: B. Herder Books, 1947), 23.

¹¹⁷ Bonaventure, *Breviloquim*, VII: 7: 1.

¹¹⁸ Bonaventure, *Breviloquim: Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series*, ed. Robert J. Karris, trans. Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute of Publications, 2005), VII: 1. 2.

the same time a pilgrim [on earth] and one possessing [the beatific vision].”¹¹⁹ Thus even during his earthly pilgrimage, Christ fully possessed the beatific vision, and those who are in Christ receive this vision fully on account of Christ.¹²⁰

Within Bavinck’s own account of the beatific vision, he affirms Bonaventure’s readiness to conceive of the *visio Dei* as an act of the intellect and will. Earlier in volume two of his *Reformed Dogmatics* contra Duns Scotus he writes, “Much sounder, therefore is the position of Bonaventure who saw the intellect and will as being conjointly the seat of blessedness. Just as in the case of humans, beatitude will embrace body and soul and all their faculties, so in the case of God it consists not only in perfect knowledge but equally in perfect power, goodness, and holiness, and so on.”¹²¹

Recall that earlier, that both intellect and will were rooted in the heart in Bavinck’s theological psychology the seat of religion. According to Bavinck, Bonaventure is right in arguing that we will enjoy God in both our intellect and will (our heart). As Pass notes, because faith becomes “sight” in the eschaton, we are left with intuition as the faculty by which the *visio Dei* is enjoyed (an enjoyment that is “immediate.”)¹²² Bavinck writes “enjoyment of God (*fruitio Dei*) was the fruit not only of the knowledge of God (*cognitio Dei*) but also of the love of God (*amor Dei*) and resulted from the union and cooperation between the two.”¹²³ Thus dogmatics and ethics (unified theological *thinking* and *loving*) converges in the beatific vision.

As observed by Brock, Bavinck’s understanding of the *visio Dei* is intimately connected to Bavinck’s theme of the highest good.¹²⁴ In chapter three of the dissertation, Bavinck’s conception faith was linked to Augustine’s *faith seeking understanding* oriented toward the highest good. At this juncture, we might bring Bavinck back into conversation with Augustine, especially given Bavinck’s discussion linking the highest good and the beatific vision revolves around Bonaventure and Augustine in the second volume of *Reformed Dogmatics*.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Bonaventure, *Breviloquim*, IV: 8. 3; IV: 6. 1.

¹²⁰ Bonaventure, *Breviloquim*, IV: 6. 2; IV: 5. 6; VII. 7. 2.

¹²¹ *RD* II, 212.

¹²² Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 159. See also *RD* IV, 720.

¹²³ *RD* IV, 722. See also *RD* II, 190-191.

¹²⁴ Brock, “Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision,” 374.

¹²⁵ *RD* II, 64, 212.

Augustine (the theologian *par excellence* according to Bavinck) develops the beatific vision as one of the major themes of his *The Trinity* and *The City of God*. In the opening of *The Trinity*, Augustine articulates his work as “seeking his face always (Psalm 105:4).”¹²⁶ The aim of the mind seeking God in Augustine is “to know as we are known,” and to see God “face to face.”¹²⁷ Bavinck summarizes Augustine on the highest good writing: “Especially Augustine frequently described God as the “the supreme good.” In him alone is everything creatures seek and need. He is the supreme good for all creatures, though in varying degrees, depending on the extent to which each creature shares in the divine goodness and is able to enjoy him. . . . A creature finds no rest except in God alone.”¹²⁸

In the opening chapter of *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*, Bavinck tips his hat to all three of these themes: (1) highest good, (2) restlessness (3) beatific vision. First, in the opening line of *Guidebook* Bavinck beckons the reader to see that the highest good is “God, and God alone.”¹²⁹ Throughout the work, God is routinely re-introduced as the highest good.¹³⁰ And Bavinck informs the reader that the benefits of Christ include “the gift of the highest good, communion with God and all his blessings.”¹³¹ Second, Bavinck introduces the human as fundamentally restless apart from God: “As was said by Augustine, the heart of man is created for God and finds no rest until it finds it in God.”¹³² Where can the heart find rest specifically? Third, “In order for our hearts to find rest in God, naturally we must possess some knowledge of God, for the unknown is the unloved.”¹³³ This knowledge is found in Christ. “In Christ . . . we behold the Father himself in all of the fullness of his grace and truth (John 1:17; 14:9), so we may boast in humility, we know him because we are known by him; we love him because he first loved us (1 John 4:19).” *Guidebook* closes stating that, “all will see God’s face and be like him . . . all will know, as they are known.”¹³⁴ The beatific vision is special precisely as a beholding, an enjoying, and loving of God who is

¹²⁶ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book I, c. 4-5.

¹²⁷ Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book VIII, c. 3; Book XI, c. 3; Book XII, c. 4.

¹²⁸ *RD* II, 212.

¹²⁹ *GICR*, 17

¹³⁰ *GICR*, 74, 84.

¹³¹ *GICR*, 122.

¹³² *GICR*, 3.

¹³³ *GICR*, 3.

¹³⁴ *GICR*, 14-15, 194.

the highest good. Just as the *visio Dei* is set as the destiny of man in *Guidebook*, that destiny is “knowing we are known.”¹³⁵

In the third, fourth and final chapters of this thesis, the topic of the highest good in Bavinck’s theology percolates to the surface. At this point, it returns, but with a different purview. Bavinck’s mature conception of the highest good seems to be “God, and God alone.” In truth, the young Bavinck seems to present an alternative highest good — the kingdom of God. Two possibilities have to be considered. Does Bavinck’s conception of the highest good develop (such that they should be viewed as alternative answers), or are these two apparent highest goods to be viewed in harmony with one another? It is my contention that the latter interpretation is correct. In demonstrating that there is no dualism in Bavinck’s eschatology, Brock makes the point that:

Likewise, in “KGHG,” he argues, the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom *of God*.¹³⁶ Christ is the head of this living body. The Kingdom exists unto the glory of God. That is its first purpose. “In the Kingdom of God, God himself is the King-Sovereign.”¹³⁷ Accordingly, the goal of the individual is that one’s essence be “reflected in the mirror of [their] consciousness, and that [they] thus become like God, who is nothing but light and in whom is no darkness (1 John 1:5).”¹³⁸ In other words, the end of each person is that they be restored by grace to full humanity, to being in themselves the nature that God pronounced over his image-bearers: fully dependent upon God, and without any internal conflict between the law of God and the desires of the personality, to become like God in the presence of God.¹³⁹

In the beatific vision humans behold God, who is the founder, architect, and king of this city. The inhabiting of this kingdom is not to be juxtaposed with the beatific vision — this would be to introduce the dualism Boersma supposes, and Bavinck opposes.¹⁴⁰ Humans take up the *munus triplex* as creatures actively serving God and these activities are not at odds with but intertwined with enjoying, delighting, and resting in God.¹⁴¹ Therefore, in conjunction with Bavinck’s understanding of the activity of sanctification and the development of the personality, humans become who they are in Christ, in the eschaton. This includes a

¹³⁵ *RD* II, 190.

¹³⁶ Bavinck, “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good,” 149.

¹³⁷ Bavinck, “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good,” 149.

¹³⁸ Bavinck, “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good,” 150.

¹³⁹ Brock, “Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision,” 379.

¹⁴⁰ Boersma, *Seeing God*, 33; Brock, “Revisiting Bavinck and the Beatific Vision,” 369.

¹⁴¹ *RD* IV, 729-730.

continued faithful service of God in the kingdom of God as creatures who partake in the diversity of glory.¹⁴² It must not be forgotten, for Bavinck, in the kingdom of God grace precedes nature.

The intertwining of the beatific vision and the kingdom of God as a shared highest good may be briefly amplified by considering Bavinck's engagement with Augustine on the beatific vision, once more. In volume two of *Reformed Dogmatics*, within his discussion on rejecting innate ideas he considers Augustine. Bavinck references Augustine's distinction of the various forms of creaturely knowledge in contrast to God's knowledge of himself, which percolate to the surface in Augustine's *The City of God* and *De Genesi ad litteram*.¹⁴³ God's knowledge of himself is "noonday" — it is perfect and brilliantly bright. In comparison, creaturely knowledge is like the "twilight" — it is dim, semi-dark, and waning. This "twilight" knowledge can be transformed through the love and adoration of God, in which it becomes akin to "the morning dawn."¹⁴⁴ Augustine writes: "For the knowledge of the creature is, in comparison of the knowledge of the Creator, but a twilight; and so it dawns and breaks into morning when the creature is drawn to the praise and love of the Creator; and night never falls when the Creator is not forsaken through love of the creature."¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the believer knows herself better in the wisdom of God (in the light of God's wisdom), then in her own creaturely (twilight) knowledge, and navigates the world in the light of God's light.

Augustine takes this further than Bavinck acknowledges in this section. In Augustine's *The City of God* when he turns to the beatific vision in Book XXII, chapter 29 one finds that he speaks of the beatific vision as "translated into the kingdom of Christ" in the most "delightful city of God."¹⁴⁶ The material and spiritual world, therefore, are not split by Augustine — and even includes activity on the part of the believer, who "both in motion and at rest... shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification."¹⁴⁷ Augustine's city of God is filled with creatures who are *actively* at rest, he writes, "How great shall be that felicity, which shall be tainted with no evil, which shall lack no good, and which shall afford leisure for the praises of God, who shall be all in all! For I know not what other employment there

¹⁴² *RD* IV, 728.

¹⁴³ See *RD* II, 64.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XI, c. 29.

¹⁴⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XI, c. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXII, c. 29.

¹⁴⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXII, c. 30.

can be where no lassitude shall slacken activity, nor any want stimulate to labour.”¹⁴⁸ Much like Augustine’s union of the beatific vision in the city of God — Bavinck’s unites the beatific vision and the kingdom of God because God’s creatures *actively* participate in God’s rest.

Conclusion

In Bavinck’s *ecclesia militans* I noted the expansion of the application of Christ’s *munus triplex* beyond the organism of the church into the institution of the church. In Bavinck’s ecclesiology, all believers are prophets, priests, and kings, although it is the officers of the church who in particular act out Christ’s mediatorial role in the life the church. This led us to consider the interface of organism and institution in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In these two sacraments, found in the worshipping life of the church, we have both signs and seals of the promises of God, and an opportunity to reflect on humans as *passive* and *active*. In baptism, humans are *passive* in that they are washed in the blood of Christ. Yet in the Lord’s Supper, believers actively eat and drink Christ’s blood and body, participating in his death and resurrection. In these two, we then see the same division that appeared between dogmatics and ethics: the difference between humans as *passive* and *active*. While baptism displays the work of God toward the believer, the Lord’s Supper models our continued ethical perseverance in fellowshiping with Christ.

In the final section of the chapter, we continued mapping out Bavinck’s threefold vision of the ethical activity of humans in the eschaton. This was brought into conversation with the believer’s ethical end and vocational destiny in the *visio Dei*. Reflections on eschatology also necessitated that we bring our conversations related to the highest good into order. There, we disclosed via Brock that the kingdom of God is in harmony with God and God alone as the highest good. Bavinck’s resourcing of both Augustine and Bonaventure was drawn upon to make evident two features: (1) the importance of the shared location of the intellect and will in his theological anthropology, and therefore the convergence of the theological thinking and loving in the *visio Dei*; and (2) the *passivity* and *activity* in the kingdom of God is mutually facilitated as creatures rest, serve, and delight in God for all eternity as prophets, priests, and kings.

This closed our handling of Bavinck’s dogmatic/ethical loop of all things as from, through, and to God. It furthered the thesis by mapping *passive* and *active* into at least two more loci, ecclesiology and eschatology. The second chapter provided election as a “pile”, the third and fourth, faith, regeneration, *unio mystica* and sanctification, and now this chapter, ecclesiology, and eschatology. We might picture the

¹⁴⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XXII, c. 30.

imagery of the transformation of Amsterdam once again. The swampland of Amsterdam has been adequately trenched and we now stand atop a canal admiring the movement of God's descent (dogmatics — God's work toward man) and the believer's ascent (ethics — man's work toward God). The *activity* of the individual believer in sanctification was harmonized alongside the community of the church in ecclesiology and eschatology under the umbrella of the *munus triplex*. This theological anthropology provides various "piles" to lift us out over the mud and to support the relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

At the start of the thesis, I suggested that one could picture the piles as collated around God's activity in salvation. As such, the "piles" are located along the lines of the *ordo salutis* (election, regeneration, *unio mystica*, faith, justification, sanctification, glorification, etc.).¹⁴⁹ The pile, of ecclesiology might be imagined as sitting awkwardly in this relationship — but in reality, according to Bavinck's understanding of *mater fidelium* — the church is precisely the theological location in which the benefits of Christ's person and work are applied. As such, the church vivified by the Spirit takes on the activity of Christ in the world and continues his *munus triplex*. The *ordo salutis* then reaches its fulfilment in the ascent of the church in Christ, when Christ is all in all.

In the chapter that follows, the thesis shifts pace to consider dogmatics and ethics as related in Bavinck's theological system. This system is the theological encyclopaedia, which acts as theology's self-consciousness, organising and developing theology itself. Rather than being within the "dogmatic/ethical loop" it sits above it, reflecting on the discipline of theology as a whole. At this point, the theses leading imagery—that of "piles" supporting a systematic theology "home" —shifts. From here on in, our attention will move to the avenue along which our home resides — the theological encyclopaedia — and the systematic theology home, itself.

¹⁴⁹ *GICR*, 133.

Chapter Six: The Theological Encyclopaedia

“The encyclopaedia in general is presently that science, which is the organism of the different parts, of science which knows its goal from the immanent idea of that science itself.”¹ – H. Bavinck

“As an Encyclopaedia, the theological encyclopaedia does not have any other standard than any other special encyclopaedia. But it becomes its own encyclopaedia through the theologisches moment [theological moment], through the idea of God, which organizes and controls all of its parts, and with the idea of God as revealed in Holy Scripture, by Christ, idea and fact are in harmony.”² – H. Bavinck

In the previous chapters, we looked at the “piles” of election, faith, regeneration, sanctification, *unio mystica*, ecclesiology, and eschatology each as connecting dogmatics and ethics through the lens of *passive* and *active*. Together these “piles” provide a framework that supports the discipline of systematic theology (which includes the sub-disciplines of dogmatics and ethics). In this chapter, I consider the theological encyclopaedia avenue upon which our Amsterdam systematic theology home rests. The theological tool that conceptualizes the historical origin and development of the distinctions between the various theological disciplines was known as the theological encyclopaedia. This chapter aims to provide a close reading of Bavinck’s own encyclopaedic project. What theology is, how its various disciplines are formed, its place among the various sciences, and its distinct task and limitations affect how we understand the scientific and

¹ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: Encycl. in het algem. is nu die wetenschap, welke het organisme van verschillende deelen eener wetenschap uit de immanente idee dies wetenschap zelve om kennen doel].

² Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: Als Encycl. heeft ook de theol. Enc. geen ander begrip dan elke andere speciale Enc. Maar ze wordt een eigen Enc. door 't theolog. moment, door de idee Gods, welke alle hare deelen organiseert, beheerscht en met de idee Gods gelijk zij in de H. Schrift door X is geopenbaard, idee en feit in harmonie]. Here Bavinck cites Staudenmaier (see Franz A. Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften, als System der gesammten Theologie* (Mainz, 1834), §27-28). The phrase “theological moment” is borrowed from Staudenmaier’s “theologische moment.”

conceptual relationship between dogmatics and ethics. The chapter develops an understanding of dogmatics and ethics as flowing out of the science of theology, in particular systematic theology.³

The chapter moves forward in three sections. The first section aims to make clear what makes the encyclopaedia *theological* and therefore it probes Bavinck's understanding of the nature, scope, and purpose of theology. This takes shape by considering a reoccurring motif seen in Bavinck's attempts at describing the nature of theology, drawn from Romans 11:36: theology is from, through, and to God. This was briefly introduced in the previous chapter as Bavinck's own summary of his theology project. We further that discussion in this chapter. Furthermore, for Bavinck theology is a science, the whole of which is irreducible to its parts, unity-in-diversity, in an organic whole. No part of the organism of theology is independent from the whole. Theology also relates to the broader faculty of the sciences via the office it fulfils in the *munus triplex*.

In the second section, we move into the theological *encyclopaedia*. According to Bavinck an encyclopaedia is the self-consciousness of a particular science. Therefore, the theological encyclopaedia is the self-consciousness of theology. Theology develops an analytical understanding of itself, of how the parts relate to the whole organism of the science.⁴ The theological encyclopaedia generates a degree of organization and development of the forces inherent within theology.⁵ In this section, it will become clear that just as Bavinck desires for theology to be *theological*, he is also interested in the theological encyclopaedia developing *theologically*. In this manner, through its encyclopaedia, theology grows into maturity.

In the third section, the four components of Bavinck's theological encyclopaedia are unveiled. These subdivisions allow us to see how Bavinck maps the relationship of dogmatics and ethics within his framework. Here, I also distinguish Bavinck's conception of the theological encyclopaedia from his friend and theological peer Abraham Kuyper's theological encyclopaedia.⁶ Bavinck's private and public

³ Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie*, 7. This chapter likewise contributes to Veenhof's call for a systematic analysis of Bavinck's theology, particularly through analyzing the conceptualization of Bavinck's theological system in the theological encyclopaedia.

⁴ *OT*, 56-57.

⁵ See Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist'," 158.

⁶ See Kuyper, *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1894).

engagements with Kuyper's encyclopaedia differentiate his encyclopaedia from Kuyper's, while also making room for Kuyper.

In this chapter, we will gain a broad understanding of Bavinck's encyclopaedia, while being more narrowly focused on the relationship of dogmatics and ethics therein. This also permits an opportunity to make a foray into the growing discussion surrounding Bavinck's organicism, to which this chapter hopes to contribute. Bavinck's encyclopaedic projects assist us in further locating his relationship to nineteenth and early twentieth century thinking in this discussion. Together, the chapter introduces us to the historical and scientific relationship Bavinck envisions between dogmatics and ethics. Therefore, the first phase identifies his Romans 11:36 conception of theology; the second, the concept of the theological encyclopaedia; and the third phase makes clear Bavinck's historic distinctiveness within his neo-Calvinist *milieu*. Altogether, the chapter facilitates an understanding of the disciplines of dogmatics and ethics as placed within the intellectual system of the theological encyclopaedia, a connection which has been previously overlooked.

I. The *Theological Encyclopaedia*

The aim in this section is to identify the theological encyclopaedia's relationship to theology. That Bavinck desired theology to develop *theologically* has received sufficient attention in recent scholarship.⁷ His understanding of theology can be framed around a motif that pervades his writing on the nature, purpose, and scope of theology: the doxological conclusion found in Romans 11:36, that, "All things are from him and through him and to him are all things. To him glory forever. Amen." Throughout his corpus Bavinck consistently perceives all theological knowledge and activity as proceeding from God, all true theological activity as occurring through God's self-disclosure of himself in the Word — penultimately in Christ — and the revealing, reforming, and sustaining work of the Spirit, and all true theology serves God and his glory. In a similar vein, Xu summarized this idea in Bavinck as the Trinitarian grammar of his scientific theology.⁸ This motif of course is not restricted to theology — it encompasses all the sciences, and all of creation — nonetheless, the motif finds its optimum fulfilment in the activity of theology.

⁷ Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God", 32; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 45-74. Sutanto also explores the idea of theology as a *wetenschap* in Bavinck; *BCB*, 137-140.

⁸ Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God", 12, 181. "This grammar consists of five rationales: (1) positive revelationalism; (2) theological organicism; (3) critically organic realism; (4) dialectical catholicity; and (5) doxological teleology."

In 1883 Bavinck delivered a speech titled “The Science of Holy Theology.”⁹ The main claim made in the speech is that theology is a “science” or in particular a scholarly discipline that must not attempt to preserve itself through secularization but rather “in the sanctity of that which is sacred.”¹⁰ In other words, theology must remain *theological*.¹¹ Bavinck’s speech is split into three sections: principle, content, and *telos*. In other words, who is theology from, through, and toward?¹² While he does not explicitly quote it, Bavinck’s use of Scripture when speaking is often implicit. Therefore, even early on we might see the presence of Romans 11:36 as a guiding motif to his reflections on the nature and scope of theology.

In both “The Science of Holy Theology” and “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” Bavinck discloses that in theology, “God is everything: object, author, *modus*, and *finis*.”¹³ God is the principle by which all things are known, the content it unfolds, and the end with it seeks. The origin of theology is God himself. God is the *principium essendi* (ontological foundation). God is archetypal knowledge, which must be given to believers in a palatable ectypal form. Therefore, God discloses himself to humans in the *principium cognoscendi* (epistemological foundation).¹⁴ This is both external and internal to man as the Spirit binds believers internally to the external Word.¹⁵ Accordingly, for Bavinck, then, the object of theology is not our thoughts about God, but God’s self-disclosure of himself. He writes, “God’s thoughts are one, just as God is one according to *sensus communis*.”¹⁶ In this manner, theological knowledge is unified just as God is unified hence why it can be conceptualized as an organism. Theology is thus either “*vera*” or “*falsa*.” The

⁹ *OT*, 30-60; *BCB*, 137-140. Eglinton draws out comparisons between Jan’s speech in 1882 and Bavinck’s in 1883, in which Eglinton argues that Jan attempts to “reclaim *wetenschap*” or “reclaim science for orthodoxy.” Pass also introduces the speech (see Bavinck, *OT*, 5-10); see also Clausing, “‘A Christian Dogmatic does not yet Exist’,” 9.

¹⁰ *OT*, 30-32.

¹¹ *BCB*, 137.

¹² *OT*, 32.

¹³ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: God is alles: object, auteur, *modus*, *finis*].

¹⁴ *OT*, 32-36.

¹⁵ *OT*, 5-10. See Pass’ introduction regarding development of the *principium internum*.

¹⁶ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: Er is een God, en dus Godskennis, blijkennis *sensus communis*].

false, following Augustine's *City of God* is either *fabuloso* (mythical), *naturalis* (natural), or *civili* (civil).¹⁷ True theology, then is *theological* and it is not divided, but is in "substance one."¹⁸

God is the source of all theological knowledge. "The *principium essendi*," Bavinck discloses, "is God: Father, by his Son, through the Holy Spirit. He is the author of Theology; the Spirit is the doctor of the church."¹⁹ This Trinitarian theological-epistemology is further explained by Bavinck to be God the Father as *principium essendi*, God the Son as *principium cognoscendi externum*, and God the Spirit as *principium cognoscendi internum*.²⁰ These three principles of theology bear a clear trinitarian shape. As Bavinck states in his *Reformed Dogmatics*, "These three are one in the respect that they have as author and have as their content one identical knowledge of God."²¹ This trinitarian shape follows through with the Augustinian principle of appropriations by the persons of the Godhead and the inseparable operation of God as *principia*. God's revelation (in all its forms) remains unified in its source; God is the source of theology.²²

The starting point for theology is the simple God who is the archetype of all theological knowledge. The source of theology is God's ectypal revelation of himself.²³ Theology is not equivocal to God's knowledge of himself but is analogically in nature and grace.²⁴ Bavinck contends that revelation both general

¹⁷ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4. See Augustine, *The City of God*, Book VI, c. 5. "De tribus generibus theologiae secundum Varronem, id est uno fabuloso, altero naturali tertioque civili." Bavinck cites this page of Augustine.

¹⁸ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: De Theologie is vera of falsa... De Theol. vera is in substantie ééne]; This needs to be read in light of Bavinck's later development of *theologia irrogenitorum* (see the opening pages of chapter three). Bavinck may also have in mind Ulrich Zwingli's work *De vera et falsa religione* (*On the True and False Religion*).

¹⁹ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: Principia. Principium essendi (rei) is God: Vader in Zoon door den H. Geest. His is auctor Theologiae; Spiritus is Doctor Ecclesiae]; *OT*, 34-35.

²⁰ *OT*, 36; Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4.

²¹ *GD2^c*, I, 142-143; *RD I*, 213-214, "These three principia; distinct yet essentially one, are rooted in the Trinitarian being of God. It is the Father who, through the Son as Logos, imparts himself to his creatures in Spirit."

²² *OT*, 5-10. Pass notes the connection between science of theology and these principles in the mature Bavinck and his indebtedness to Schleiermacher.

²³ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: Theol. archetypa is Dei... Deze is God zelf... Theol. ectypa. Zij is in verschillende subjecten verschillend].

²⁴ *OT*, 45-46.

and special is given as a free-act of God – that all revelation is *self*-revelation – with God as the origin, content, and goal of revelation. It is important to highlight that for Bavinck revelation is the source of all true theology. This necessarily makes it a connecting point between the various theological disciplines including dogmatics and ethics.²⁵

In an undated set of student lecture notes on Bavinck’s theological encyclopaedia, Bavinck is recorded as critiquing theology that has a Christological starting point and arguing instead that theology must have a *theological* starting point.²⁶ He states, “From a Christological point of view, God does not come into his own either. It is only from the theological point of view of God, [that theology moves] from, and works through, and returns to God.”²⁷ Once more, the Romans 11:36 motif summarises Bavinck’s ideal for the nature of theology. Similarly, in his speech, “Religion and Theology”, Bavinck described the science of theology by arguing that, “Theologically, it is thus [i.e. it is theological] from the beginning to the end. From God it proceeds, to Him it returns. It has no rest until it has found rest in Him.”²⁸ Therefore, according to Bavinck theology displays a triune arc that is not an intellectual abstraction but is actually another way of talking about our creaturely existence (as thinking creatures) *coram Deo*. Just as we have no rest until we find it in God, our thinking has no rest until it becomes theological and finds its rest in God. This of course is in harmony with Bavinck’s theological anthropology. Theological *thinking* and theological *loving* find their rest in God.

This relationship between theology as a science and the motif drawn from Romans 11:36 is also exemplified in a different portion of Bavinck’s 1902 lectures on the theological encyclopaedia. There, it is written, “God is the author, object or content, and also the end of theology, from him, through him, and to

²⁵ *GD2*^c, I, 36; *RD*, I, 54.

²⁶ Cf. *RD* III, 274

²⁷ “Dictaat of Herman Bavinck’s Encyclopaedie d. Theol.,” 47 [Dutch: Op Chr. log. standp. komt G. evenmin tot z. recht. Dat alleen op het theol. standp. van God uit en door en werken heen tot G. terug]. In the first chapter, Bavinck notes the recent publication by Friedrich Paulsen. Paulsen’s book *Die deutschen Universitäten und das Universitätsstudium* was published in 1902. This means the lectures at the earliest were given in 1902. Bavinck also completed a move from Kampen to Amsterdam in the fall of 1902, succeeding Kuyper as professor of theology. These lectures likely belong to Bavinck’s encyclopaedia course in Kampen in 1902.

²⁸ *OT*, 137.

Him are all things also in the theological science.”²⁹ In Bavinck’s *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion* he encapsulates all knowledge of God under Romans 11:36. He writes, “Thus we, having proceeded from God through all his works, return to God; he is the Alpha and the Omega of all things; from through and to him are all things”³⁰ Moreover, revelation is pictured through this motif: “revelation comes from God, has God as its content, and has *God himself* as its goal. It is from him, through him, and to him; God has worked everything for his own sake (Prov. 16:4; Rom. 11:36).”³¹ One might conclude that for Bavinck the entire enterprise of theology is framed through an exposition of Romans 11:36.

In this same book we see this motif appear succinctly across his chapter on the Trinity.

In a word, the first person of the of the Divine Being is the *Father* because *from* him are all things... As all things are *from* the Father, so are they are also all *through* the Son... While all things are *from* the Father and *through* the Son, they all exist and rest *in* the Holy Spirit... It is the Father *from* whom, it is the Son *by* whom, and it is the Spirit *in* whom all things exist. From the Father through the Son and the Spirit come all things in creation and re-creation, and in the Spirit and through the Son they all return to the Father.³²

In the Romans 11:36 motif Bavinck’s trinitarian theological program is encapsulated. In these aforementioned lectures on the theological encyclopaedia the claim that theology is an avenue of inquiry with a distinct object is central to Bavinck’s argument for theology as a science. He claims, “This view is strictly logical, truly scientific: from God, therefore concerning God, and to God; One *principia*, origin, development, direction, goal; everything from one point of view: God’s self-revelation.”³³ Accordingly, he adds, “This view declares theology as an independent science, with right to its own faculty.”³⁴ God’s self-disclosure of himself gives theology a distinguished place among the sciences. On account of its unique

²⁹ “Dictaat of Herman Bavinck’s Encyclopaedie d. Theol.,” 34 [Dutch: God is Auteur, object of inh., e ook doel v.d theol., uit Hem, door en tot Hem zijn alle dingen ook in de theol. wetensch].

³⁰ *GICR*, 18.

³¹ *GICR*, 20.

³² *GICR*, 72-77. Emphasis Bavinck’s.

³³ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: Deze opvatting is streng logisch gedacht, echt – wetenschappelijk: uit God, daarom over God, en tot God. Eén principe, oorsprong, ontwikkeling, richting, doel: alles on der één gezichtspunt: de zichzelf openbarende God].

³⁴ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4.

object and content theology is superior to all the other sciences. Moreover, it is distinct from the other sciences because of its sacred source.³⁵ Theology is at the heart of the sciences.

In the third part of “The Science of Holy Theology” Bavinck is concerned with the following question: for whom is theology? Put differently, what is the end of theology? In this respect, Bavinck puts forth two intermediate goals, followed by a final goal. Theology is both ecclesial and scientific. Here Bavinck picks up again the *munus triplex*. He emphasizes both the theologian’s priestly, and prophetic role, but perhaps interestingly his only mention of regality belongs to theology herself and to Christ the King.³⁶ Theology as queen, is Christ-like, she reigns through service³⁷. In this manner, the *theologian* is to serve and be a prophet to the church, and *theology* a queen to the academy. Therefore, Bavinck accords to theology a royal role among the sciences. “Theology is *the* science, “*Regina Scientiarum.*”³⁸

In the first chapter, it was mentioned that Bavinck subscribed to the three forms of unity, which includes the Heidelberg Catechism. In the previous chapter we saw how he re-imagined a small portion of the catechism and nuancing of Schleiermacher. The Heidelberg Catechism explicitly teaches Christians to understand their own calling in life under the *munus triplex* applied derivatively (prophet: in confessing the name of Christ; priest: in offering up their lives as living sacrifices; king: in stewarding life to God’s glory). Hence, just as we saw it earlier as permeating his theological anthropology, ecclesiology, and eschatology we now see it being derivatively applied across public spheres.

Sutanto has correctly identified the two reasons Bavinck places theology on the throne of the sciences. First, theology is *Regina Scientiarum* because God is the object of study and second, because all sciences are theological in character.³⁹ Theology is thus the *Universalwissenschaft*.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, like all sciences theology rests on faith. This is superlatively so for theology.⁴¹ In summation, for Bavinck, theology

³⁵ *OT*, 57-58.

³⁶ The lack of regality to Bavinck’s theologian also contrasts with Schleiermacher’s ‘prince of the church’ in which the theologian occupies a princely office (Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, 3rd edition, trans. Terrence Tice, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011).§9.

³⁷ *OT*, 49-50.

³⁸ *OT*, 48-49.

³⁹ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 56.

⁴⁰ *OT*, 50.

⁴¹ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4.

is the science that unites all sciences and accords to each science its rightful place. “[Theology],” Bavinck writes, “stands in the closest connection to all other sciences. However, that connection must not ... be sought in the anthropological character of theology, but rather in the *theological* character of the other sciences.”⁴² What makes theology like the other sciences is the theological character of the other sciences. Ultimately, every science has as its end goal God’s glory. At the end of the ages there will only be one science, “knowing all things in God and God in all things.”⁴³

In the second part of “The Science of Holy Theology”, Bavinck is concerned with the question: what is the content of theology? On account of theology’s origin, it cannot be primarily about the church, but must be about God. It cannot be about Christians, but must be about God as revealed in Jesus Christ—its content includes then not only who God is, but also expands to all things in relation to God. Bavinck furthers his argument regarding theology’s relationship to the other sciences in this speech. As noted in the previous paragraph, theology not only belongs in the academy, but is itself the *Universalwissenschaft* (universal science).⁴⁴ Like all sciences, theology must be determined by its object and thus define itself; in other words, this requires theology to be *theological*. While theology is the science that provides unity to all the disparate sciences, the “science of the sciences” according to Bavinck is the encyclopaedia. It is the science that seeks to understand the science and therefore, we turn to develop our understanding of the Bavinck’s conception of the encyclopaedia. By understanding the encyclopaedia, we will garner a vision of how Bavinck perceives the encyclopaedic task, and therein the role of the theological encyclopaedia.

II. The Theological *Encyclopaedia*

In the Netherlands in the 19th century, the theological encyclopaedia was an indispensable tool in the theological student’s toolbelt.⁴⁵ Zachary Purvis argues that in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the theological encyclopaedia was viewed as a “living” apparatus. It was a way for theologians to envision how the various

⁴² *OT*, 35.

⁴³ *OT*, 58.

⁴⁴ *OT*, 50, 54. The *universalwissenschaften* was referenced in the third chapter in relation to the development of a *Wereldbeschouwing* and the place of theology amidst the sciences. We will pick up this discussion more below; see also Clausing, “A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist”, 55.

⁴⁵ For an expansion on the importance of the theological encyclopaedia in 19th century theological thought see Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany, en toto.*; It is interesting to note the absence of such a discipline in anglo-theological education today.

components of theology related to one another. The issues of the organization of knowledge, the unity of theology's various parts, and theology's relationship to the rest of the traditional faculties were all problems facing theology. In Germany the collective name for these problems was the theological encyclopaedia (*theologische Enzyklopädie*).⁴⁶ The same issue was prevalent in Dutch universities, where the same theological tool was utilized.⁴⁷

Bavinck perceived the theological encyclopaedia as a crucial component to the study of theology. He writes, "the encyclopaedia must be practiced at the beginning and at the end of the years of study. First to orient us. Subsequently to pull everything together and thereby allow us to see the forest for the trees."⁴⁸ The theological encyclopaedia was a crucial part of the development of the student of theology orienting them to the theological terrain. Bavinck lectured on the theological encyclopaedia throughout his Kampen years.⁴⁹

The word encyclopaedia, according to Bavinck, comes from the combination of two Greek words: ἐγκύκλιος and παιδεία.⁵⁰ Together the two had the connotation of the *orbis doctrinae* that were necessary for a man of culture.⁵¹ The total enterprise of dividing and categorizing the various disciplines itself (including dogmatics and ethics) gradually developed as its own distinct discipline as the various disciplines

⁴⁶ Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 2, 80.

⁴⁷ BCB, 86, 103; Joris van Eijnatten, "History, Reform, and Aufklärung: German Theological Writing and Dutch Literary Publicity in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* 7, no. 2 (2000): 173–204, 174. Van Eijnatten argues German theological writings were commonly and popularly translated and read in the Netherlands in the second half of the 18th century.

⁴⁸ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §1 [Dutch: De Encycl. moet dus beoefend aan 't begin en aan 't eind des studie jaren. Daarna om alles saam te vatten en om de boomen het woud niet voorbij te zien].

⁴⁹ BCB, 130.

⁵⁰ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §1; cf. Kuyper, *Encyclopedie*, 2-3.

⁵¹ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §1 [Dutch: 't was dus de naam van een kring van wetenschappen, *orbis doctrinae*, voor beschaafd mensch noodzakelijk]; cf. to Kuyper, *Encyclopedie*, 3-4; . "Manuscript Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §1. Bavinck claims, Galenus was the first to pull the two words together as ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία and the first to impart the primary divisions between the *trivium* (grammar, dialect, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music).

expanded and it became necessary to organize the sciences into an entire system. Therefore, as theology became organized and expanded it necessarily developed its own encyclopaedia.

Accordingly, the theological encyclopaedia is oriented by theology, the disciplines \ at the centre of the sciences. Theology embraces everything concerning God and all things in relation to God: Scripture, God and his works, ecclesial life, ministry, ethics, the life of piety. In his “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” Bavinck tells the reader to “see my oration” for his Reformed understanding of the concept of theology.⁵² This is a reference to his 1883 speech “The Science of Holy Theology.” For this reason, it was used in the description of theology above. The address is similar in order, content, and conclusions to §4 in “Encyclopaedie der Theologie.” – theology is a science with a unique principia, object, and goal.⁵³

In §6 of “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” Bavinck argues that there are five sciences: theology, law, medicine, letters, and the natural sciences.⁵⁴ These five are unified by theology. Purvis argued that the birth and maturation of the theological encyclopaedia was fostered alongside of the development of the university. He also, indicated that it was through the rise of the university that theology emerged as “a self-conscious, scholarly enterprise.”⁵⁵ This is not dissimilar to Bavinck, who writes, likewise, that, “The unity of the sciences is embodied in the University.”⁵⁶ In Bavinck’s narrative, theology, as a distinct discipline in the

⁵² Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §4 [Dutch: Gerformeerde Beschouwing van de Theologie. Zie mijne oratie].

⁵³ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 47. This argument is in harmony with Sutanto who adjudicates well the unity-in-diversity of the sciences, especially theology’s regal role therein. Nonetheless Sutanto does not connect this to the more precise category of the theological encyclopaedia. Sutanto makes three claims about knowledge as an organism: (a) theology provides the resources for a rich unified christian worldview, (b) theology is the queen of the sciences, in that all science is theological, (c) all science belongs to a whole, with methods and goals unique to each science.

⁵⁴ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §6 [Dutch: Het gansche gebeid des wetens in onder 5 faculteiten verdeeld theologie, rechtswetenschap, medicijnen, letteren, natuur[wetenschappen]. Tusschen den bestaat verband]. English: “The whole domain of knowledge is divided into 5 faculties theology, law, medicine, literature, nature. There is a connection between them.” In this section, Bavinck makes explicit how he perceives theology as connected to each of the individual sciences.

⁵⁵ Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, 22.

⁵⁶ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §6 [Dutch: De eenheid der wetenschappen belichaamt zich in de Universiteit]. Underline original; “Encyclopaedie der Christ. Geref. Theologie Cursus” (1883-1884), Box 346, Folder 43, §6; see also Kuyper, *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology*, 615-617.

university, is consequently accompanied by the development of the encyclopaedia.⁵⁷ How does the encyclopaedia fit with other sciences? Bavinck puts it succinctly:

This Encyclopaedia stands, therefore, not on the same line alongside, but is in the middle and above the subjects, orientated in the *orbis doctrinae*. It is the fount, the centre (*middelpunt*), from which the circumference is surveyed, it is the science of the sciences . . . the central science, therefore in essence philosophy, as this truly is encyclopaedia.⁵⁸

The encyclopaedia watches over, organizes, orders the various disciplines, and identifies how they fit together. The encyclopaedia is not a science *among* the sciences but is “the science *of* the sciences.” If we place Bavinck within the philosophical context of the previous century, the reasoning for this can be reconstructed. It is best to perceive Bavinck as partaking in a discussion that stretched from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth over the nature of philosophy. We will pick up the discussion we began in chapter three on the *Wissenschaftslehre* as it relates to the encyclopaedia.⁵⁹

Franz Staudenmaier (1800-1856) appears to be Bavinck’s chief interlocuter in discussion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Staudenmaier was a significant figure in German Catholic theology in the first half of the nineteenth century. Bavinck’s engagement with Staudenmaier is primarily restricted to the encyclopaedia.⁶⁰ Following Staudenmaier Bavinck acknowledges that the concept of the encyclopaedia sought to provide purpose for humanity, unity to the sciences, and harmony to all things and that this was first recognized in the philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.⁶¹ Thus, while Staudenmaier is down stream, the fountainhead is Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. In his 1901-1902 “Theologische Encyclopaedia,” Bavinck

⁵⁷ Bavinck, *Christelijke Wetenschap* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904), 108. Bavinck connects the benefits of the Christian faith to the context of the university; Forthcoming is an English translation of this volume by Eglinton, Sutanto, and Brock.

⁵⁸ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §1 [Dutch: Deze Encyclopaedie staat dus niet opgelijke lijn naast, maar midden in en boven de vakken, orienteert in den *orbis doctrinae*. Zij is de Foun (sic), het middelpunt, van waaruit de omtrek words overzien is de wetenschap des wetenschappen (gen. obj.), de centraalwetenschap, dus wezenlijke filosofie, gelijk deze waarlijk encyclopaedie is].

⁵⁹ See also Clausing, “A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist’,” 55.

⁶⁰ Staudenmaier is only cited a few times across the corpus of *RD* (see *RD* I, 156, 269, 320, 328; *RD*, II, 63). This is leading us into a discussion regarding Bavinck’s organicism. Staudenmaier should not be seen as his chief source of the “organic motif,” but rather an organic guide for him to follow on the road to constructing a theological encyclopaedic informed by organicism; Staudenmaier was an influential critic of Hegel with Schleiermachiian proclivities (Cf. Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 188).

⁶¹ Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §7-8.

indicates the conversation's indebtedness to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁶² This phrase "teaching of the sciences" has its historical root in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁶³ Fichte's idea of the *Wissenschaftslehre* originates in his work *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*—a book that had a sizeable impact on German Idealism and later the Romantic movement.

Bavinck's notebooks on the encyclopaedia reveal a historical indebtedness to Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel on the concept of the organism and encyclopaedia. Nonetheless, he was not their disciple. In the remainder of his works, in particular the *Reformed Dogmatics*, he levels sharp critiques against all three. In fact, many of the central themes of organism, an organic whole, the common idea, the reciprocal relationship between the parts and the whole, were unexceptional thinking by the turn of the nineteenth century. They had gained common currency by that point, such that to strictly identify him with any one earlier organicist figure might be overly ambitious.⁶⁴

Bavinck makes liberal use of Staudenmaier's *Encyklopädie* in his "Theologische Encyclopaedie" in which he describes the organic nature of the encyclopaedia.⁶⁵ Staudenmaier calls the theological encyclopaedia the *Wissenschaftslehre*.⁶⁶ Like Staudenmaier, Bavinck places theology, and not philosophy, at the centre of the sciences.⁶⁷ Theology is the science that connects the various disciplines because it is the

⁶² Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5. Here Bavinck also cites Staudenmaier (see Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §8).

⁶³ Johann G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (Leipzig, 1794); Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5.

⁶⁴ Beiser, *Romantic Imperative*, 82.

⁶⁵ Bradford E. Hinze, "Roman Catholic Theology: Tübingen," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. David Fergusson (Chichester, U.K.; Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 187-213. Staudenmaier was part of the nineteenth century Roman Catholic Tübingen school. He is also well known for his criticism of Hegel (see Staudenmaier, *Darstellung und Kritik des Hegelschen Systems. Aus dem Standpunkte der christliche Philosophie* (Mainz, 1844)).

⁶⁶ Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §9.

⁶⁷ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5; Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §25; *CWB*, 80; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 51; *OT*, 50. Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 71. Sutanto argues for four propositions related to Bavinck's epistemology. (1) "Wetenschap is a single organism containing a unity-in-diversity", (2) Each science is methodologically distinct with its own unique object and therefore diverse in its labor, (3) For their unity, "each science depends upon Trinitarian and scriptural Christian principles for them to be seen organically", (4) Theology is a queen of the sciences who shapes each science but is not determinative of the content of other sciences.

centre and crux of the sciences. Bavinck writes: “The theological encyclopaedia is therefore theology itself, developed and systematically ordered, a compendium to theology, theology *in nuce*, theological *Wissenschaftslehre*; the conclusion being that the Encyclopaedia has proved theology as a science.”⁶⁸ The theological encyclopaedia functions in the role of philosophy, and as such it is the science of the sciences at the heart of the encyclopaedia of knowledge. In this respect, theology functions as the *Universalwissenschaft*. It is the *Universalwissenschaft* because the theological encyclopaedia is the *Wissenschaftslehre*.

III. The Theological Encyclopaedia and Organism

Bavinck’s exact relationship to “organicism” has sustained much scholarly attention in recent developments in Bavinck studies, but no attention has been paid to the science of the science of theology.⁶⁹ Eglinton explored the organic motif in relation to Trinity, creation, scripture, and ecclesiology.⁷⁰ Pass discussed the organic motif in relation to Christology.⁷¹ Sutanto brought the organic motif into conversation with Bavinck’s theological epistemology.⁷² Xu’s work dealt with the scientific and organic character of theology.⁷³ By attending to the organism in the theological encyclopaedia, we see with greater clarity that Bavinck both participates in, and is indebted to, Romantic idealism.⁷⁴ This provides greater nuance to this ongoing discussion within Bavinck studies.

⁶⁸ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: De Theol. Encycl. is dus de naar haar wezelijken inhoud ontwikkelde en systematische geordende Theologie zelve, een compendium der Theologie, een Theologie *in nuce* (Räbiger 99), theologische Wissenschaftslehre; doel zij dit dan heeft de Enc. ook de Theol. als wetenschap bewezen]. Bavinck cites both Räbiger and Staudenmaier.

⁶⁹ Mattson, *Restored to our Destiny*; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*. Alongside Mattson, Eglinton’s work significantly moved the discussion forward.

⁷⁰ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 81-128, 131-154, 155-182, 183-204.

⁷¹ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 23-37.

⁷² Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 45-74, 17-44.

⁷³ Xu, “Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God,” 19-23, 108-119.

⁷⁴ One is wise to heed the advice of Mattson, who suggests being wary of committing the genetic fallacy while reading Bavinck, that is of attributing the meaning of words to their historical origin. Nonetheless, origin, resemblance, likeness cannot be simply discarded (see Mattson, *Restored to our Destiny*, 47-48); see also Clausing, “A Christian Dogmatic does not *yet* Exist’,” 61-62, 115.

Most recently, Pass has argued for Bavinck's organicism as having congruency with the formal properties of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*.⁷⁵ Going beyond Veenhof and Eglinton, Pass identified five features of Bavinck's organicism: (1) unity in diversity, (2) the priority of the whole over the parts, (3) the governing role of a living-force idea, (4) teleological orientation, and (5) the "congruency of mechanical and teleological explanation."⁷⁶ Bavinck's encyclopaedic writings lend credence to this claim. The various parts of the encyclopaedia are a unified whole, in which the diverse parts find their teleological significance in relation to the whole, which is governed by the principle of life, namely, theology. Bavinck writes of the organism, "In an organism, two things are at stake: The principle of life (*levensbeginsel*) and the parts or members."⁷⁷ This is true of the theological encyclopaedia. Notably, Bavinck writes of theological encyclopaedia itself as an organism:

This [encyclopaedia] shows us unity in the diversity of theology courses indicating connection, coherence, order, location, system, and organism. The value of the Encyclopaedia appears therein. If the Encyclopaedia does not know where to place a course, then it does not belong there. An organism is a whole with parts, which all take their own place; not too many or too few. Science is also an organism; not an aggregate, coincidentally thought out and blended together, but belonging and having grown together.⁷⁸

There is unity in diversity in the theological encyclopaedia. Each course belongs synthetically with the rest. This is true of the theological encyclopaedia: the various sub-sections "belong together" and the "unity in the

⁷⁵ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 28-37. Pass argues for a closer alignment of Bavinck's organism with the *Frühromantik*; Veenhof, *Revelatie en Inspiratie*, 267. Veenhof connects Bavinck and the German idealist Schelling; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 67-69. The course of my inquiry into the theological encyclopaedia, with respect to Bavinck's organicism seeks a mediating position between Pass and Eglinton with Bavinck's organicism sourced from the *Frühromantik* but utilized toward Reformed ends.

⁷⁶ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 28-32. That is to say, that Bavinck's organicism does not exclude, but includes forms of mechanicism. In this way, Bavinck's organism, as Pass states, "mirrors the formal properties of the organism as it was developed by the first-generation of post-Kantian idealists."

⁷⁷ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: Bij een organisme komt nu tweelei ter prake: het levensbeginsel en de deelen of leden].

⁷⁸ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §2:

[Dutch: Deze toont ons eenheid in de veelheid der theol. vakken wijst verband, samenhang, orde, plaats, systeem, organisme aan. Waarde der Enc. blijkt daarin. Indien de Enc. geen plaats voor een vak weet aan te wijzen dan hoort het er niet in. Een organisme is een geheel met deelen, die alle eigen plaats innemen; geen te veel of te weinig. Ook de wetenschap is een organisme; geen aggregaat, toevallig uitgedacht en saamgevoeld maar saam tot elkaar behoorend, gegroeid].

diversity of theology courses” in the encyclopaedia show “connection, coherence, order, location, system, and organism.”⁷⁹ The unfolding of the organic motif relies on the balance between the whole and its parts. What facilitates the diversity of the encyclopaedia is the role the various parts play in relation to the whole—such that theological porridge is made out of the sciences; not too many, and not too few.

The constitutive grounding life-principle (*levensbeginsel*) is orchestrated by the common idea. Bavinck considers the idea as central to the concept of the encyclopaedia. For the theological encyclopaedia, this is *theology*. In a telling passage he writes:

Organism is a cycle of life, affirming and investigating relationships. It is the highest form of being; thus the scientific organism is also the form of completed truth. Every part of a science has its scientific truth only in connection with the whole, in the system. There is thus no science without a system; where coincidence prevails, there is no true knowledge. The Encyclopaedia is thus the opposite of an aggregate of skills; it starts from the idea of a special science, from which the various parts emerge as a unity. The idea is the centre.⁸⁰

The encyclopaedia is a system that has a principle of life (*levensbeginsel*) as its animating centre. This idea orchestrates the various parts such that they may relate to one another in harmony. This idea for theology is God, as he has revealed himself. The teleological definiteness of the theological encyclopaedia is also clear. Citing Staudenmaier once more, Bavinck writes of the teleological end of the theological encyclopaedia as, “Theology describes itself in the encyclopaedia, [and does so] for itself... She proves herself to be a science in the Encyclopaedia.”⁸¹ Bavinck also connects theology to the other sciences and to the church.⁸² In this

⁷⁹ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §2.

⁸⁰ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5:

[Dutch: Organisme is een cyclus van levende, elkander onderstellende en bevestigende verhoudingen. ‘T is de hoogste vorm van ‘t zijn; zoo is wetenschappelijk organisme ook de vorm der voltooide waarheid. Elk deel eener wetenschap heeft zijn wetenschapl. waarhied slechts in verband met ‘t geheel, in ‘t systeem. Er is dus geen wetenschap zonder systeem; waar toevaligheid heerscht, is er geen waarachtig weten. Encycl. is dus het tegendeel van aggregaat van kundigheden; ze gaat uit van de idee eener bijzondere wetenschap, uit welke als eenheid de verschillende deelen voortkomen. De idee is het centrum].

Bavinck also cites Staudenmaier (see Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §21-26). §25 is eerily close to Bavinck here.

⁸¹ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: De theologie beschrijft in de Enc. zichzelf – voor zichzelf... Zij bewijst zij in de Enc. als wetenschap]. Here Bavinck also cites Staudenmaier (see Staudenmaier, *Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften*, §63-64.[German: In so fern nun ist die Theologie in der Encyklopädie die ruhige Darstellung ihrer selbst – für sich selbst]).

⁸² Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5.

manner the encyclopaedia connects theology both to the other sciences, and identifies the various parts within theology, as they provide unity to the whole of the theological discipline.

Notably then it appears the organism of the theological encyclopaedia has its mechanical counterpart in the university. As such, theological encyclopaedia (organism) and university (institute) are in a similar symbiotic relationship as the dual ontology of the church as organism and institution. The university suffers when the theological encyclopaedia suffers; likewise, when the theological encyclopaedia is well developed and organized the university thrives. This also connects with Bavinck's vision of the theologian as prophet and priest to the university. Therein the theologian is accorded a pivotal role — just as office-bearers in the church play a significant role. Nonetheless, the university is not a divine institution and therefore properly speaking theology and the theologian serve not the university, but the church.⁸³

At this point, we must return to Bavinck's conception of the encyclopaedia among the sciences. The role of the encyclopaedia among the sciences is to identify and expose the connections between the subjects. It serves to bring the sciences together not artificially, but organically through the object. Thus, when Bavinck writes of both theology and the encyclopaedia as the central science, it is not because the sciences orbit two suns. Rather, just as the fusion of the sun's core creates heat and light, which reveals the sun itself (light) and produces effects (heats) on those within its radiation, theology illuminates the proper teleological place of all sciences and effectually organizes them in the activity of encyclopaedia. In this way, the sciences orbit one discipline — that of theology — but the activity of this discipline is effectual at illuminating both theology's own task and the proper role of all other sciences. This organizing activity takes place, likewise, when encyclopaedia is turned inward at theology itself. Bavinck writes:

The [subject of] theological encyclopaedia can only be given by a theologian. The philosopher cannot do this. The theological encyclopaedia is a system of theology, so it must not be dominated by philosophy, etc., but entirely through [theology]. The encyclopaedia is bound to her object, theology and this is also her home. The theological encyclopaedia is the self-consciousness of theology.⁸⁴

⁸³ *OT*, 94-95.

⁸⁴ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: Theol. Enc. kan alleen gegeven worden door den Theoloog, de wijsgeer kan dat niet. De theol. Ency. is systeem der theologie, moet dus niet door de philos. etc maar geheel door deze beheerscht worden. De. Ency. is gebonden aan haar object, de Theol. en haar dus ook in deze thuis. De theol, enc. is het zelf-bewustzijn der theol.].

The encyclopaedia as the self-consciousness of theology is a concept that is likely borrowed from Hegel. Bavinck links self-consciousness and theology in an archival encyclopaedia to Hegel.⁸⁵

Hegel's concept of self-consciousness is indebted to Fichte and Schelling. Indeed, it was Fichte who placed self-consciousness at the centre of all things, as that which provided organization, development, and purpose.⁸⁶ And it was Schelling whose organic concept of identity pushed to overcome the dualism of subject and object.⁸⁷ Hegel's argument via Schelling was to overcome the dualisms of the subject and object through an animating life force, which was at different degrees of development and organization.⁸⁸ This identity of the subject and the object is realized in the self-consciousness.

In this manner, the subject (theology) finds itself in the other (encyclopaedia), which together are driven along by the *lebensbeginsel*, theology. If this appropriation of Hegel's idea is correct, we might well consider self-consciousness as the fruit of consciousness. Applied to Bavinck's argument, it would show the theological encyclopaedia as the self-reflective developing agent within theology. In this manner, theological development is intimately connected to the development of the encyclopaedia.⁸⁹ The theological encyclopaedia thus becomes the medium by which theology comes to understand itself. In line with Hegel, the theological encyclopaedia comes to embody theology. As Bavinck writes, "It is certain that the theological encyclopaedia is not next to, or on par with the other theological subjects, because it encompasses them all. It is also not a bare introduction or appendix to theology, but it is the whole system of theology itself in *verjüngten Gestalt* (in a more focused form)."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2 [Dutch: Hegel (384) God object, zellbew. in theol.]. In the same location, Bavinck adds further confirmation to Pass' thesis of the "real and ideal" in Bavinck having recourse to Schelling. Under the heading of Schelling appears: [Dutch: eenheid v. ideale, reale in X, idee]. See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 23-37).

⁸⁶ Bieser, *Hegel* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 73-74.

⁸⁷ Tillich, *Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology*, 144-145.

⁸⁸ Bieser, *Hegel*, 104-106.

⁸⁹ See Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic does not yet Exist," v, 13, 19, 34, 114, 149-150, 152-165.

⁹⁰ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1901-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §5 [Dutch: Zeker is, dat de theol. Encycl. niet naast, op een lijn staat met de andere theologische vakken, want zij omvat alle. Zij is ook geen bloote inleiding of aanhangsel van de Theol., maar zij is heel het system der Theologie zelf in *verjüngten Gestalt*]; *Verjüngten Gestalt* was philosophical language utilized in Germany particularly by Schelling and Hegel. See Heinrich Ritter, *Geschichte Der Philosophie* (Hamburg: Perthes, 1850), 126.

The theological encyclopaedia is the science of theology, which orders and arranges theology according to its object, content, and goal. It is a science that is organic, a whole that is irreducible to its parts, and in which no part is dispensable or isolated. It is science which takes up a mechanical form in the university. As the self-consciousness of theology, it contemplates the organization and development of theology and shares in the identity of theology. Moreover, the theological encyclopaedia is necessarily theological; it must be driven by its animating life force, which is to say, by theology itself.

This section of the thesis furthered the growing discussion around Bavinck's organicism through the introduction of organic nature the theological encyclopaedia. It also gestured towards expanding Bavinck's organicism beyond strictly Schelling, but as participating in the larger philosophical discourse of the nineteenth century.⁹¹ In the next section, we will look at development within Bavinck's theological encyclopaedia, which will help us to understand the structure of Bavinck's own theological encyclopaedia. This is important because it situates how Bavinck envisions the relationship between dogmatics and ethics within the discipline of theology itself.

IV. Distinguishing Bavinck's Theological Encyclopaedia

In the previous section, we discussed Bavinck's understanding of the synthetic unity of the theological encyclopaedia, via the living force of theology. We came to an understanding that the theological encyclopaedia must develop *theologically*. We now turn to begin to analyze its structure. In this final section, we will consider how Bavinck's theological encyclopaedia was distinct from Kuyper's materially, but was willing to include his encyclopaedia formally. This will reveal the inclusion of Kuyper's formal categories within Bavinck's encyclopaedia. This inclusion may be indebted to Bavinck's transition to the *Vrije Universiteit* in 1902. Bavinck's critiques of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie* reveal Bavinck's continued distinctiveness in the realm of the encyclopaedia. While Bavinck acknowledges the formal categories of Kuyper's encyclopaedia his own encyclopaedic writings remain distinct from Kuyper.⁹²

⁹¹ See also Manuscript "Aesthetica" (1906), Box 346, Folder 139. In this manuscript Bavinck writes about Romantic Aesthetics including §15 "The Beauty in Organic nature." Romanticism viewed the world through aesthetic categories. At minimum it identifies that Bavinck was aware that romanticism utilized organic themes.

⁹² Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God," 174-179. Xu engages Bavinck's reservations with Kuyper's encyclopaedia, but does not directly engage Bavinck's own theological encyclopaedic writings.

Bavinck discloses the arrangement of the various disciplines in several places. These will be handled chronologically. Bavinck's first statement regarding the proper ordering of the theological encyclopaedia is on the cover of his 1883-1884 lectures notes titled the "Encyclopaedie der Christ. Geref. Theologie." The theological encyclopaedia is split here into: (1) exegetical, (2) historical, (3) systematic, and (4) practical.⁹³ In the following academic year, his 1884-1885 lecture notebook, he splits the theological encyclopaedia into nearly the same four categories: (a) exegetical theology, (b) historical theology, (c) dogmatic theology, and (d) practical theology.⁹⁴ This fourfold split in the theological encyclopaedia is what Bavinck considered to be the dominant view throughout church history. Together, these four parts form the whole of the organism of theology.⁹⁵ To understand the whole, one must understand the parts. To understand any part is to show how it plays a necessary role within, and is inseparable from, the organic whole. Bavinck uses the illustration of a living organism to gesture towards these relationships. He writes:

a & b [Exegetical & historical] can be considered an auxiliary science (*hulpwetenschap*), just as the stomach and intestines are not the human itself, but tools which aid its existence. a & b [Exegetical & historical] are thus together vegetative [they] nourish systematic theology. c [dogmatic] is the heart, centre, life outlet of theology. d [practical] the muscles, the straightforward exercise of the organs.⁹⁶

In this, the theological encyclopaedia is pictured anthropomorphically as a human organism. Dogmatic theology is at the centre of the system. This is a slight development from the prior year, in which systematic

⁹³ "Encyclopaedie der Christ. Geref. Theologie Cursus" (1883-1884), Box 346, Folder 43 [Dutch: Exeget.; Hist.; System; Pract.].

⁹⁴ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie Cursus" (1884-1885), Box 346, Folder 45, §1 [Dutch: Exeget. Theol., Histor. Theol., Dogmat. Th., Pract. Theol.]. The various branches contained the following: (1) Exegetical theology (canonical, textual criticism, hermeneutics, exegesis, historical sacra, theological sacra), (2) Historical Theology (Church History, history of dogma (Patristics), History of Customs and Culture (Archeology), Symbolic, Statistics), (3) Dogmatic Theology (Natural Theology (religion), Dogmatics, Ethics, Apologetics, Polemics (Irenic)), (4) Practical Theology (church discipline, charismatic, Homiletics, Liturgy, Catechesis, Doctor, Governance, Diaconate, Mission).

⁹⁵ Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist", 33-34. This four-fold encyclopaedia is distinct from Schleiermacher's threefold (philosophical, historical, practical), see Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology*.

⁹⁶ Manuscript "Encyclopaedie der Theologie" (no date), Box 346, Folder 187, §8:

[Dutch: A en b. kunnen hulpwetenschap genoemd worden, zoo als maag & ingwanden leschrijpijen niet de mensch zelf zijn, maar hulpenmiddelen tot zijn levensbestaan. A & b zijn dus saam het vegetatieve, voedende, ondershoudende system der Theol. c) is het hart, centrum, levens uitgang der Theol. d) de spieren, de dadelijke krachts oefening van het org].

theology was the formal title for the category.⁹⁷ Bavinck seems to use the two terms interchangeably here and thus little should be made of this difference. Exegesis and history nourish the practice of systematic theology, while practical theology is the proper exercise or outlet of the other parts.

In Bavinck's 1900-1902 encyclopaedia notes, he is not explicit on the exact relationship between the various disciplines.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, in his historical chronicle of the development of the encyclopaedia his focus is on the fourfold breakdown now familiar to us.⁹⁹ Furthermore, in several places in this notebook he refers back to the 1884-1885 notebook, suggesting there is little change between the systems.¹⁰⁰ In between the two encyclopaedias', of course, Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* was published. It should come as no surprise that the section discussing the relationship between dogmatics and ethics in the *Reformed Dogmatics* is titled "Encyclopaedische Plaats der Dogmatiek" ("Encyclopaedic Place of Dogmatics"). Importantly, this section of the *Reformed Dogmatics* doubled in length between the first edition in 1895 and the second edition in 1906.¹⁰¹ The expansion offers a stimulating view of Bavinck's development in this area. There are three possible reasons for this enlargement. The first is an expansion of his critique and appreciation of Schleiermacher's system. The second is the additional engagement with the concept of theology as a science of religion. The third, which concerns us here, is the expansion of his discussion of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

In both the 1895 and 1906, Bavinck places dogmatics and ethics in the same relation. In neither edition is he explicit about his four-fold division of the theological encyclopaedia. In both editions, he writes: "The nearest relative to dogmatics is ethics."¹⁰² In the second edition, this thought process is slightly

⁹⁷ *OT*, 42. "For like a heart from which the other theological subjects pulse, [systematic theology] remained the core and centre of theological science, was practiced by preference, and long had born the name theology in the preeminent sense of the word."

⁹⁸ In the student notes of his 1902 lectures on the theological encyclopaedia Bavinck's four categories may be inferred but they are not directly laid out. See "Dictaat of Herman Bavinck's Encyclopaedie d. Theol.," §6-8.

⁹⁹ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2, 9. It appears §12 would have explored this, but it is missing from the archival document.

¹⁰⁰ Manuscript "Theologische Encyclopaedie" (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §7-10 [§7 Theol. in subj.; §8 Theol & Verstand; §9 Theol. & gevoel; §10 Theol. & wil]. Where there appears to be a change, is a significant expansion on the "subject" of theology. Here Bavinck expands upon the intellect, will, and feeling and their role in theology.

¹⁰¹ cf. *GD1^e*, I, 9-14, *GD2^e*, I, 27-41.

¹⁰² *GD1^e*, I, 12; *GD2^e*, I, 38; *RD* I, 56.

expanded to draw out this close relationship. The closest he gets to articulating the precise location of dogmatics is this sentence: “If dogmatics, then, takes its rightful place in the third division of the theological science, other disciplines belong to this group, the task still remaining is to precisely distinguish it from the others that belong in this third division.”¹⁰³ In other words, dogmatics belongs to the sub-division of systematic theology. Uniformly, across Bavinck’s various theological encyclopaedia he places the disciplines of dogmatics and ethics under the category of dogmatic or systematic theology. Nonetheless, other disciplines also belong to this sub-division, namely: Natural Theology, Apologetics, and Polemics.¹⁰⁴ The editors of the *Reformed Dogmatics* wrongly note several features in reference to Bavinck’s encyclopaedia. They write:

Ed. note: Bavinck’s terminology reflects the division found in Abraham Kuyper’s *Encyclopaedie*, where the first grouping of dogmatics is “The Bibliographical Group,” the second “The Ecclesiological Group,” and the third “The Dogmatological Group”; see A. Kuyper, *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerheid*, vol. III. In Kuyper’s encyclopaedic division, included in the dogmatological group, in addition to dogmatics proper, are symbolics, history of dogma, ethics, elenctics, and apologetics.¹⁰⁵

The editors overlook that Kuyper did not have three divisions *à la* Schleiermacher, but rather four—the fourth division being “Diaconologische Theologie.” Moreover, the theological encyclopaedia is more accurately part of “the tree of theology” for Kuyper, and not “dogmatics.”¹⁰⁶ In addition, it is unclear if Bavinck actually adopts Kuyper’s formal categories. In the first edition Bavinck lists the acceptable terminology for this sub-discipline as “Systematische of Dogmatische Theologie.”¹⁰⁷ Notably, (and here is what I believe the editor’s were acknowledging) in the second edition of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics* he references Kuyper’s terminology as a viable grouping: “systematische, dogmatische, of dogmatologische theologie.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *GDI*^e, I, 36; *GD2*^e, I, 36; *RD* I, 53.

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie Cursus” (1884-1885), Box 346, Folder 45, §1.

¹⁰⁵ *RD* I, xx.

¹⁰⁶ See Kuyper, *Encyclopaedia of Sacred Theology*, 631.

¹⁰⁷ *GDI*^e, I, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Does Bavinck envision a distinction between the two disciplines of dogmatic theology and systematic theology, such that, although here dogmatics is utilized as simply shorthand for systematics, one might still envision them as two distinction practices? It appears so. In his early 1883 speech, “The science of Theology” he lists “systematische

In 1894, Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerheid* hit the press, just a year prior to the publication of the first edition of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Bavinck nonetheless was not unaware of Kuyper's categories. In a letter from Kuyper in January of 1894, Kuyper thanked Bavinck for reading the first volume of the *Encyclopaedie*.¹⁰⁹ Although he did not initially list Kuyper's categories, why did he eventually include them? One significant reason is that this inclusion occurs alongside Bavinck joining Kuyper's fledging university, the year prior.¹¹⁰ While Bavinck had taught the theological encyclopaedia in Kampen, it was Kuyper's son H.H. Kuyper who held that mantle at the *Vrije Universiteit*.

To what extent does Bavinck's Encyclopaedic work remain distinct from Kuyper's? In *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, R.H. Bremmer noted Bavinck's criticism of Kuyper's Encyclopaedia.¹¹¹ Bremmer refers to a student's dictation of Bavinck's thoughts on Kuyper's Encyclopaedia. This dictation by a Rev. A. Terpstra, unfortunately, is no longer a part of a public collection.¹¹² Nonetheless, in Bavinck's 1895-1896 notebook on Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie* he also levels criticism of Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie*. The criticism of this notebook nearly match the analysis found in Bremmer's work.¹¹³ By noting Bavinck's difference from

theologie" as one of the four disciplines of a theological encyclopaedia (*OT*, 41-42). And in his 1902 speech he offers a succinct summary of their differences (*OT*, 120):

Thus, there is a difference between systematic theology and dogmatics. The former cannot replace the latter. Dogmatics reckons with the requirements of the church and adheres to her confession, but systematic theology seeks after the truth and summarizes what the comparative historical study of religions has brought to light concerning the essence, and origin, and the truth of religion.

Accordingly, systematic theology is then a much broader enterprise than that of dogmatics. In *Reformed Dogmatics*, I believe Bavinck to simply be listing the viable options — although his own leanings would be toward that of "systematische theologie."

¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, there was some public confusion about the nature of Kuyper and Bavinck's projects. Many were wrongly critical of Bavinck for supposedly reduplicating Kuyper's efforts. There may have been some public confusion about what exactly the distinction was between dogmatics and encyclopaedia in the 1880's and 90's (see *BCB*, 191).

¹¹⁰ *BCB*, 213-216.

¹¹¹ R.H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1961), 37-46.

¹¹² Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, 39n75. Bremmer indicates that the *Dictaat* is "a beautifully bound lecture-notes of Rev. A. Terpstra, which as of 1961, was in the possession of Dr. K.G. Idema van Wilsum. Bremmer suggests the notes were from the years 1896/1897.

¹¹³ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48. In this discussion, I am more concerned with the substance of Bavinck's critique rather than if the critique is warranted.

Kuyper we will be able to see that while he included Kuyper's "dogmatologische" as an option, it is unlikely that the substance of his encyclopaedia changed. Unfortunately, Bavinck did not work on an encyclopaedia in the final portion of his life. His last known encyclopaedic writings are a set of lectures from his final year in Kampen.

It is necessary to demonstrate Bavinck's reservations with Kuypers *Encyclopaedie* in order to differentiate Bavinck from Kuyper.¹¹⁴ It will also help us understand why Bavinck may have felt comfortable including Kuyper's categories in the second half of his career.¹¹⁵ In the 1895/1896 notebook, Bavinck engages with Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie* across 37 pages and 10 points. The points of contention vary from Bremmer's recapitulation of a dictation (provided by Rev. Albert Terpstra) but are not contradictory.¹¹⁶ The first of the ten points outlines the primary division of Kuyper's encyclopaedia.¹¹⁷ I summarize the remaining nine points of criticisms as follows:

1. The theological encyclopaedia must be determined by *theology*.¹¹⁸
2. Faith and wisdom are not opposed to science.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Xu offers a distillation of Bremmer's summary of Terpstra's student notes of Bavinck's criticism. He lays out the distinction between the two of them across four points: (1) the notion of moving from a general conception of science to a particular science, (2) Kuyper's speculative method, (3) Kuyper's placement of Kant, (4) the relationship between theology, the church, and theological faculty.

¹¹⁵ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 94-95. Sutanto likewise broached this discussion in attempting to properly locate the differences between Bavinck and Kuyper regarding their epistemologies. Sutanto suggests the Bremmer notes made three primary criticism: (1) Kuyper's account of science was too speculative, (2) Kuyper conflates the categories of regenerate/unregenerate with true/false, and then building upon the second, (3) true science cannot be performed only by the regenerate.

¹¹⁶ Albert Terpstra (1876-1934) was a reformed minister and student in Kampen.

¹¹⁷ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 1. Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie* is split into two parts: (a) the essence of theological encyclopaedia and its connection with the other sciences, and the second part, (b) how the various divisions of theology relate to one another. This point also includes a brief outline of the main section divisions in the work.

¹¹⁸ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 2 [Dutch: dat wet. karakter der theologie niet kan aangetvoond, zonder zoo is begrijp, dat het du seen geval van noodzakelijkheid is]; Additionally, Kuyper makes the concession that if theology is not a science it is an art. According to Bavinck, to concede this is to undermine his argument for if theology is a science, it cannot be an art.

¹¹⁹ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 4-5.

3. Science must be equally true for the regenerate and the unregenerate.¹²⁰
4. There is no strict (Kantian) separation between the spiritual and natural sciences.¹²¹
5.
 - a. Kuyper's account of revelation is inconsistent, speculative, inside-out, and conflates Adam, unregenerate, and regenerate humankind.¹²²
 - b. Kuyper fails to connect theology to the idea of science.¹²³
- 6.

¹²⁰ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 7 [Dutch: Maar dat kan natuurlijk niet. Bij wedergeborenen is veel dwalig, bij anwedergeborenen veel waarheid enz. Beide groepen staan niet als waarheid en leugen op wetenschap terrerin tegenover elkaar (wel op relig. terrein)]. English: "But naturally this cannot be. With born-again much is wrong, with those who have not been born again there is much truth, etc. Both groups are not opposed to each other in the terrain of science as truth and lie (but on the religious terrain)." Instead of setting-up a false-dualism between true and false science, between the regenerate and unregenerate, Bavinck avers that Kuyper should have appealed here to common grace (*gratia communis*). It follows that science would remain empirical and despite sin hampering the process, the unregenerate and regenerate individual alike could partake in the work of science. Nonetheless, without revelation one does have a limited view of science. Common grace would then propel the activity of science (wisdom, faith, knowledge). Where common grace falls short there is the remedy of special grace (*gratia specialis*).

¹²¹ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 10-11. Bavinck inspects Kuyper's theological method and epistemology in this critique. In essence it is a continuation of the previous critique, that is of Kuyper's understanding of science. This unfolds in his notes across ten subpoints: a) Kuyper is split between the speculative and empirical method, but prefers the speculative, b) this results in two kinds of knowing (*weten*/empirical & *kennen*/speculative), c) equitable with Kants (*νοοῦμενα*/*φαινόμενα*), d) Kuyper's view of sin flows out of his concept of truth, which Bavinck disagrees with; Bavinck sees it as the agreement between thinking and being. e) this distinction is nothing more than *anima sensitiva/bewustzijn* and *rationalis/denken*, which cannot be true according to Bavinck on account of angels, who also possess consciousness and thinking, representation and understanding, f) the subject is not the source of the science, but the source of value, g) Kuyper introduces faith as that which undergirds all sciences, but is unclear about the meaning of faith (*geloof*), h) Kuyper returns to the two men, two consciousness, two sciences concept, i) Kuyper appeals to regeneration to understand this. Bavinck contends that Kuypers defence here is weak. On a more positive note, Bavinck concludes this critique that Kuyper's articulation of the five faculties, his understanding of theology as an organism, and God as he has revealed himself as the object of theology all to be affirmed.

¹²² Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 11-20.

¹²³ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 20.

- a. Kuyper's account fails to develop a distinction between revelation and illumination, between *principium internum* and *externum*.¹²⁴
 - b. Kuyper's account of the authority of Scripture is "a bit circular."¹²⁵
 - c. Kuyper's account of inspiration is underdeveloped and includes canon formation.¹²⁶
- 7.
- a. Kuyper fails to make clear why the idea that the church must lead the theologian is derived from the claim "that the church is a product of Scripture."¹²⁷
 - b. Kuyper unsatisfactorily deals with the relationship of church and theology (school and university).¹²⁸
 - c. More is needed to develop how the divisions of theology relate to Holy Scripture as the *principium*.¹²⁹
8. Kuyper derives the divisions of theology not from the object of theology, but from its *principium*.¹³⁰
9. Kuyper's history of theology as a science is a naïve retelling.¹³¹

Bremmer summarizes Bavinck's 1896/1897 criticism as follows:

- 1. Kuyper's speculative methodology for determining the scientific character of theology.
- 2. The shift that Kuyper made in talking of two people who practice science, namely, the born-again and the rebellious.

¹²⁴ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 21 [Dutch: Maar jammer is, dat Kuyper geen onderscheid maakt tusschen principium enz, en internum, tusschen revelatie en illuminatie].

¹²⁵ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 23 [Dutch: 'T Is wel wat cirkelredenering. Jesus gezag steunt op de Schrift, en gezag der Schrift weer op Jesus].

¹²⁶ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 23-26.

¹²⁷ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 23-26.

¹²⁸ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 27 [Dutch: Dit alles is zeer juist, maar Kuyper maakt volstrekt niet duidelijk, waarom dit (dat de kerk den theoloog leiden moet) voortvloeit daaruit, dat de kerk product is der schrift].

¹²⁹ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 27.

¹³⁰ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 33 [Dutch: Maar deze 4 moeten uit een beginsel en uit het object der theologie worden afgeleid 577. En nu neemt K. 578v. niet 't object der theologie (in de kennis Gods) maar het *principium* der theologie tot in deelings beginsel, de in de Heilig Schrift]. The object, according to Bavinck should be the knowledge of God, God's self-disclosure, or revelation itself, but not restricted to Scripture.

¹³¹ Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48, 34.

3. The danger of equating, in Kuyper's case, salvific faith with believing in a purely intellectual sense.
4. The opinion that the revelation, by virtue of causalities affects people from the inside out, thus opening the door toward rationalism and mysticism.
5. Kuyper's view of Christ as the general subject of regenerate humanity.
6. The determinative position that was assigned to Kant in order to establish the scientific character of theology.
7. The inclusion of canon formation under the influence of inspiration.
8. The way in which Kuyper dealt with the question of training ministers, which was at the moment topical.
9. Kuyper's speaks of three types of theology.¹³²

Together, the 1895/1896 notebook, alongside Bremmer's reflections on the dictation of Bavinck's 1896/1897 lectures on Kuyper's *Encyclopaedie*, demonstrate various points of encyclopedic difference between the two towers of neo-Calvinism. What is crucial about the above summary is that they detail mainly substantive, rather than formal criticisms of Kuyper. In other words, one can imagine how Bavinck may have felt comfortable including categories (perhaps for the sake of continuity for students at the *Vrije Universiteit*) without capitulating to Kuyper's understanding of the encyclopaedia.

Sutanto points out two caveats regarding the above Bremmer source which also apply to the Terpstra source. That is (1) that these sources are before the completion of the first edition of *Reformed Dogmatics* as whole, whereas Bavinck's most comprehensive reflections on science and world- and lifeview occurred in the years that followed the completion of the *Reformed Dogmatics*, and (2) regarding the second of these two notes (1896/1897), it is important to acknowledge that they were not written by Bavinck himself, but rather they were an unpublished notes written by a student. In this sense, one must be careful how much "hermeneutical weight" one gives them in Bavinck's conception of the encyclopaedia.¹³³

¹³² Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als Dogmaticus*, 45; Manuscript "Kritiek van Kuyper's Encyl." (1895-1896), Box 346, Folder 48. One may compare this list with Bavinck's summary list on a slip of paper: [Dutch: Kuyper a) deductief, speculatief b) gaat uit v. idee der wet. en zoo v. idee der wet; c) zoo moest wet zijn zoo moest theol. zijn; d) Maar zoo is wet [illegible] den door de zonde en zoo theol. ook; e) Herstel wedengeboorte 2 erlei wetenschap; f) theol. ~~door~~ na zonde hersteld. openb. V. buiten; g) Openb. voor zonde na zonde; h) uitlopend in Schrift].

¹³³ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 95; see also *BCB*, 215. Eglinton has identified at least one instance where a student's notes provided incorrect biographical information.

However, the 1895/1896 notebook's consonance with the 1896/1897 equivalent does lend it some credibility.

We might lay out a few lines of distinction between the two forefathers of neo-Calvinism in respect to the theological encyclopaedia. First, for Bavinck faith did not necessarily make one a superior practitioner of a science. Bavinck developed his stance on the role of faith for the practitioner of theology suggesting that it was not necessary for a theologian to confess faith to do (factually) true theology. Nonetheless, this theology was restricted to that of historical theology rather than salvific. This was discussed briefly in the third chapter and here we do little more than remind the reader of what was discussed there. Therefore, whether one was regenerate or not did not inhibit the veracity of their theology. Sutanto summarizes the distinction well:

The difference between Bavinck and Kuyper is thus summarized accordingly: Bavinck is more modest in his claims concerning the principles of unbelieving and believing science; he refuses to transfer the principle of regeneration unto the practice of science itself. Bavinck makes a distinction not between two sciences (in some ontological sense that flow out of the kinds of persons) but in two *conceptions* of science. Thus, Bavinck can more readily affirm that non-believers are often more capable, more learned and more skilled in the sciences than Christians. Bavinck is also more comfortable with embracing the proper functionality of the unbeliever's noetic capacities even after the fall, due to common grace.

The second distinction to draw out is what makes a science a particular kind of science (that is, theology should determine what fits theology). In this respect, Kuyper began with the notion of a science in general and then moved to the particular of the science. Bavinck saw this as backwards; he remained unconvinced that Kuyper's conception of science could fit theology.¹³⁴ Bavinck's desire was that the theological encyclopaedia would develop *theologically*. And therefore, move from the particular of the science out toward the general.

One can see this desire in Bavinck's various chronicles of the history of the theological encyclopaedia.¹³⁵ He lays out the history in three broad periods: (1) Early Church to the Reformation, (2)

¹³⁴ Xu, "Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God," 175.

¹³⁵ See also Parker, "Encyclopedia Bavinck: The Case of the History of the Theological Encyclopedia," *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 293-310.

“After the Reformation until Schleiermacher”¹³⁶ and (3) “Since Schleiermacher.”¹³⁷ In section §3 of “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” he also outlines the progression of the theological encyclopaedie. It follows a similar historical trajectory to the aforementioned encyclopaedia but lacks any clear divisions, apart from a gap before the introduction of Johann G. Herder and Schleiermacher.¹³⁸ In the third phase Bavinck identifies the main problem with the theological encyclopaedia in the wake of Schleiermacher, which is that it has allowed philosophy to take centre stage. In the final analysis Bavinck suggests all modern encyclopaedia as having this problem. Bavinck corrects this line of thinking by returning theology to its proper location at the heart of the theological encyclopaedia.

For Bavinck, just as theology must develop *sui generis*, the theological encyclopaedia must be allowed to develop *theologically*. Bavinck’s use of theology as the essence, principle, and purpose of the theological encyclopaedia differentiates him from his philosophical sources. As Bavinck writes:

The concept of essence, principle, content, purpose and thus the divisions of theology, and thus also of the content, purpose, etc. of its subjects stands under that influence. It is necessary first to disengage from it, to work to purify philosophy, to allow theology to construct itself. Therefore, the foundations must first be properly laid. Then perhaps we can adopt good ideas from Schleiermacher, etc. and graft on our trunk of theology. The difference in division, the arrangement of the subjects, suffers in different views of theology. For it has become increasingly clear, the object of the Theological Encyclopaedia is theology itself, her business is the development of Theology. So long as the view of theology differs (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Philosophical, etc.) so does the Encyclopaedia.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2, 3 [Dutch: Na de Reformatie, tot Schleiermacher].

¹³⁷ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2, 9 [Dutch: Sedert Schleiermacher]; Kuyper’s *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*, 54-475. These three periods are similar to, but distinct from Abraham Kuyper’s threefold division of: 1) Up till the Renaissance, 2) From the Renaissance to the New Philosophy, 3) The New Philosophy; Notably, this is consistent with the role Bavinck perceives Schleiermacher playing in the development of dogmatics (see *RD I*, 497ff., 563).

¹³⁸ Manuscript “Encyclopaedie der Theologie” (unknown), Box 346, Folder 187, §3. Rather than beginning with the development of Scripture it begins with Origen (see Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2). In the margins he does list an alternative fourfold historical division: 1) development of the canon, 2) dogmatic period, 3) growth of pietism and rationalism, 4) 18th century between orthodoxy & piety; rationalism & super-rationalism.

¹³⁹ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2:

To carry Bavinck's own metaphor further, the branches that will help the organism to flourish have been grafted into the trunk that is Reformed theology. This is a clear statement from Bavinck on his eclectic method. Theology must construct itself, and then — once its identity is established — find good ideas elsewhere and graft them in.¹⁴⁰ On the heels of this extended quote, Bavinck differentiates the theological encyclopaedia around this exact idea. According to Bavinck, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher each arrange the encyclopaedia around philosophy, while Protestants arrange it around the Scriptures, “the essence of theology.”¹⁴¹ However, Bavinck's contrast is not between Protestants and non-Protestants, otherwise, Kant, Schleiermacher, Schelling, and Hegel (who were each Protestants) would muddy Bavinck's distinction. Rather, he seems to be using Protestants here to polemically capture the purity of his own articulation.

The third distinction between Kuyper's encyclopaedic project and Bavinck's, then, is the theological character of all of science. As Sutanto put it: “True science in Bavinck's judgment continues to flourish in his day only because it ‘in fact still rests in part on Christian foundations. But to the same extent that it seeks to undermine this, [science] labours also to her own destruction.’”¹⁴² Xu likewise reads Bavinck's relationship between the other sciences as “Christological” and thus one of Christ-like service.¹⁴³ Pass has also made this observation.¹⁴⁴

[Dutch: De opvatting van wezen, beginsel, inhoud, doel en dus verdeeling der theologie, en dus ook van den inhoud, doel etc der enkele vakken staat on der dien invloed. Het is noodig, om zich daarvan eerst los te maken, positief te werk te gaan het filosofie uittezuiveren, de theol. zelve zich te laten construeeren. Eerst moet daarom de grondslag goed gelegd. Dan kunnen wij misschien later wel goede ideeën van Schlierem. etc overnemen, en op den eigen stam der Theol. in enten: Het verschil in verdeeling, volgorde der vakken worstelt in verschillende opvatting der Theol. Want het is steeds duidelijker geworden: Object der Theol. Enc. is de Theol. zelf, haar zaak is de ontwikkeling der Th. Zoolang opvatting v. Theol. verschilt (Kath. Luth. Geref. Philos. etc), verschill ook the. Enc.].

¹⁴⁰ See also Brock and Sutanto, “Herman Bavinck's Reformed eclecticism: On catholicity, consciousness and theological epistemology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 70, no. 3 (August 2017): 310-332.

¹⁴¹ Manuscript “Theologische Encyclopaedie” (1900-1902), Box 346, Folder 217, §2 [Dutch: Protest. In de Schrift; [illegible] weze Theol. in de philos (v. Kant, Schell. Hegel, of Schleierm.)].

¹⁴² Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 96. Sutanto cites Bavinck, *Christelijke Wetenschap*, 104-105.

¹⁴³ Xu, “Theology as the *Wetenschap* of God”, 157-193.

¹⁴⁴ *OT*, 9. Theology as queen is Christ-like, “she reigns through service.”

Nonetheless we must not totally separate them. Sutanto summarizes why we might see their two respective theological encyclopaedias in close conversation:

However, their affinities, it seems to me, are still maintained in that both have an organic understanding of science and of human knowledge such that the whole precedes the parts. Both hold that knowledge of the whole is the context in which each part is properly understood. Indeed, Bavinck makes a distinction between atomistic knowing and organic knowing: unbelievers have knowledge, but Christians have a knowledge, a science, which forms a coherent organism. Bavinck ‘foresaw the university as becoming a cacophony of arbitrarily associated faculties when deprived of theology.’ The distinction is not between not knowing and knowing but between atomistic (mechanical) knowing and organic knowing.¹⁴⁵

While more could certainly be said on each of these distinctives, it will suffice to say that they illustrate well that while Bavinck included formal categories and shared much in common with Kuiper, he would have had reservations about incorporating the entire system given the dogmatic nature of many of the critiques. Therefore, while there is an incorporation of Kuiper’s encyclopaedic categories in the second edition of *Reformed Dogmatics*, there is unlikely material development within the encyclopaedia. In other words, Bavinck included the formal categories of Kuiper’s encyclopaedia without adopting his encyclopaedia.¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

In this chapter, the main systematic connection between Bavinck’s dogmatics and ethics was identified: that of the theological encyclopaedia. While theology is the science that provides unity to all the disparate sciences, the “science of the sciences” according to Bavinck is the encyclopaedia. The theological encyclopaedia orders and arranges theology according to its object, content, and goal, with its object as theology itself. As the self-consciousness of theology, it contemplates the organization and development of the organism of theology. The chapter develops an understanding of dogmatics and ethics as flowing out of the discipline of theology and traces a shift in his articulation of the theological encyclopaedia. Bavinck also consciously connects the maturation of theology and theological encyclopaedia alongside the development of the university.

¹⁴⁵ Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 97; Eglinton and Bräutigam, “Scientific Theology,” 30.

¹⁴⁶ *BCB*, 191, 200, 235-236. Eglinton touched on the private nature of Bavinck’s critiques/reception of Kuiper’s encyclopaedia. Here, I’ve added to that significantly in showing us that there’s an adoption of formal categories, but not of material content.

This section of the thesis furthered the growing discussion around Bavinck's organicism through the introduction of the organic nature of the theological encyclopaedia. It also gestured towards expanding Bavinck's organicism beyond Schelling, but as participating in the larger philosophical discourse of the nineteenth century. By looking at the history of the theological encyclopaedia, I was able to identify the importance of the theological encyclopaedia being *theological* and not philosophical.

After surveying Bavinck's understanding of the theological encyclopaedia we looked at the formal structure of his theological encyclopaedia. In this respect, I noted Bavinck's inclusion of the formal categories of Kuyper's encyclopaedia within his *Reformed Dogmatics*. Nonetheless, given his conception of the nature of the theological encyclopaedia it is unlikely that his conception of the material of the encyclopaedia changed. Therefore, the chapter closed by differentiating Bavinck's encyclopaedic project from that of Kuyper. Most importantly, we situated dogmatics and ethics under the third subdivision of the theological encyclopaedia, that of dogmatics or systematic theology. Dogmatics and ethics are joined by Natural Theology (religion), Apologetics, and Polemics in this subdivision.

In connecting this chapter to the second and third chapter, it is notable that personality and world- and lifeview behaves in similar fashion as that of the enterprise of theology and theological encyclopaedia. Just as the human has a personality and a self-consciousness that must develop into a world- and lifeview, theology must develop into a theological encyclopaedia. Just as the human personality finds its *telos* in the kingdom of God, theology finds its *telos* in the beatific vision. Like the human who is to be oriented toward the highest good, theology is to be oriented toward God doxologically. The human personality and science of theology converge in the act of *theological* thinking and loving. The human personality is restless until it finds its rest in God, and all thinking has no rest until it becomes theological and finds its rest in God. Encyclopaedia viewed through this lens is not only a discipline that organizes the various sciences, but it is, in a manner of speaking a worldview building science, in which all sciences must find their end in God.

The theological encyclopaedia remains a promising conceptual tool, given its absence in the anglo-theological world. What a "science of the sciences", in encyclopaedia, provides is a discipline that might facilitate the independence of each science — as operating in its own sphere — and therefore, not being subject to hegemony of other disciplines, while simultaneously facilitating true dialogue rather than intrusion. Each discipline may flourish under its own object, while existing within a larger system. In the

next chapter we will look more closely at this subdivision of the theological encyclopaedia — systematic theology — and differentiate dogmatics from ethics and vice versa.

This chapter fits within the larger argument of the thesis — that dogmatics and ethics must relate through a multiplicity of “piles” rather than a singular one — by situating the two disciplines within the larger intellectual system to which they both belong, the theological encyclopaedia. The theological encyclopaedia, then is not another “pile” — but is the avenue along which our canal runs. On this theological encyclopaedia avenue there are four Amsterdam homes: (1) exegetical, (b) historical, (c) systematic, and (d) practical. Dogmatics and ethics reside within systematic theology. The encyclopaedic relationship between these two disciplines has gone largely unnoticed in Bavinck studies. This advanced the larger argument of the thesis by demonstrating that Bavinck’s vision for how the various theological disciplines relate was not haphazard, but was in fact an integral part of the discipline of theology in 19 and 20th century Netherlands.

Chapter Seven: Dogmatics and Ethics — Theological *Thinking and Loving*

“Christ is Christianity itself; He is not on the periphery but at the centre of it; without his name, person, and work there is no more Christianity. Christ is, in a word, not the signpost to salvation but the way itself. He is the only true and complete Mediator between God and humanity. What other religions have suspected and hope for in the mediators of their faith is essentially and completely fulfilled in him.”¹ – H. Bavinck

“The person and work of Christ is the central revelation of God; all other revelation is grouped around this centre.”² – H. Bavinck

In the Herman Bavinck Archive, there is an undated manuscript titled “Dogmatiek” which appears to be an early outline of the *Reformed Dogmatics*. This outline includes various questions that Bavinck perceived as needing to be addressed in the task of dogmatics, and occasionally brief gestures at an answer.³ When considering the nature of dogmatics, one of the questions scribbled down is: “What is the distinction between dogmatics and ethics?”⁴ Although no answer is provided in this outline, it does hint at the importance of the question in his mind.

In this dissertation I have traced various “piles” which connect dogmatics and ethics to demonstrate that the linking relationship cannot be restricted to one doctrine. Led by the various *precis* from the first chapter, the theological difference between humans as *passive* and *active* (the decisive distinction between dogmatics and ethics) was parsed across an array of doctrines. In the second chapter, the “pile” of election was identified as pivotal to ethical activity. In the third chapter, I explored the importance of the “pile” of faith as a connection between the two disciplines on the part of the subject. This was followed by the “piles” of regeneration, *unio mystica*, and sanctification in the theological movement of creatures from *passive* to *active*. Lastly, we looked at the *ecclesia militans* and traced the interface between *passive* and *active* through the

¹ *GICR*, 105.

² *RD I*, 339.

³ Manuscript “Dogmatiek” (no date), Box 346, folder 149, 1. The first six sections closely mimic the *RD*.

⁴ Manuscript “Dogmatiek” (no date), Box 346, folder 149, 2 [Dutch: Was it verschil v. Dogm.en Ethiek?]. This outline, presumably of the *Reformed Dogmatics*, also tips the reader to the importance of the Theological Encyclopaedia (see p. 2).

corporate body into the ascension of the *ecclesia triumphans*, therefore adding two more “piles” of ecclesiology and eschatology. The result of this was a theological anthropology that highlighted the threefold frame of Romans 11:36 and linked the activity of believers to their divine origin, kinship, and destiny in the *munus triplex* in the divine activity of salvation.

In the previous chapter, Bavinck’s theological encyclopaedia, was explored. This theological tool acts as the self-consciousness of theological inquiry itself, allowing theology to organize and develop—in a way, paralleling the development of the human personality toward a world- and lifeview. Just like a world- and lifeview, in the theological encyclopaedia theology expands and develops a conceptual framework that holds together all avenues of inquiry. Likewise, both theology and the personality, have their culmination in God’s kingdom in the beatific vision. In Bavinck’s fourfold theological encyclopaedia (exegetical, historical, systematic, and practical theology), dogmatics and ethics are classified under systematic theology — the heart and centre of theology.

In this chapter, I tend to the nature of dogmatics and ethics in the home of systematic theology. By distinguishing the two disciplines, several theological connecting points will become clear, above all, their shared starting point, centre, and doxological end. Put simply, dogmatics and ethics are rooted in the same soil, nourished by the same centres, and flourish toward the same end. According to Bavinck, dogmatics is a theological reflection on the works of God, and ethics is a life lived beholden to the works of God. Objectively, dogmatics is descriptive of the *descent* of God toward man, and ethics is descriptive of the *ascent* of man toward God.⁵ Taking our lead from Bavinck, the two disciplines will be framed as *theological* thinking and loving.⁶ This leads to an appraisal of the Amsterdam — systematic theology — home.

I. Family Resemblance: At Home in Systematic Theology

As has been noted by Xu, Bolt, and van Kuelen, the methodology is shared between dogmatics and ethics.⁷ In his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck advances a threefold theological method. This is mirrored in his *Reformed Ethics* by a similar threefold account.⁸ This threefold task is undertaken through “believing reflection” in the

⁵ “Untitled” (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, 47-48.

⁶ Bavinck, “Geloof en Liefde,” in *Maandblad van de Jongelingsvereniging ter bevordering van Christelijk leven “Excelsior”* 245 (August 1909): 121-122; cf. “Faith and Love,” 1-3. See 80n73 for more on theological thinking and loving.

⁷ Bolt and van Keulen, “Introduction to Herman Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics*,” in *RE I*, xxvi; Xu, “Gloriously Intertwined,” 87.

⁸ *RE I*, 29.

mind of the practitioner. Thus, the scientist's task in both ethics and dogmatics involves: (1) mining the source, (2) processing the material, (3) and refining the material.⁹

In mining the source, theology seeks out the material which is found throughout Scripture. "Like gold from a mine, so the truth of faith has to be extracted from Scripture by the exertion of all mental powers."¹⁰ Dogmatics and ethics gather material from the same mine shaft. As Bavinck writes regarding ethics, "We need to gather the material from Holy Scripture and arrange what it teaches about sin, regeneration, sanctification, the relationship between parents and children, and so forth."¹¹ The material for theology, for both dogmatics and ethics, is found in Scripture. Dogmatics and ethics have the same starting point or source, i.e. the revelation of God. This is the fount that provides the material content for both sciences, and that prods them toward their doxological end. Just as in dogmatics, Scripture is determinative to our understanding of the knowledge of God, in ethics Scripture is determinative of the ethical and imitation life of the believer.¹² Theological *thinking* and *loving* is indexed by Scripture.

The human mind then takes up the material gathered for dogmatics and ethics and processes it. Neither is simply a repetition of Scripture, but it is a contemplation of the whole. According to Bavinck, then, theology, "is not only a noetic [relating to the activity of the mind], but also a dianoetic [relating to the intellectual activity of the mind] science; not an apprehensive but a discursive branch of knowledge."¹³ In other words, theology is both a world understanding and world building science. Theological reflection then is not an opportunity for either the ethicist or theologian to "proof text" (unreflectively select texts to

⁹ *RD I*, 616-618; *RE I*, 29.

¹⁰ *RD I*, 617; *BCB*, 376; Eglinton, "The Reception of Aquinas in Kuyper's *Encyclopedie der heilige godgeleerdheid*," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, eds. Matthew Levering and Marcus Plested (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 452-467, 461-462, 465. Eglinton notes that Kuyper envisioned himself as a goldminer who was awaiting a goldsmith. In this respect, Eglinton suggests that Bavinck was the goldsmith who was able to refine the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper.

¹¹ *RE I*, 29.

¹² *RD I*, 44-45; Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus III," *De Vrije Kerk*, XII (1886): 321-333, 332. The unity of Scripture is part and parcel of why dogmatics and ethics belong to the same "system." The Christian believes and acts solely because "God has said it."

¹³ *RD I*, 618. Brackets are mine.

support one's position), but rather the whole of Scripture is to be taken up and reflected upon.¹⁴ In his essay, "Reading, Thinking, Speaking," Bavinck writes:

Thinking, that is not to be as the spiders and the ants, but to do as the bees, which suckle honey out of the blossoming flowers. And so we get rich, fill our heart, brain, soul, we enrich ourselves with the treasures of God's thoughts, we grow spiritually we become full grown men, free, independent, self-reasoning, self-acting; we become rich by the riches of God.¹⁵

Theological thinking and loving, therefore, is not to gather Scripture and to present it as is, but rather to imbibe it as readers who are led to the storehouses of divine thought. Bees procure nectar from flowers and in the process of expelling it from their stomach produce honey. In both *thinking* and *loving*, the practitioner of theology is to repeat a similar process — perhaps not through regurgitation — but in the process of being transformed in the head and heart by Word and Spirit produce not merely Scriptural recapitulation (or mere rote imitation), but theology that is *theological*.¹⁶ As such both ethics and dogmatics are reflective tasks.

This sort of *theological* activity has both Augustinian and Romantic roots. We might think back to the third chapter, when Augustine's analogies within human psychology were drawn upon. Augustine views the world as a cosmic order in which the highest good for humans is to recognize and love this beatific good and order. To grow in wisdom the soul must therefore be directed towards the highest good. In the activity of the mind—or more specifically, memory—for Augustine, the mind takes up the activity of both recalling itself and God.¹⁷ As man seeks to understand himself, he is ultimately directed toward God. For Augustine, this happens through the "memory", and so the soul can be said to "remember God." Brock and Sutanto have identified Bavinck's connection to Augustine and the Romantics in his work *Philosophy of Revelation*.¹⁸ There, Bavinck speaks of Augustine as the first to understand self-consciousness.¹⁹ This self-

¹⁴ See also Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist'," 107n129.

¹⁵ Bavinck's "Reading, Thinking, Speaking," 14-16.

¹⁶ See also Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist'," 10, 72, 125.

¹⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XI, c.26.

¹⁸ Brock and Sutanto, "Herman Bavinck's Reformed eclecticism," 324; *POR*, 63. "Augustine descended deep into his own inner life; forgetting nature, he desired to know naught else but God and himself. There he found thought to be sure, but not thought alone . . . for in himself always life preceded thought; self-consciousness, reflection; experience, science."

¹⁹ *POR*, 79.

consciousness, however, is not a static consciousness but a dynamic one.²⁰ It takes up this information not as copy and paste, but as one who assimilates it. The active participation of the mind in the process of learning who God is and who we are, is *theological* thinking.²¹

Paradoxically, then, for Bavinck, the turn to the self-consciousness is not a turn away from, but toward, God. And therefore, “True faith... does not stop at the testimony of Scripture, but penetrates through it to Christ himself, joins him, enters into fellowship with him, and whoever believes thereby becomes through him a child of the heavenly Father and an heir of eternal life.”²²

The theological method of both dogmatics and ethics identifies revelation as a connecting point between the two disciplines. It is what led Veenhof to argue for Scripture as the centre of Bavinck’s thought.²³ In general revelation, God makes himself known in the cosmos. In ethics, this is the conscience and in dogmatics the self-consciousness of man (see chapter three). As it relates to human ethics, this internal revelation is often referred to as God’s law.²⁴ As Bavinck wrote in 1891, “God’s law—written on human hearts—was given as a rule and guide for our entire existence in its internal and external dimensions, covering our daily walk and our commerce.”²⁵ This external dimension is the decalogue, of which Bavinck makes extensive use of in his *Reformed Ethics*.²⁶ The continuity of the two rests on the Logos who makes known the object to the subject.²⁷ The organic centre of revelation is Christ.

²⁰ Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 5. Williams notes the recent development in Augustine studies to see the self as “unfinished.”

John Kenny, *The Mysticism of St. Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (London: Routledge, 2005), 107.

While this theme in the *Confessions* is not systematically elaborated, nevertheless the activity of the Spirit is clearly viewed as the agent of divine self-contemplation. It is this divine contemplative motion, out into creation and back through the “things of God,” that establishes the great rhythm of creation. It is this majestic spiritual movement that spiritual persons discover in contemplation.

²² Bavinck, “Faith and Love,” 1-3.

²³ Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie*, 124, 586, 589.

²⁴ Bavinck, “Ethics and Politics,” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 261-278, 262.

²⁵ Bavinck, “General Biblical Principles of the Relevance of Concrete Mosaic Law for the Social Questions of the Day,” trans. John Bolt, *Journal of Markets and Morality* Vol. 13, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 437-446.

²⁶ Bavinck, “Faith and Love,” 3. Bavinck notes how Christian “love” is distinct from how the average person thinks of “love”, namely, because it does not set aside the law.

²⁷ *RD I*, 279; Sutanto, *God and Knowledge*, 49.

In special revelation, the content of both disciplines is sourced specifically from Holy Scripture. Externally to man, God has provided general and special revelation. Special revelation in the form of Holy Scripture is the norming norm of both ethics and dogmatics. In other words, both theological *thinking* and theological *loving* necessitate engagement with Scripture. In the fourth chapter, I explored how both the conscience and self-consciousness are transformed through the operation of the Spirit in regeneration in the head and heart of man. The gift of faith vivifies theological activity of the mind and body in love.

The final step within a theological method is one of refining the material.²⁸ It is here that Bavinck demonstrates his catholicity as one who retrieves from revelation, assimilates through the self-consciousness, and then refines the material through dialogue with the communion of the saints (as well as sources beyond one's confessional bounds). Herein lies theological development for both ethics and dogmatics. One needs to do theology for one's own day.²⁹ Theological thinking and loving are then both reflective activities, rooted in Scripture, filtered through the believing head and heart, and turned upon the world.

This requires processing theology as part of the community of the church. The bee produces honey for and with a hive. As Bavinck writes, "Dogmatics will be safest, if one does not exegete Scripture and do the work of dogmatics alone, but when one maintains fellowship with the Christian church of all ages and with his Church in particular and be profitably led by that historic dogmatic work."³⁰ The same holds true for ethics. Ethical reflection requires that one performs ethics within the community of the church and develops alongside the issues of one's own day.³¹

²⁸ Albeit presented as "steps" (and therefore potentially viewed as linear) this theological method is somewhat circular in that each "step" occurs in conversation with all the others.

²⁹ *RD I*, 618; *RE*, 30.

³⁰ Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," *Theologische Studiën* 9 (1891): 258-275, 269 [Dutch: de dogmaticus zal het veiligst gaan, wanneer hij niet op eigen houtje de Schrift exegetiseert en dogmatisch verwerkt, maar wanneer hij de gemeenschap onderhoudt met de Christelijke kerk aller eeuwen en met zijne Kerk in het bijzonder, en door dien dogmen-historischen arbeid zich leiden laat en daarmee winste doet].

³¹ Eglinton, "Domination and Vulnerability: Herman Bavinck and Posthumanism in the Shadow of Friedrich Nietzsche," in *The Ethics of Generating Transhumans: Philosophical and Theological Reflections on Bringing New Persons into Existence*, eds. Trevor Stammers and Calum Mackellar (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 93-105. In this essay, Eglinton explores Bavinck's engagements with the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. It is a good example of ethical reflection that is oriented towards the concerns of today.

With this shared methodology, how should one explore the relationship between dogmatics and ethics? In his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck notes how the community of the saints has related these two disciplines. As was referenced in the third chapter on faith, initially the two disciplines were treated together, and then as the field developed, they typically fell into three categories: (1) dogmatics and ethics side by side; (2) dogmatics as primary, ethics as secondary; and (3) dogmatics and ethics treated separately.³² Bavinck favours the third formulation of treating dogmatics and ethics separately. Nonetheless, he is keen to keep the two disciplines together. Dogmatics describes divine action; ethics describes human action toward the divine. In dogmatics Christians are given faith in love; in ethics Christians live out their faith in love. As Bavinck writes:

That is why faith and love are inseparable in Christianity. The new life begins and continues in faith; the life of faith lasts as long as we are below; only above does it pass into a life of vision. This life new life [of faith] unfolds its powers in love. [Love] is the terrain on which it moves, the air that it breathes, and the path on which it walks.³³

Thus far we have attempted to do justice to Bavinck's vision of dogmatics and ethics as a single organism. We have identified their shared systematic theology home in the theological encyclopaedia. We have also recognized their shared methodology. Both dogmatics and ethics are bound to the word, for instruction in the knowledge of the faith and for knowledge of how to love. We turn now to define the two theological disciplines and explore their shared centres.

II. Defining Dogmatics: Theological Thinking

The nature, purpose, and task of Dogmatics

The summary from the *Reformed Dogmatics* provides a port of entry to a definition of dogmatics.

Dogmatics describes the work of God done for and to and in humanity... In dogmatics, man is passive, receives and believes... In dogmatics comes the *articuli fidei*... In the former, that which concerns *fide*... Dogmatics develops what God is and does for man and causes them to know Him as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier... Dogmatics is the system of the knowledge of God...

³² See *RD I*, 28, 47, 56; see also "Manuscript eerste zin 'Terwijl dus de...'" (no date), Box 346, Folder 227, § 14 "Dogmatiek en ethiek." This section of the manuscript seems to follow a similar pattern of disclosing the relationship between the two disciplines. Unfortunately, Bavinck's handwriting is nearly illegible throughout most of this section.

³³ Bavinck, "Faith and Love," 3.

Both sciences [dogmatics and ethics] are not independent entities to one another, but form one and the same system, they are related members of a single organism.³⁴

Dogmatics is a description of the wonderful works of God's *descent* toward humans and the empowering of their *ascent* back to him. Dogmatics thus captures the complete arc of divine triune action. The activity of reflecting upon dogmatics is *theological* thinking. It concerns itself with reflecting on the articles of faith.

In 1877, while a student at Leiden, Bavinck took a course with Professor Johannes Scholten titled "Dogmatiek."³⁵ As mentioned in a previous chapter, Bavinck was introduced to theological mechanism popularized in the Netherlands by this very professor. Nonetheless, as Eglinton has indicated, by this time Scholten's influence at Leiden was waning, and his influence on Bavinck in particular is insignificant.³⁶ Nonetheless, it was Bavinck's first exposure in the classroom to the discipline of dogmatics. Just four years later, in 1881, Bavinck spoke at the Central Pastoral Conference held in Utrecht on the "Pros and Cons of a

³⁴ *GD2*^e, I, 41; cf. *RD*, I, 58. Translation is original to me and is utilized to draw out the Latin phrases. The final sentence of the first edition includes a citation to the work of Hans Hinrich Wendt. This citation is dropped in the second edition. The absence of Wendt in the second edition indicates Bavinck was likely not dependent on this source, although many modern sources drop between the first and second edition. Nevertheless, attention is drawn to it because of its absence from the second edition and its clear resonance with Bavinck's statement. See *GDI*^e, I, 14; Hans Hinrich Wendt, *Die Aufgabe der Systematic Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1894).

[German: So komme ich also zu der schlussfolgerung, dass wir in der systematischen theologie nicht zwei gegen einander westentlich selbständige, in sich abgeschlossen Systeme christlicher Lehre auszubilden haben, sondern ein einheitliches System der christlichen Lehre, in welchem die gewöhnlich in den separaten Disciplinen der Dogmatiek und der christlichen Ethik bearbeiten Theile der christlichen Lehre als zusammengehörige Gleider eines einzigen Lehrorganismus aufgeweisen warden].

[English: Thus I come to the conclusion that in systematic theology we do not have to form two systems of Christian teaching that are independent of each other, rather a uniform system of Christian teaching, in which ordinarily the separate disciplines of dogmatics and Christian ethics are shown as belonging together as parts of a single teaching organism].

It should be stated that this is not the only reference that is dropped from the first and second edition in this section. See also *GDI*^e, I, 13; Wendt, *Die Aufgabe der Systematic Theologie*, 12, 17. This reference, and the earlier one both draw out the organic connection between dogmatics and ethics. Wendt establishes his vision for the "organism of the theological disciplines" which exists for the benefit of the leadership of the church. This has consonance with the purpose of theology for Schleiermacher. See Wendt, *Die Aufgabe der Systematic Theologie*, 1.

³⁵ "Colleges betreffende Dogmatiek" (1877), Box 346, Folder 31.

³⁶ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 63-64; Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 91-96.

Dogmatic System.”³⁷ In this address, Bavinck commends to the listener the idea of systematizing theology on account of the systematic nature of our existence. He writes:

Everything that exists is systematic. The entire cosmos was created and arranged according to a fixed plan. It is not an aggregate of materials and forces that were accidentally merged. If it were, it would not constitute a cosmos, a unity. But all things are oriented toward each other, exist together in an unbreakable connection, together constitute a system, an organism.³⁸

Here Bavinck combines the idea of system with his idea of organism, which featured in the previous chapter.³⁹ This living organism, he argues, is rooted in the divine being, and in particular, in the Triune nature of God. This theme in Bavinck, of course, has been identified as “Trinity *ad intra* leads to organism *ad extra*.”⁴⁰ The manifold richness of God’s simple essence, in three persons is revealed in an organically developing system.⁴¹ Therefore, in Bavinck’s mind theology is a formal system.

Ten years on, in 1891, Bavinck responded to François Daubanton’s paper presented at the Netherland Reformed Pastors’ Association.⁴² Here, Bavinck lays out some early reflections on the relationship between a church confession and dogmatics *contra* Daubanton, who proposed that dogmatics must turn “back to Schleiermacher!”⁴³ Bavinck did not think this return to be prudent—albeit for practical, rather than theological reasons: the sails of dogmatics have moved past Schleiermacher, especially in Germany. Dogmatics will not be saved by Schleiermacher.⁴⁴ In this response to Daubanton, Bavinck outlines succinctly that God (the *principium*) is the only source of revelation. God provides the organic

³⁷ Bavinck, “The Pros and Cons of a Dogmatic System,” *TBR* 5 (2014): 90-103.

³⁸ Bavinck, “The Pros and Cons,” 90.

³⁹ See also Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 26-27.

⁴⁰ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 81.

⁴¹ Bavinck, “The Pros and Cons,” 92.

⁴² François Daubanton (1853-1920) was a Reformed theologian and pastor in the Netherlands. He published a book under the same title. See Francois Daubanton, *Confessie en Dogmatiek* (Amsterdam: F.W. Egeling, 1891).

⁴³ Bavinck, “Confessie en Dogmatiek,” 261 [Dutch: Indien deze opvatting juist is, worden de gronden zwak, welke Dr. Daubanton aanvoert voor de leuze: naar Schleiermacher terug!].

⁴⁴ Bavinck, “Confessie en Dogmatiek,” 262 [Dutch: Maar zooveel is toch wel met zekerheid te zeggen, dat de dogmatiek der eerstvolgende jaren niet allereerst bij Schleiermacher haar heil zal zoeken]. This is not to suggest that Bavinck is anti-Schleiermacher, or did not appropriate Schleiermacher. This is an early engagement of Bavinck with Schleiermacher (see, Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 223-263).

connection between Scripture and the dogmatician, by which the dogmatician may imbibe the truth of Scripture and identify the parts within the whole to construct a dogma. Bavinck writes:

For the Scripture is the fruit of inspiration, dogmatics the product of reflection. A dogma is always a truth, taken from Scripture and passed through the thinking consciousness. That is why it is actually less correct to call Scripture the source of theology. In the past, people were better and more accurate when they spoke of the *principium* of theology. The word source nevertheless indicates a mechanical relation between Scripture and dogmatics, but the word *principium* points to an organic connection. The Scripture is not a source from which one has the water of creation. She is not a lawbook full of articles, which one needs to follow. But it is the organic foundation, the seed, the root, from which the plant of dogmatics grows. The mechanical use of Scripture is therefore completely cut off. A dogmatic is not a text roll and not a collection of *dicta probantia*.⁴⁵ Rather it is the truth of Scripture itself, incorporated into and independently processed by the thinking, scientifically formed consciousness of the believer, and now confessed as one's own belief and maintained also on the heritage of science. Therefore, this is the glorious, but also difficult task of the dogmatist to analyze the dogmas into their hidden fibers, and to trace how they are fully rooted in Scripture. He must recapitulate the work of the church, as it were, to develop the dogmatics for our eyes from the Scriptures, and to produce them anew. Through this he will to no small degree contribute to the preservation of the church and confession from petrification and dead orthodoxy. For he takes the dogma and dips it into the fresh bath of the water of life, time and time again, where there is the rushing of water in the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ A reference to the Emanuel Swedenborg's *Dicta Probantia*, which was never published but is a collection of scripture references for various church doctrines.

⁴⁶ Bavinck, "Confessie en Dogmatiek," 267:

[Dutch: Want de Schrift is vrucht van inspiratie, dogmata echter zijn product der reflectie. Een dogma is altijd eene waarheid, die uit de Schrift is genomen en door het denkend bewustzijn is heengegaan. Daarom is het eigenlijk ook minder juist, om de H. Schrift de bron der Theologie te noemen. Vroeger drukte men zich beter en juister uit en sprak men van principium der Theologie. Het woord bron toch duidt eene mechanische verhouding aan tusschen Schrift en dogmatiek, maar het woord principium wijst op een organisch verband. De Schrift is geen bron, waaruit men het water maar voor het scheppen heeft. Zij is geen wetboek vol artikelen, dat men maar behoeft na te slaan. Maar zij is het organische beginsel, de kiem, de wortel, waar de plant der dogmatiek uit opwast. Mechanisch Schriftgebruik is daardoor volkomen afgesneden. Eene dogmatiek is geen tekstenrol en geen verzameling van dicta probantia. Maar zij is de waarheid der Schrift zelve, opgenomen in en zelfstandig verwerkt door het denkend, wetenschappelijk gevormde bewustzijn van den geloovige, en nu als eigen geloofsovertuiging beleden en gehandhaafd ook op de erve der wetenschap. Dit is dus de heerlijke maar tevens moeilijke taak van den dogmaticus, om de dogmata tot in hun verborgenste vezelen te ontleden, en na te sporen hoe ze geheel en al wortelen in de H. Schrift. Hij moet den arbeid der kerk als het ware recapituleeren, de dogmata voor onze oogen uit de Schrift doen uitgroeien, en ze produceeren op nieuw. Daardoor zal hij er in niet geringe mate toe bijdragen, om

According to Bavinck, the origin or starting point of dogmatics is divine. Its *principium* is God, who makes himself known in revelation.⁴⁷ Xu draws out the implication of this well when he identifies that God's self-disclosure is a disclosure of his glory and therefore brings a doxological character to dogmatics. Once again, Bavinck accurately portrays the process of *theological* thinking. Dogmatics is concerned with reflecting on the knowledge of God's action toward man. This *theological* thinking is enlivened through its immersion in Scripture, yet it remains a creaturely activity that strains to contemplate God afresh.

In the aforementioned address on "Pros and Cons," Bavinck also considered the material content of dogmatics. The material content is that which composes the substance of theology. In earlier times, theology was described as having its content as *God and all things in relation to God*.⁴⁸ Bavinck laments that this is no longer so, and in modern times has taken a subjective turn to consider man rather than God. Bavinck's contention here is with Schleiermacher and Kant—detailed attention to which would carry us beyond our focus. However, it will suffice to say that Bavinck perceives a true recovery of dogmatics as requiring that faith be the organ or knowledge, and not the source of knowledge.⁴⁹ Therefore, the content of the knowledge of faith is prior to faith and an element of the revelation of God, in such a way that God's self-disclosure enables us to know him by faith. Faith, then, is not the source of knowledge, but rather the conduit, the *organ* by which God discloses knowledge of himself.

On account of this, Bavinck believes we may know God by faith, and theology may be a science, as I argued in chapter three.⁵⁰ God is known as he discloses himself objectively in his revelation, and is known subjectively by us in faith as we appropriate this knowledge.⁵¹ This allows the material of dogmatics to be

kerk en confessie voor versteening en doode orthodoxie te bewaren. Want hij neemt de dogmata en dompelt ze telkens weer in dat frissche bad van het water des levens, dat daar ruischt in de H. Schrift].

⁴⁷ Bavinck, "The Pros and Cons," 92, 97, 100.

⁴⁸ Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 94. Importantly notes that Bavinck often uses theology and dogmatics interchangeably, but this is largely because dogmatics was "originally predicative of theology."

⁴⁹ Bavinck, "The Pros and Cons," 97, 100.

⁵⁰ In the previous section of "Pros and Cons" Bavinck engages Schleiermacher. Though unstated by Bavinck a difference here may be identified between Bavinck and Schleiermacher. The difference may be reduced to the role of the organ of faith. Bavinck attributes to faith an instrumental cause, whereas Schleiermacher would resist faith being a receptive organ. See Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §109.4.

⁵¹ *RD* I, 43.

formed by the revelation garnered from this source. In “Confessie en Dogmatiek,” Bavinck writes of the dogmatic material:

And what then is the material content of dogma? There is a big difference about this. And no wonder, because at the same time it is the question of the basic principle, and the material principle of the whole teaching of the Holy Scriptures. One is looking for this in the person of Christ, a second in man, a third in the opposition of sin and grace, a fourth in the church of the kingdom of God, etc. Many today now assume an anthropological, or christological, or ecclesiological principle. But the earlier theology sought that principle and starting point in the knowledge of God. That knowledge, revealed by God himself in nature and Scripture, was the centre and the organic principle of all dogma. In this science, therefore everything is related either directly or indirectly in this case *recto vel obliquo*,⁵² with the knowledge of God. And from there the dogmatic material was then organized in a more or less ordered system.⁵³

The material of dogmatics is derived from Scripture as the dogmatician imbibes the content of revelation and it is filtered through their consciousness. The dogmatician then strives to find the true unity in the system. For some, this unity has been anthropological, for some Christological, and others the kingdom of God. Bavinck here puts forth that the true substance of dogmatics is the knowledge of God. This brings us a pressing question within the field of Bavinck studies: what is the theological centre of Bavinck’s dogmatics?

The Centre of Bavinck’s Dogmatics

In the final portion of Bavinck’s essay “The Christian Faith” offered an exposition of the Apostles’ Creed.⁵⁴ This creedal approach to theology was expanded in Bavinck’s trio of dogmatic-esque works (*Reformed Dogmatics*, *Magnalia Dei*, and *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*). In the first volume of his *Reformed Dogmatics*, we are introduced to “the lost art of systematic theology” and given “a methodology by

⁵² Straight or oblique

⁵³ Bavinck, “Confessie en Dogmatiek,” 273-274.

[Dutch: En wat is dan de materiele inhoud van het dogma? Hierover is groot verschil. En geen wonder, want het is tegelijk de vraag naar het grondbeginsel, het materiele principe van heel de leer der H. Schrift. De een zoekt dit in den persoon van Christus, een tweede in den mensch, een derde in de tegenstelling van zonde en genade, een vierde in de kerk of het koninkrijk Gods enz. Velen gaan tegenwoordig uit van een anthropologisch of christologisch of ecclesiologisch beginsel. Maar de vroegere theologie zocht dat beginsel en uitgangspunt in de kennis Gods. Die kennis, door God van zichzelf in natuur en Schrift geopenbaard, was het middelpunt en het organisch beginsel der gansche dogmatiek. In deze wetenschap behoorde dus alwat rechtstreeks of zijdelings, in casu *recto vel obliquo*, met die kennis van God samenhang. En vandaar uit werd dan de dogmatische stof in een min of meer geordend systeem georganiseerd].

⁵⁴ Bavinck, “The Christian Faith,” 65.

which one knows God as triune.”⁵⁵ In the second volume, Bavinck begins his doctrine of God by first moving to consider the attributes of God, the unity of the essence, before moving to the personal properties of the Trinity. The third volume explores the second person of the Trinity’s “accomplishment of redemption” and exalts the one who is the mediator between God and man.⁵⁶ The fourth volume turns to consider the work of the Spirit in the life of the church as the application of those benefits acquired by Christ in redemption.

The first volume sets the stage for the central dogma in Bavinck’s theology to be “the knowledge of God.” This dogma interweaves all aspects of the *Reformed Dogmatics* and perhaps more importantly *Magnalia Dei* and *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*.⁵⁷ We recall here what was already said (Chapter five) about how in *Guidebook* Bavinck begins by arguing that the highest good for humans is God and God alone and that humanity is restless without God. Bavinck’s answer to the question of the highest good is the knowledge of God as displayed in revelation. *Guidebook* follows the pattern then unfolding the works of God. God’s self-disclosure and movement towards humanity in Christ, and his drawing of his creatures back to himself by his Spirit. This functions at the heart of Bavinck’s system as God organically reveals himself in Scripture and the cosmos as ectypal unity-in-diversity, which points to the archetypal unity-in-diversity of the Triune God. Humanity finds rest then in the knowledge of God with *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Guidebook* culminating with knowing God and being known by God.

Most recently, Pass has argued for a development in Bavinck toward Christ as the central dogma in Bavinck’s system.⁵⁸ Pass takes his starting point from volume three of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, in which Bavinck writes:

The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point (*uitgangspunt*), but it is indeed the centre (*middelpunt*) of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious-ethical life of Christianity. It is the **μυστήριον εὐσεβείας** (1 Tim. 3:16). The whole of Christology has to proceed from here.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 26, 89-93.

⁵⁶ Eglinton, “Some Benefits of Going Organic,” 26.

⁵⁷ *GICR*, 211-212.

⁵⁸ Pass, “Reading Bavinck’s Ethics,” 454, 463. Pass likewise argues Bavinck’s ethics are Christo-centric.

⁵⁹ cf. *RD III*, 274; Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 8.

Pass' reflections are then mediated by the structure of this paragraph. What is the true centre of Bavinck's dogmatic system? Is the knowledge of God the centre, or is Christ the centre? Moreover, are these two centres contentious or harmonic? In this respect, I agree with Clausing that Bavinck's two central dogmas are reconcilable. Rather than viewing these dogmas as competing or exclusive, Clausing has argued that the one (Christ) is the centre of the centre.⁶⁰ In other words, theology has a concentric centre in which the knowledge of God is central to the system and Christ is the centre of that centre. Just as Bavinck writes in "The Christian Faith," "Jesus Christ is the centre of all [the church's] knowledge and faith."⁶¹ Clausing argues that revelation is Christologically determined within a Triune framework. The Triune arc of revelation is unfurled in the "Christological prism" of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ.⁶² Clausing writes:

Thus in seeing Christology as flowing out of the Triune life and revelation a Triune mark, one no longer has to choose between 'the doctrine of the knowledge of God' or Christology as the mutually exclusive central dogmas. It is possible to consider them as two sides of the same coin. Instead of arguing for a shift in Bavinck's focus, one can assert a focusing of Bavinck's thought so that the 'doctrine of the knowledge of God' remains the central dogma. However it is the 'doctrine of the knowledge of God' as seen in the face of Christ because all revelation flows out of and is formed by the Logos.⁶³

Therefore, in Bavinck's theology we have a concentric centre, in which the knowledge of God is apexed in Christ. In Bavinck's encyclopaedia lectures at the turn of the 20th century, a student's notes record him as arguing for two centres. He admits that "Christ is the centre of dogmatics", yet argues that theology cannot be fully understood in this manner. Dogmatics must be viewed theologically. He writes:

Therefore, in our opinion, the dogmatic, the theological, is not necessarily Christological. Many people think so. In certain sense, well-meaning. Also, in our opinion Christ is the centre of dogmatics, the parts lead to Christ (theology and anthropology) and the next parts are derived from Christ (doctrine of salvation, etc.). Nevertheless, theology should not be understood as Christological, because Christ is both God and man, the person of Christ presupposes God, man, fall, etc. That is what we must know to speak of Christ. But the person of Christ, does not keep us to himself, but leads us to the Father, he has gone out from the Father and he leads us back that

⁶⁰ Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist", 93-94. Pass admits that Bavinck failed to re-work it around the centre of Christ. Bavinck had ample opportunities with *Guidebook* and *Magnalia Dei*. See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 47.

⁶¹ Bavinck, "The Christian Faith," 75.

⁶² Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist", 89-90.

⁶³ Clausing, "A Christian Dogmatic Does not yet Exist", 95.

way. God is α and ω . Thus, to be faithful we have to be theocentric, not Christological, Christocentric. Only then does the whole of Scripture come into her own.... From a Christological point of view, God does not come into his own either. It is only from the theological point of view of God, [that theology moves] from, through, and to God.⁶⁴

These archival notes suggest that even as late as 1902, Bavinck favoured considering his system as being theo-centric rather than Christo-centric. This is still 4 years prior to the date at which Pass perceives a shift in Bavinck toward being Christo-centric.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, in this, we see continuity with Pass's reading. Bavinck still places Christ at the centre of this theo-centric system. The arc of theology, though, is Triune, rather than Christic. Bavinck's system is Christologically concentrated, with a theo-centric bend. Importantly, Bavinck summarizes his theology with the aforementioned Romans 11:36 motif.

Julia Lamm identified a helpful illustration within Schleiermacher's theology that may be useful in shaping an understanding of Bavinck. She writes:

The temptation might be to say that Schleiermacher's spirituality is christocentric, but the implied geometry of that imagery would have been too static for him. Schleiermacher's preferred geometrical image was that of the ellipse... An ellipse has two foci along the major axis, both of which are equidistant from the centre; any point around the curve of the ellipse stands in relation to both foci, although at any given time the point may be closer to one focus than to the other. The imagery of the ellipse is much more dynamic than that of the circle in that it allows for novelty and change, especially when the third dimension is taken into account. ... [W]e might therefore think

⁶⁴ "Dictaat of Herman Bavinck's Encyclopaedie d. Theol.," 46-47:

[Dutch: Dus naar onze meening heel de dogmatiek, theologisch op te vatten, zelfs niet Christologisch. Velen meenen v. wel. In zekeren zin goed bedoeld. Ook volgens ons is Chr. het centrum v.d. dogmatiek, voegen deelen leiden naar Chr. leer (theol. en anthrop.) en volgende den uit Chr. afgeleid (leer der heils enz). Toch moet theol. niet Christol. opgevat want Chr. is beide God en mensch, Pers. v. Chr. onderstelt God, mensch, val enz. Dat moeten we weten om v. Chr. te kunnen spreken. Maar de pers. v. Chr. zelf houdt ons niet bij z.z. maar leidt ons heen tot de Vader, is v.d. Vader uitgegaan en leidt daarheen. God is α e. ω . Dus om getrouwd aan te zijn moet we theocentriek, niet Christolog. Christocent. Dan eerst komt de gansche Schr. tot haar recht.... Op Chr. log. standp. komt G. evenmin tot z. recht. Dat alleen op het theol. standp. van God uit en door en werken heen tot G. terug].

⁶⁵ Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 38. Pass perceives the transition happening in three stages: Stage 1: the knowledge of God is both the starting point and centre of the dogmatic system. Stage 2: the knowledge of God remains the starting point, but Christ becomes the centre of the system and mid-point of the dogmatic system. Stage 3: Christ becomes the starting points and center of the dogmatic system. The faults Bavinck perceived in the ethical theologians may have prevented him from making this move in the end (see page 27 of this thesis).

of its two foci as, on the one hand the joy of having been redeemed by Christ, and on the other hand, the trust that defines the feeling of absolute dependence on God.⁶⁶

While it should be noted this is language utilized by Schleiermacher but absent from Bavinck, it nonetheless captures the possibility of envisioning a path forward to understanding the central dogma in Bavinck. Christ is the centre of Christianity; the centre of revelation; the centre of the knowledge of the one true God.⁶⁷ As Bavinck writes in *Guidebook for Instruction in the Christian Religion*, “It is, in a word, a knowledge of the only true God in the face of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent and it is joined with eternal life (Joh. 17:3).”⁶⁸ Yet, picturing Bavinck’s central dogma as an ellipse, we might be helped in envisioning how he maintained two major foci: “the knowledge of God” and “Christ.” In this manner, we might also reconcile why at particular moments across his *Reformed Dogmatics*, he oscillates between the two foci.⁶⁹

For example, in the second volume of *Reformed Dogmatics* he writes, “All the doctrine treated in dogmatics—whether they concern the universe, humanity, Christ, and so forth—are but the explications of the one central dogma of the *cognito Dei* (*the knowledge of God*). All things are consisted in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as the starting point.”⁷⁰ From this vantage point the ellipsis is better subsumed or understood as flowing out of the centre of the knowledge of God. In turn, this should be placed next to his statement in the third volume of *Reformed Dogmatics*, that Pass appeals to: “The doctrine of Christ is not the starting point, but it is indeed the centre of the whole system of dogmatics. All other dogmas either prepare for it or are inferred from it. In it, as the heart of dogmatics, pulses the whole of the religious-ethical life of Christianity. It is the *μυστήριον εὐσεβείας* (1 Tim. 3:16). The whole of Christology has to proceed from here.”⁷¹ Seen in that light, the ellipsis allows both to function as a centre with either being drawn upon depending on which doctrines are being unfurled. Therefore, we might

⁶⁶ Lamm, *Schleiermacher*, 45-46.

⁶⁷ *GICR*, 32-33, 109-110, 116-117.

⁶⁸ *GICR*, 155-156.

⁶⁹ Another analogy that has not yet been explored would be to consider axial precession. Precession describes the “wobble” of the earth on its axis as the gravity of the sun and the moon bear on the earth. As such axial precession might allow for Bavinck’s system to “wobble” between a theo-centric and Christo-centric system. Like ellipses it allows for a vision of loci being called upon at particular moments, while also having a controlling role in the system (See Robert Feingold, “Our planet wobbles,” *Astronomy* vol. 40, no. 4 (Apr. 2012): 50).

⁷⁰ *RD II*, 29.

⁷¹ Cf. *RD*, III, 274; Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 17 (Pass translation).

consider Bavinck's dogmatic system as having two foci along the major axis Christ and the knowledge of God. As such, the best path forward may be to envision Bavinck as articulating something like Schleiermacher's ellipses, or alternatively a theo-centric system that is Christologically concentrated.

Is it possible, as a neo-Calvinist, resourcing and developing Calvin for a new generation that Bavinck was simply following the path laid down by Calvin in his *Institutes*? In Book I of his *Institutes* discusses the "knowledge of God" more broadly under the knowledge of God as Creator before proceeding in Book II to discussing knowledge of God as Redeemer.⁷² In Calvin's own scheme this would not be considered development, but rather the natural progression of knowledge of God in the activity of God in salvation. Unlike Calvin, however Bavinck is not moving from knowledge of God as Creator (in light of the fall) to knowledge of God as Redeemer but rather introduces us to the activity of dogmatics in prolegomena before preceding to its content. The weakness of this idea is that Bavinck does not exclude knowledge of Christ when he claims that dogmatics is centrally concerned with the knowledge of God.

Bavinck's path then is slightly different than Calvin's. He introduces the content of theology as "the knowledge of God." But then, while unfolding his Christology, he more openly acknowledges dogmatics as the knowledge of God in Christ, in other words Calvin's knowledge of the Redeemer.⁷³ Hence why both can posit that faith is "the knowledge of God in Christ."⁷⁴ Moreover, can acknowledge a shared creedal pattern between Books I-III of Calvin's *Institutes* (Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier) and Vols. II-IV of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*.⁷⁵ This movement of knowledge of God more broadly to knowledge of God in Christ, does not appear for the first time in Vol. III, but is found in Vol. I of the *Reformed Dogmatics*, after all, Bavinck wrote, "The content of dogmatics is the knowledge of God as he has revealed it in Christ through his Word."⁷⁶ Bavinck's "neo-Calvinist" background posits seeking a harmony of centres between knowledge of God and Christ as the central dogma — even if it is not a reduplication of Calvin.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, Book I, c.1, 1. Bavinck cites Calvin in his discussion on the knowledge of God (see *RD* II, 29-30).

⁷³ Calvin, *Institutes*, Book I, c.6, 1.

⁷⁴ See Calvin, *Institutes*, Book III, c.2, 3; Bavinck writes in *SOP*, 42-43:

Jesus is the promised Messiah, the divinely appointed prophet, priest, and king — that is the brief contents of the whole Christian faith. It is the heart of revelation, the heart of Holy Scripture, the bone and marrow of all confession, the central dogma of all the truths of salvation, the center from which all the rays of knowledge of God expand to the periphery. The person of Christ determines the essence of Christianity.⁷⁴

⁷⁵ *RD* I, 100. Bavinck asserts likewise that Calvin's starting point is "theological."

⁷⁶ *RD* I, 110.

Having explored Bavinck's dogmatic thought as a theo-centric system that is Christologically concentrated, we turn to consider how a similar centre might make sense of Bavinck's ethical thought. In this portion of the chapter, the starting point, task, and centre of ethics will be explored.⁷⁷ As was argued above, dogmatics and ethics have identical starting points in the revelation of God. Do the two disciplines share a centre? The centrality of Christ to Bavinck's ethics is the thrust of John Bolt and Jessica Joustra's argument regarding the imitation of Christ.⁷⁸ Their proposal stands in harmony with that of Pass, who argues for a Christological centre to Bavinck's mature dogmatic thought.⁷⁹ We have nuanced Pass' proposal, in-line with Clausing above. If dogmatics has a such a centre, is it illuminating to view ethics in this manner as well? We will consider this after coming to an understanding of Bavinck's theological ethics.

III. Defining Ethics: Theological Loving

The nature, purpose, and task of ethics

We might once again appeal to the *precis* from the first chapter to provide a structure for our definition of ethics.

... ethics describes the deeds, that the renewed man now does on the foundation of and in the power of those actions... in ethics he acts himself... in ethics, the precepts of the decalogue are treated... in the latter *caritate*, *obedientia*, and *bonis operibus* are handled... ethics sets forth what man is and is to do for God now; how, the entire man, with all his intellect and will and strength is to serve God out of gratitude and love... Ethics that of the service of God. Both sciences [dogmatics and ethics] are not independent entities to one another, but form one and the same system, they are related members of a single organism.⁸⁰

While dogmatics is a description of the divine works of God, Christian ethics is a description of regenerate Christian action in response to divine action. Ethics is *theological* loving. A reflective activity, rooted in Scripture, imbibed and filtered through the conscience, turned toward both God and the world in love.

⁷⁷ Bavinck, "Review of *De Ethiek in de Gereformeerde Theologie*," by W. Geesink, *De Bauzin* 45:45 (Nov. 1897), 4.

"[Geesink] points out the principles from which the Reformed ethics must be built; he draws the ground lines, within which she has to move." In Geesink's *Gerformeerde Ethiek* he argues for the source of Ethics as 1a. Holy Scripture, 1b. The Confession, 1c. Christian Consciousness; Reformed ethics have a 'decalogical' character and must have an eye toward development.

⁷⁸ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 29, 246; Joustra, *Following the Way of Jesus*, 138-139.

⁷⁹ See Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 21.

⁸⁰ *GD2^c*, I, 41; Translation is original to me and is utilized to draw out the Latin phrases.

Bavinck's work in ethics is written in close proximity to Scripture and therefore is, on the one hand, a recital of doctrine, and on the other, an articulation of the Christian life in the modern world. This doctrine is brought immediately into the context of the world.

We might note, as others have, that dogmatics facilitates ethics. Pass writes, "What stands out in both descriptions is the way that ethics stands theologically downstream not only of dogmatics but also of God's reconciling works. Ethics, therefore, is not merely an account of human agency but an account of redeemed creaturely agency."⁸¹ In an undated archival manuscript, Bavinck writes, "Ethics is the description of the born-again man in his essence and revelation; the life-history of the Christian; of man as a Christian, alone, in family, society, etc."⁸²

In ethics the life of the redeemed creature is in view. Importantly, Bavinck's conception of the Christian life, then, is not one limited to discipleship or spiritual maturity, but one that requires the acquisition of "prudential ethics" suited for navigating this world.⁸³ Bavinck's ethics is for the Christian, for the regenerate individual. He writes, "As a theology subject, Ethics carries a theological character. Otherwise, it would not belong here. That theological character consists in this, that it is the content, measure, purpose of the Christian."⁸⁴ Xu draws out the implication concisely, "The *divine* work gives birth to *theo-logical* person, who is empowered to undertake an authentic *theo-logical* ethics. Therefore, according to Bavinck, theological ethics originates neither in nature, nor in creation, nor in humanity. Instead, it is only rooted in God's self-revelation to human beings."⁸⁵ A *theo-logical* person, as one gifted faith, then is an active agent in both theological *thinking* and *loving*.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Pass, "Reading Bavinck's Ethics," 456.

⁸² "Untitled Manuscript" (unknown date), Box 346, Folder 226, §27. "Ethiek." [Dutch: Ethiek is de beschrijving van den wedergeborene in zijn wezen en openbaring; de levens-geschiedenis van den Christen; van den mensch als Christen, alleen, in gezin, maatschappij, etc.].

⁸³ Ziegler, *Militant Grace*, 190.

⁸⁴ "Untitled Manuscript" (unknown date), Box 346, Folder 226, §27 "Ethiek." [Dutch: Als theologie vak draagt de Ethiek een theologisch karakter. Anders hoorde zij hier niet. Dat theologisch karakter bestaat hierin, dat de inhoud, maatstaf, doel van de Christelijkl]. For why Bavinck prefers "ethics" to "morality" see Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 86-87.

⁸⁵ Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 85-86.

⁸⁶ *RE I*, 248.

How does the Christian know how to live? To what source can the ethical agent appeal to know how to live?⁸⁷ What is the starting point for *theological* loving? The answer for Bavinck is tri-fold. First, the main source of Christian theological ethics is made up of divine command.⁸⁸ This divine command is summarized by the law of love.⁸⁹ Secondary to Scripture is the conscience (in the fourth chapter, the conscience surfaced as I located Bavinck's theological psychology of the head and heart). The conscience, located in the heart (or next to it), enables individuals to have a moral awareness of God and the world. Importantly, I indicated that regeneration resulted in a conscience which related to the divine law not by way of condemnation but through Christ as one of grateful duty. As such, the Christian conscience is oriented toward Christ until Christ becomes the content of the conscience. The third starting point for theological loving is the imitation of Christ. Together, the main content of Christian theological ethics is made up of divine command and divine imitation as the Christian lives a life beholden to Christ. The Christian life is therefore shaped by Scripture, grace, and Christ, and set within the horizon of loving both God and neighbour.⁹⁰

Importantly, as has been argued by Joustra and Bolt, this theological *loving* is not one of rote imitation.⁹¹ The imitation of Christ is not a rote external practice, but rather consists in being transformed by Christ into his likeness. The disciples thus do not imitate rote practices, but imitate him in the virtues of humility, lowliness, longsuffering, purity, holiness, forgiveness, love, etc.⁹² It does not reduplicate Scripture, but rather "consists of a free, spiritual application of the principles by which [Christ] lived completely fulfilling the moral law."⁹³ Just as theological thinking imbibes the nectar of Scripture and produces dogmatic honey; theological *loving* imbibes the nectar of Scripture and produces ethical catacombs

⁸⁷ See Ziegler, "Reformed Ethics," 577-578.

⁸⁸ *RE I*, 27-29, 216-217; "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation," 17.

⁸⁹ *RE II*, 20, 101-102, 151-154, 286-292, 420, 435-456.

⁹⁰ *RE I*, 27; *RE II*, 19-20, 153. Bavinck's ethics could be understood as teleological ethics as the Christian life is oriented "unto God."

⁹¹ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 29; Joustra, *Following the Way of Jesus*, 64; Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus II," *De Vrije Kerk*, XI (1885): 203-213, 213; Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus en het Moderne Leven," in *Kennis en Leven: Opstellen en Artikelen uit Vroegere Jaren* (Kampen: Kok, 1918), 115-145, 127.

⁹² Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus en het Moderne Leven," 133.

⁹³ Bavinck, "De Navolging Van Christus III," *De Vrije Kerk*, XII (1886): 321-333.

in which the believer dies to self, lives unto God, and toward neighbour. Moreover, in his treatises on the imitation of Christ, it is the divine commandments that shape, or act as the norming norm of imitating Christ. Bavinck writes, “The Ten Commandments form the constitution of a life of obedience to God and, in the final analysis determine that which may and must not be imitated in the life of Jesus.”⁹⁴

In his *Reformed Dogmatics*, Bavinck puts forth a fivefold organic account—rather than “atomistic”—of the Christian life. In this context, Bavinck is discussing the nature of good works. He argues, (i) that the moral law is a single organism with a normative use, such that if one violates one portion of the law, the whole law is violated. Therefore, if a human fails in one aspect of the law (as Adam did), the whole edifice of good works crumbles. Conversely, the virtue that fulfils the law is that of love.⁹⁵ (ii) The believer has the whole of Christ’s merits imputed to them. Here, the two sides of the covenant are operative. In the first point, is the covenant of works—that the human is required to fulfil every aspect of this work. The individual, of course, cannot fulfil such a demand. In the second point, is the covenant of grace, in which Christ fulfilled the conditions and curse of the law and in *unio mystica* with his person, believers receive all those benefits that Christ acquired in his work.⁹⁶ (iii) The spirit then applies those benefits organically. In other words, the Christian life is one of perpetual motion in the Spirit. The more believers are drawn toward Christ, the more he indwells them. The more faith increases, the more Christ communicates himself to the believer. As Bavinck writes:

In the church of Christ, therefore, there are lambs and sheep who nurse them (Isa. 40:11); those with little and those with great faith, first and last (Matt. 11:11; 20:16); those who are little and those who are great in faith (Matt. 6:30; 8:10, 26; 14:31; 15:28; 16:8); weak and strong (Rom. 14:1ff.; 15:1; 1 Cor. 8:7ff.; 9:22; 10:25); carnally minded and spiritually minded (1 Cor. 3:1, 3; Gal. 6:1); beginners and mature believers (1 Cor. 2:6; 3:2; 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:12, 14; 1 Pet. 2:7); young men and fathers (1 John 2:12–14). To each is given a personal measure of faith (Rom. 12:3); everyone has a place of their own in the body of Christ (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:12ff.). All members must grow up together in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Bavinck, “De Navolging Van Christus III,” 332; Joustra, *Following the Way of Jesus*, 7. As Joustra has noted, “Neo-Calvinists have tended to highlight the primacy of the law (the Ten Commandments) in ethics.”

⁹⁵ *RD IV*, 263.

⁹⁶ *RD IV*, 263–264.

⁹⁷ *RD IV*, 264.

All members of the Christian church are at various stages of sanctification. (iv) The Christian life has a singular principle, norm, and telos, and that is God. He writes, “The final goal of all moral conduct can be found only in God, who is the origin, and hence also the final goal of all things, the supreme good that encompasses all goods, the Eternal One to whom all finite things return.”⁹⁸ This doxological norm and goal is the essence noted by Xu and others. Ethics is framed by its being from, through, and to God. (v) Finally, the organic view makes sense of the connection between the present and future life. Often, Scripture speaks of wages and reward for obedience, for which reason Bavinck frames the connection between the present and future life as both being a gift. He writes,

He represents heavenly blessedness to them in the form of many images—of a city, a fatherland, eternal rest, a crown, an inheritance, an athletic prize, wages...The imperishable, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, which is kept for us in heaven, is not a wage paid out to employees in proportion to what they have earned but a reward that the Father in heaven grants to his children out of sheer grace.⁹⁹

The shape of Bavinck’s Christian life and therefore his ethics is Spirit-filled Christian obedience to the law of love. The perpetual humming of the Christian life is one of developing a deeper and more abiding life in the Spirit. This Spirit-filled life is rendered in service to God as the believer embraces the benefits of Christ in gratitude. It is theological *loving*, as Bavinck puts it:

[T]he new life unfolds its power in love... But that love is not a weakness, but a strength; not a flattery, but an energy; not a feeling of sentimentality, but a resolved will. It is not an evasion and destruction of the law, but a fulfilment of the law... It is a love that seeks to honour God, the salvation of one’s neighbour, and therefore fulfils the law in all things. Such a love requires faith, and Christian faith is active in such a love.¹⁰⁰

Theological loving then is intimately connected to the law. Moreover, Bavinck envisions that what is distinctive about Christian love is its connection to justice. He puts forth a Christianity in which faith “unfolds its power in love” and therefore seeks to honor both God and neighbor as it seeks to be active in love. The connection between faith and love is justice, and this justice finds its apex in the object of faith,

⁹⁸ RD IV, 264.

⁹⁹ RD IV, 266.

¹⁰⁰ Bavinck, “Faith and Love,” 3.

the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because of this in theological *loving* the Christian is not condemned by the law — but may delight in it.¹⁰¹

Thus far, one question has remained unanswered in this chapter: is Christ the centre of Bavinck's ethics? Having suggested dogmatics as having a being a theo-centric system that is Christologically concentrated we now turn to consider if this is an appropriated depiction of the centre of Bavinck's ethics.

The centre of Bavinck's ethics

In the published version of his dissertation, Bolt identifies the imitation of Christ theme as a *necessary* but *partial aspect* of Bavinck's cultural ethical ideal.¹⁰² He inspects this theme by evaluating two essays by Bavinck on the imitation of Christ: the first written in 1885/86, and the second, in 1918. These essays provide an interesting filter through which to look at the young and old Bavinck, respectively, and his approach to the theme in those phases.¹⁰³ Bolt's primary contention is that the imitation of Christ theme is *partial* and not comprehensive because of the overall Trinitarian perspective that pervades Bavinck's project. Bolt writes, "However, based on his overall *trinitarian* theological perspective, he also insists that the imitation of Christ cannot serve as the comprehensive theme for Christian ethics. It must be qualified by the priority given in trinitarian thought to the Father and creation, a priority which suggests an equally valid and proper world-affirmation."¹⁰⁴

This *partial* perspective was disputed by Joustra, who perceived Bolt as isolating Bavinck's imitation of Christ ethical ideal from the moral law.¹⁰⁵ Joustra, however, connected the imitation of Christ to the law, and therefore saw it as *comprehensive*. Joustra wrote, "Bavinck grounds the imitation of Christ in the moral law and creation. Given this grounding, the imitation of Christ *is* a comprehensive ethic, on account of its relation to the moral law. The key, for Bavinck, to the proper imitation of Christ is in its relationship

¹⁰¹ Bavinck, "Faith and Love," 3.

¹⁰² Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 28.

¹⁰³ See also, Dirk Van Keulen, "Herman Bavinck on the Imitation of Christ," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 78-91.

¹⁰⁴ Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck's Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi*, 29.

¹⁰⁵ See also Jessica Joustra, "Jesus the Law Restorer: Law and the Imitation of Christ in Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Ethics*," *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 311-330.

to the moral law.”¹⁰⁶ Alongside Bolt, Joustra then submits Bavinck’s imitation of Christ theme into his larger Trinitarian framework. She writes:

His three aspects of the imitation of Christ – union with Christ, the inner working of the Spirit, and the outward law-patterned imitation of the virtues of Christ – highlight the role of Father, Spirit, and Son. The creational will of God is enduring, the work and example of Christ is upheld, and Holy Spirit applies the benefits of the work of Christ in the life of the believer, uniting us to Christ that we may experience these benefits.

Bavinck’s understanding of the imitation of Christ, positively articulated, *is* the shape of the Christian life. It is a uniquely Trinitarian ethic, grounded in creation and the moral law, concretized and fulfilled in the life of Christ, hopefully anticipating eschatological glorification. The entirety of the Christian life is the imitation of Christ: on account of one’s spiritual union with Christ, the imitation of Christ takes shape in the life of the believer as the believer lives their life in conformity with Christ, in law-patterned imitation of the virtues of Christ.¹⁰⁷

If we are to conceive Bavinck as having a Christologically concentrated and theo-centric ethic, one could not have put it better than Joustra. To the degree that Joustra and Bolt both perceive Christ as the centre to his ethics, they are both correct. Joustra and Bolt both submit Bavinck’s imitation of Christ theme within the wider Trinitarian framework, nonetheless where Bolt sees Bavinck’s imitation of Christ theme as *partial*, Joustra suggests it is *comprehensive* because of the christological connection to the moral law. Christ is indeed the heart of the spiritual life, and the heart of dogmatics. Thus, in accordance with Joustra — and our earlier discussion on the role of revelation — we do have a concentric centre in ethics. In this manner, the imitation of Christ and the moral law function at the heart of his ethics.

Just as theological *thinking* requires that we imbibe Scripture and reproduce it in our own thinking, theological *loving* necessitates propagating holy imitation not in rehearsed actions, but in the transformation of all of life. As Bavinck writes, “The true following of Christ therefore does not consist in copying him, in replicating him, in imitating his life and teaching but is found in the inner conversion of the heart, which gives us a true desire and choice to walk according to all, not just some of, God’s commandments in spirit and truth. Therefore, the words of Christ...are religious-moral commandments that can be honoured only in the way of liberty, spontaneously, from an inner compulsion of the regenerated heart.”¹⁰⁸ Theological

¹⁰⁶ Joustra, *Following the Way of Jesus*, 138-139.

¹⁰⁷ Joustra, *Following the Way of Jesus*, 138-139. Joustra likewise gestures toward a distributed account in this quote.

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationships,” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra & Gerrit Sheeres, eds. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 119-144, 133-134.

loving allows the regenerate human the liberty to discern their own ethical means because it is not merely rote imitation, but is a task that involves theological reflection.¹⁰⁹

IV. The Doxological Essence of Dogmatics and Ethics

An additional connecting point is the *telos* for which both dogmatics and ethics are oriented—the glory of God. Xu, the translator and editor of the Chinese edition of Bavinck’s *Reformed Ethics*, has published an insightful article on the relationship between dogmatics and ethics in the thought of Bavinck. Xu’s argument is twofold. First, he argues that one may relate dogmatics and ethics under the banner of doxology. In other words, in their shared origin, essence, and *telos* in the theological encyclopaedia, dogmatics and ethics have a doxological essence. He cites the work “The Honor of God,” in which Bavinck writes:

All theology... seeks to maintain his glory for all things. A true theologian is the one who if he needs to be against everything, science, and public opinion, State and church, and all things on the earth – holds fast to God and His word and intends his glory among everything. The glory is the guideline and goal of all things.¹¹⁰

Xu argues from this that all theological activity undertaken by Bavinck—and in particular dogmatics and ethics—has this doxological origin and *telos* in mind. The doxological *telos* of dogmatics and ethics fits perfectly within the Romans 11:36 motif. Dogmatics, *theological* thinking, reflects on God’s descent toward man. All things are “from” God. Both dogmatics and ethics conspire in acknowledging that all regenerate activity occurs “through” God. Ethics, *theological* loving, ascends back “to” God. The doxological *telos* of dogmatics and ethics — “To him be the glory” — fits perfectly. This spiritual life has its origin in God the Father, is acquired by and united to Christ, and is applied and nourished by the Spirit. “The life of spiritual persons, also after its origination, cannot for a moment be separated from God and his fellowship; in the same strict and particular sense in which this life is from God, it also is through and for him.”¹¹¹

Both dogmatics and ethics are captured in this Romans 11:36 scheme. As Bavinck writes, “Our ethics, proceeds from God, through God, and is for God.”¹¹² And elsewhere, “All the doctrines treated in dogmatics... are but the explication of the one central dogma of the knowledge of God. All things are

¹⁰⁹ See also Pass, “Reading Bavinck’s Ethics,” 460-461.

¹¹⁰ Xu, “Gloriously Intertwined,” 83; Bavinck, “De Eere Gods,” *De Vrije Kerk* 9 (1883), 418. Translation, Ximian Xu.

¹¹¹ *RD* IV, 98.

¹¹² *RE* I, 26.

considered in light of God, subsumed under him, traced back to him as their starting point.”¹¹³ Or as Bavinck writes of his dogmatic method, “But proceeding from God, it descends to his works, in order through them again to ascend to and end in him. So in this method as well, God is beginning, middle, and end. From him, through him, and to him are all things.”¹¹⁴ Dogmatics and ethics have a shared doxological end.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the nature, task, centre, and end of dogmatics and ethics were sketched. Its argument could be summarised by referring to Bavinck’s entry on “Dogmatics” in the *Christelijke Encyclopaedie* —a publication that demonstrates a shift towards how we understand the encyclopaedia today, *contra* the older concept of “encyclopaedia” outlined in the previous chapter. The *Christelijke Encyclopaedie* is an encyclopaedia with extended references to various components of Christianity. Although this neo-Calvinist encyclopaedia was published after Bavinck’s death, he nevertheless contributed several articles to it, including the entry on dogmatics, in which he writes:

Dogmatics is that theological science which treats the dogmata, that is, attends to the articles or truths of faith, in a scientific manner, by tracing or deducing them from the *principium*, given in the revelation of God by tracing their mutual unity and coherence, and, finally, by presenting them systematically, as a single organic whole... The word dogmatism first came into use late in the 18th century. Before that time other names were used, especially that of theology, because in this discipline the knowledge of God and His works were dealt with. The other disciplines (interpretation of Scripture, church history, etc.) were considered as auxiliary subjects to theology. But when the name ‘theology’ acquired a broader meaning and incorporated all these other subjects as parts, it became necessary to distinguish all these theological subjects by an adjective. They became known as exegetical, historical, practical, and dogmatic theology, or dogmatics for short. This theological science at first also included the treatment of those dogmata, that related to life; but the breadth and importance of the subject matter made it necessary to treat separately those dogmas that were to be believed and those that applied to life; thus dogmatics and ethics (not as opposed to each other, but treated separately) came to stand side by side, dogmatics as a system of the knowledge of God (of the *credenda*), ethics of the service of God (*agenda*).¹¹⁵

¹¹³ RD II, 29; RD II, 232-233; RD II, 333-334.

¹¹⁴ RD I, 112.

¹¹⁵Bavinck, “Dogmatiek,” in *Christelijke Encyclopaedie: Voor Het Nederlandsche Volk*, Vol. I, eds. F.W. Grosheide, J.H. Landwehr, C. Lindeboom, and J.C. Rullmann (J.H. Kok: Kampen, 1925), 609–610. Translation mine.

This posthumous entry is enlightening in two respects. First, it continues the trajectory that at the centre of his dogmatic system is the knowledge of God. This quote does push back against notions of development. Although, even here we would want to acknowledge that Christ is not excluded from Bavinck's statement concerning the knowledge of God. Second, it quickly distinguishes the two disciplines of ethics and dogmatics from one another. Dogmatics is a depiction of those articles that we confess, and ethics is the discipline that describes our service rendered unto God for what he has done, succinctly, *theological* thinking and loving.

This dissertation attempted to distil the distributed relationship between the two moors in Bavinck's thought of dogmatics and ethics. This was illustrated through a home in Amsterdam constructed on a canal street. This canal street I called theological encyclopaedia avenue, which has four theological homes residing on it. A particular interest was given to the home of systematic theology, in which reside dogmatics and ethics. Both dogmatics and ethics are conceptually important for the science of systematic theology. Nonetheless, there is a conceptual and logical priority given to dogmatics as the Christian life grows out of Christian doctrine. Being precedes action. God must descend for believers to ascend.

Beneath the surface of the Amsterdam home various "piles" were revealed that support the relationship between dogmatics and ethics. The various "piles" facilitated the cumulative structure of the thesis demonstrating that the relationship between dogmatics and ethics could not be restricted to a single doctrine but must necessarily be viewed as distributed. These "piles" unfurled the movement of humans from *passive* to *active*. As such the "piles" were grouped along the *ordo saltuis* as a depiction of God's gratuitous activity toward man. The edifice that resulted was a *munus triplex* theological anthropology that considered the origin, essence, and destiny of humans as those pulled from the mire of sin *ad intra* and gifted active lives of faith, in the *ad extra* activity of theological *thinking* and *loving*.

The thesis closes with an assessment of the multi-piled relationship between dogmatics and ethics.

Conclusion

Assessing the Property Value of Bavinck's Amsterdam Home

Today, Bavinck's residence in Amsterdam at Singel 62, according to estimates provided by *makelaarsland* would sell for upwards of half a million pounds (600,000-700,000 €).¹¹⁶ But how might we assess how Bavinck relates the two disciplines of dogmatics and ethics in the construction of his systematic theology home on theological encyclopaedia avenue? In this respect, I will utilize the work of moral theologian Oliver O'Donovan to offer an appraisal of the "multi-piled" manner, in which Bavinck relates dogmatics and ethics. Both lines of appreciation and criticism will be suggested. I will also distill Bavinck scholar Ximian Xu's three observations on the relationship of Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics. Between Xu, O'Donovan, and myself an ample appraisal of the property value will be offered.

Why engage with Oliver O'Donovan at this point? The thesis up till now has been largely a historical reconstruction of the relationship between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics. By engaging with O'Donovan I hope to make clear that Bavinck's theological system can contribute to contemporary discussions. Over the course of these final pages, it'll be clear that Bavinck has certain positive lines of continuity with O'Donovan as well offers him something dogmatically. O'Donovan principally relates dogmatics (which he also calls theology) and ethics as in a reciprocal relationship. In this manner, ethics is informed by theological truths and ethics opens back up toward theology.¹¹⁷ Christ functions at the centre of the relationship of theology and ethics. This produces the distinct discipline of "moral theology," that is ethics bearing a theological framework.¹¹⁸ What makes the activity of moral theology distinct from the activity of "ethics/dogmatics"? The two disciplines of dogmatics and ethics operate "as sister-disciplines" which cannot be collapsed into each other, but also cannot be separated.¹¹⁹ Moral theology is the harmony of dogmatics and ethics, both ethics and dogmatics reaching out to hold hands, the doctrinal and the practical.¹²⁰ As such dogmatics and ethics both have their own task, but in moral theology they work together.

¹¹⁶ "Singel 62," *Makelaarsland*, April 19, 2022, <https://www.makelaarsland.nl/amsterdam/1015ab/singel/62/1>.

¹¹⁷ O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love*, 3; O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 19, 81.

¹¹⁸ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 67, 75, 89.

¹¹⁹ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 81-83; Three examples are provided in the context for their inseparability (doctrines of sin, Christology, and doxology).

¹²⁰ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 89.

Thus far, O'Donovan's conception of ethics has much in common with how Bavinck conceives the relationship between dogmatics and ethics (albeit without the discipline of moral theology). At this point, I will suggest a critique that O'Donovan might emit, and that is Bavinck's ethics does not adequately inform dogmatics. For O'Donovan the relationship between dogmatics and ethics, i.e. moral theology is reciprocal; ethics, therein has a certain purchase on dogmatics without stumbling into the activity of dogmatics itself.¹²¹ For Bavinck, "Theological ethics... is totally rooted in dogmatics."¹²² Bavinck describes dogmatics and ethics as dependent on each other and neither as independent.¹²³

In line with this critique, I believe Bavinck needed to provide greater clarity as to how exactly dogmatics is dependent upon ethics. It is clear how dogmatics informs ethics in Bavinck's system — the various doctrinal piles provide sufficient evidence of this — yet it is opaque how ethics informs his dogmatics. Does ethics only offer questions for dogmatics to answer? O'Donovan offers a solution in doxology as a path to seeing the relation of ethics toward dogmatics.¹²⁴ This shared doxological essence links with one of Xu's observation that, "the organic interconnection of dogmatics and ethics is a prerequisite for their flourishing."¹²⁵ Here, Xu appeals to the doxological essence of the two disciplines, to which I referred to in chapter seven. He writes, "Combining the doxological *telos* of the two disciplines with their doxological origin, we can arrive at the following corollary: from the beginning to the end, dogmatics and ethics are always doxologically intertwined."¹²⁶ Xu is correct in noting the doxological end of dogmatics and ethics. Yet, if this is the only manner in which ethics informs dogmatics I believe O'Donovan would desire more.

I do not perceive that O'Donovan would be altogether against how Bavinck has related the two disciplines. After all, O'Donovan's Chalcedonian characterization of John Webster's mature thought has much in consonance with Bavinck's own distinction.¹²⁷ O'Donovan summarized Webster's system saying,

¹²¹ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 82. As he writes, "Yet Dogmatics and Moral Theology must make their own discoveries, each going beyond what the other could have told it."

¹²² *RD I*, 58; Bavinck does describe dogmatics and ethics as depending on each other.¹²²

¹²³ "Untitled Loose Papers" (no date), Box 346, Folder 56.

¹²⁴ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 82.

¹²⁵ Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 92-93.

¹²⁶ Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 93.

¹²⁷ O'Donovan, "John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* Vol. 21, no. 1 (2019): 78-92.

“If dogmatics has as its theme God and his works, and ethics the nature and acts of the creature, then the Chalcedonian model is the proper matrix for thinking of these two intellectual natures.”¹²⁸ This is immaculately close to Bavinck’s understanding with Dogmatics attend to divine activity and ethics the activity of regenerate humans. The symmetry with Webster continues with the two disciplines as distinct on account of being properly “sub-disciplines” of theology, possessing separate objects, and overlapping because of a shared agent, and being precedes action.¹²⁹

O’Donovan argues for three levels to Webster’s “highly Chalcedonian” view of theology: unity, conscious-unity, and proximate-unity.¹³⁰ In the first of these, O’Donovan is focused on Webster’s vision of the unity of the theological agent. He writes, “Theology, too, is an activity human beings undertake in the course of living their lives.”¹³¹ The two, dogmatics and ethics might exist as distinct disciplines, but they have a unity in the life of the human as life and faith collide. In other words, Bavinck’s *theological* thinking and loving are not to be two executed by two separate agents, but by the singular agent carrying out the activity of *faith seeking understanding*. In the second of these levels, O’Donovan is interested in the theological unity of the discipline. As such, the theological disciplines of dogmatics and ethics must be conscious of their unity. The unfurling of Bavinck’s theological encyclopaedia fosters a clear “conscious-unity” to their relationship. Perhaps, Bavinck falters slightly here with my admission above that it is not entirely clear how ethics has a purchase on dogmatics. Perhaps, O’Donovan could persuade Bavinck that the organism of Bavinck’s theological encyclopaedia would benefit from the addition of moral-theology.¹³² In

¹²⁸ O’Donovan, “John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics,” 83. The Chalcedonian model has in view the two-natures of Christ as both God and man in the singular person of Christ. Dogmatics relates to Christ’s divinity, ethics Christ’s humanity under the umbrella of the singular activity of theology.

¹²⁹ Cf. *RD IV*, 255; O’Donovan, “John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics,” 84.

¹³⁰ Albeit in a roundabout way this grazes Pass’ desire to see Webster as a “touchstone” for assessing Bavinck’s merit for retrieval (see Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics*, 186-187).

¹³¹ O’Donovan, “John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics,” 85.

¹³² O’Donovan, “John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics,” 83.

this manner, moral theology would allow for ethics to open up toward dogmatics.¹³³ The final unity — proximate unity — request that ethics be informed by dogmatics.¹³⁴ This has been aptly illustrated above.

Where does O'Donovan criticize Webster's system? Namely, one area, O'Donovan is wary of Webster's essay "Mortification and Vivification." He has a twofold concern: (1) that vivifying is more properly the activity of the Holy Spirit; (2) that as presented "mortifying" and "vivifying" are entirely self-referential and therefore, there is no orientation toward the world, in love.¹³⁵ Alternatively, O'Donovan presses that the Christian life is an engagement with the Redeemer that re-imagines both the self and therefore necessarily all fellow humans. Does Bavinck escape this criticism? I believe so, for two reasons. First, Bavinck's own account of ethics does not lean on the theme of mortification and vivification. Second, Bavinck's depiction of the Christian life is oriented toward God and neighbour in love, which is precisely the direction O'Donovan points to close the article. The relationship between Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics, at least as I have sketched it, as a "distributed across the corpus of dogmatics" (how O'Donovan expresses Webster's mature thought) has much in common with O'Donovan's own preference for relating dogmatics and ethics. O'Donovan states it plainly, "Ethics is necessarily an architectural enterprise."¹³⁶

In O'Donovan's chapter "The Task of Moral Theology" he argues that theological ethics ought to address the present world as humans encounter it. He envisions this as shaped and centred by the truth of "God with us." Just as Christ is central to the task of dogmatics, so it must be for ethics (and therefore moral theology). Human action then takes on particular importance considering God's divine action.¹³⁷ He then quotes Karl Barth:

Not for us a passive presence as spectators, but our very own highest activation, quite simply the praise of the grace of God.... This 'we with God' implicated in the 'God with us' is Christian faith, Christian love and Christian hope; these constitute the praise of God's grace that still remains for us

¹³³ O'Donovan, "John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics," 83. Moral theology, as O'Donovan suggests facilitates connecting dogmatics and ethics "to the field of life." The discipline gives priority to exegesis and dogmatics, while allowing "illumination and expansion from the considerations of morals and ascetics."

¹³⁴ O'Donovan, "John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics," 85-86.

¹³⁵ O'Donovan, "John Webster on Dogmatics and Ethics," 87-90. John Webster, "Mortification and Vivification" in *God Without Measure II: Virtue and Intellect* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 103-122.

¹³⁶ O'Donovan, *Self, World, Time*, x.

¹³⁷ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 91-92.

to accomplish — still remaining as the essentially human thing, as the supremely important thing, as *action* in the truest sense of the word.¹³⁸

In O'Donovan's vision of moral theology, the human agent's life is transformed by the event of Christ and he takes up the centre in their identity and agency. Having been redeemed by Christ, the moral agent is then to be conformed to Christ by the Spirit.¹³⁹ I believe, Bavinck would be in hardy agreement.

This activity, for O'Donovan is shaped by the taxonomy of faith, hope, and love. He suggests this taxonomy as a summary of the Christian life, as beginning in baptism (faith), persisting in community (love), and grounded in (hope). These three “endure” as such they structure the Christian life and occupy “offices”, which allow these virtues to fold back into his threefold vision of ethics through self, world, and time.¹⁴⁰ For faith, hope, and love to operate properly O'Donovan believes it is necessary for them to be planted “in relation to the final *perfection* of mankind and the conditions of *natural* human activity.” The created order is affirmed and transcended. This *perfection* has the beatific vision in mind alongside of humanity reaching its moral telos. This perfection does not replace human nature but restores it.¹⁴¹

O'Donovan goes further in “The Trajectory of Faith, Love, and Hope” an ordering to these three virtues. “Faith *anticipates* hope and love, but hope and love *presuppose* faith.”¹⁴² In this manner, faith is the root of all action as God summons the creature into a love oriented agency.¹⁴³ Faith precedes and culminates in love, which endures through hope. O'Donovan engages with Augustine and identifies his pivotal role in envisioning love as informed by knowledge, love as informing his ethics, and God's love as the object of Christian love.¹⁴⁴ Augustine envisions God as the highest good and as such all other goods are to be enjoyed and love in relation to this good.¹⁴⁵ As such, according to O'Donovan, the self, the world, and our occupation of this world is “a series of openings and adventures” as loving God leads to loving created goods.¹⁴⁶ The adventure of loving God and loving all other goods then takes the form of embodied wisdom,

¹³⁸ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 91-92; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1. O'Donovan is critical of Barth's

¹³⁹ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 92, 97.

¹⁴⁰ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 99-100.

¹⁴¹ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 102.

¹⁴² O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 103.

¹⁴³ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 107-110.

¹⁴⁴ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 114-115.

¹⁴⁵ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 117-118.

¹⁴⁶ O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 119.

or “action” aligned by hope.¹⁴⁷ Moral activity is shaped by love of God and love of neighbour as Christians participate in the preservation (world-affirming) and redemption (world-transcending) of the world.¹⁴⁸

Bavinck does not make much of the taxonomy of faith, hope, and love.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, in Bavinck’s conception human agency takes on a particular importance in light of divine agency. According to Bavinck, human activity is the result of divine activity toward man. Whereas O’Donovan draws on the “offices” of faith, hope, and love Bavinck appeals to the threefold office. In the *munus triplex*, O’Donovan’s conception of the created order is affirmed as humans are restored to their original calling, and yet this is turned upon their eschatological destiny as they fulfil Christ’s office on earth. This theological agent then is oriented by the highest good and as such strives toward the perfection of its personality in the kingdom of God.

A question that arises from this regarding Bavinck’s system — is Bavinck’s system open to engaging the world? The reality and problems of the world were not absent from Bavinck’s writing. The transformation of head and heart *ad intra*, resulting in faith produces the cultivation of a world-and lifeworld *ad extra* as the Christian attempts to live in a distinctly Christian manner (theological *loving*). Faith as a world- and lifeworld activity suggests that his system is open to the world, as the believer must open themselves to the reality of the world and navigate how God speaks, even today. His writing on contemporary issues, including “On Inequality”, women’s suffrage, the “Right to Life of the Unborn”, and “The Problem of War.”¹⁵⁰ These issues demonstrate how Bavinck’s theological system was open to the world. Another significant feature to Bavinck’s theological program (though largely absent from this thesis), would be that of common grace.¹⁵¹ This neo-Calvinist facilitates a theological program that is world-

¹⁴⁷ O’Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 119-124.

¹⁴⁸ O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline of Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 13-14, 20, 143, 163.

¹⁴⁹ *RE I*, 353-359. Bavinck reflects on this taxonomy here.

¹⁵⁰ Bavinck, “On Inequality,” *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 145-164; “Stemrecht der vrouw,” *De Bazuin* 48 (9) 1900; “Het levensrecht der ongeboren vrucht” *Orgaan van de Christelijke Vereeniging van Natuur-en Geneeskundigen in Nederland* 3 (1904): 1-3; see also *Het Probleem van den oorlog*.

¹⁵¹ Bavinck, “Calvin and Common Grace,” 437-465; “Herman Bavinck’s ‘Common Grace’,” trans. R.C. Leeuwen *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 38-65. The antithesis is between sin and grace; A significant area of Bavinck studies — that connects to this — remains practically untouched and this, Bavinck’s political theology.

affirming (common grace), while the general antithesis of Christianity to other world-and lifeviews posits it as world-transcending.¹⁵²

In O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* he offers a solitary critique of neo-Calvinist thought in the wake of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977).¹⁵³ O'Donovan critiques neo-Calvinists who followed on the heels of Dooyeweerd's "Christian worldview" because it accorded too little place to "the love of the good" and was overly concerned with the "organization of science," and therefore left them morally rudder-less. The question if O'Donovan's reading of Dooyeweerd is plausible is necessarily ancillary to this project and will not be resolved in this thesis. Nonetheless, it may be asked if O'Donovan's critique applies to Bavinck.

The culminative construction of this thesis suggests Bavinck's vision of faith formed into a world-and lifeview (with attention to God, self, and world) in conversation with "the highest good" is the exact balm that O' Donovan is seeking in the neo-Calvinists.¹⁵⁴ At minimum, the way Bavinck relates his dogmatics and ethics — a theological program indexed by Romans 11:36, tectonically shaped by theological anthropology (the movement of *passive* to *active*), and planted within a Christian world- and lifeview in which, the whole is oriented by the conception of the highest good — suggests he evades O'Donovan's criticism on this point.

At this point, I will bring Xu's observations into the discussion. In "Gloriously Intertwined," Xu makes three observations about the arrangement of Bavinck's dogmatics and ethics. One was already mentioned above. Xu also notes that: "Dogmatics and Ethics are not absolutely independent of each other."¹⁵⁵ I have substantiated this point robustly through our exploration of the theological encyclopaedia and theology as single organism. Dogmatics and ethics, therefore, are intertwined and develop alongside each other. In this same point, Xu argues that the distinction between the two disciplines is only distinguished by the practitioner. Therefore, formally the two disciplines are distinct according to the subject. This is partially correct in that Bavinck does position the disciplines as distinct on account of the

¹⁵² See Eglinton, "To Transform and to Transcend: The neo-Calvinist relationship of church and cultural transformation," in *The Kuyper Center Review*, Vol. 3, eds. Gordon Graham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 163-184.

¹⁵³ O'Donovan, *Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 112-113.

¹⁵⁴ Of course, Bavinck did not neglect the organization of the sciences as we see in his theological encyclopaedia.

¹⁵⁵ Xu, "Gloriously Intertwined," 88-94.

subject as *passive* or *active*. Nonetheless, from the perspective of the object, ethics (a depiction of the Christian life in service to God) and dogmatics (a description of the knowledge of God given in his divine activity) are also conceptually distinct. Ethics and dogmatics cannot be simply distinct on account of the subject. Xu corrects this with his next observation.

Xu arranges his final observation — “Dogmatics and ethics are not identical; neither is subordinate to the other” — around three points, oriented around “an *exitus-reditus* scheme – from God, through humans, and to God.”¹⁵⁶ At the outset, we might note how Xu sees within Bavinck’s theological framework the Romans 11:36 motif that I have identified in this thesis. Xu’s three points are that, (i) dogmatics precedes ethics, (ii) that ethics is not subordinate to dogmatics, and (iii) that dogmatics is divine invitation and ethics is a human response. Dogmatics precedes ethics soteriologically and chronologically; knowledge precedes love. In this manner, ethics speaks out of dogmatics, rather than to dogmatics. A problem, I suggested would trouble O’Donovan above. Ethics is distinctly shaped by divine action while divine action remains impervious to human action. Humans ascend to God on account of God’s descent and God’s vivifying activity. Xu argues toward his second point that the *exitus-reditus* displays the two disciplines as having equal value. Human ascent to God in ethics only retains equal value because it is empowered by divine activity. All things are from, through, and to God. Finally, Xu uses the interplay between divine and human action to account for a complementary connection between human and divine realities.

Two further observations might be added then to Xu’s and O’Donovan’s. First, in dogmatics and ethics, the relationship between human origin and destiny are facilitated. In the *exitus-reditus* scheme we have a story of the movement of humans from, through, and to God. Humanity’s divine origin, kinship, and destiny is held together as theology moves from God’s descent toward man, man’s transformation through the vivifying activity of God, to man’s ascent to God. The relationship between dogmatics and ethics is not merely “anthropological.” Rather, it is a *theological* anthropology. That is, at its deepest level it conveys the dependence of humans on the free act of God’s gift to reunite the creature to their true destiny of love and worship in the kingdom of God. The history of divine love toward the creature becomes the creature’s own history as they ascend to the Father in love. The Christian life is founded by the Father, in election, redeemed and united to Christ by the Spirit, and in union with and enlivened by the same Spirit to live unto

¹⁵⁶ Xu, “Gloriously Intertwined,” 88-90.

God. As such, Bavinck's account of the relationship between dogmatics and ethics takes seriously that doctrine has import into life.

The second observation is that the pithy distinction between dogmatics and ethics as the difference between humans as *active* and *passive* seems to bear too much weight. In particular, (if we have O'Donovan in mind) — and we restrict our knowledge to this distinction — it does not indicate what makes this account of ethics distinctively Christian.¹⁵⁷ As such, I prefer Bavinck's other distinction of dogmatics as descent and ethics as ascent. While, Bavinck seems to draw upon the latter in his depictions of the relationship, it is the former that has more controlling role in his system. Moreover, the description then is largely anthropological and does not adequately include divine action, perhaps other than by what may be implied in the *passivity* of humans.

Can Bavinck offer anything to O'Donovan? I believe Bavinck could offer at least one significant dogmatic point for O'Donovan's account of Christian ethics. It relates to O'Donovan's theological conception of the relationship between faith and love in continual conversion and baptism. O'Donovan attends to baptism in *Resurrection and Moral Order* as he depicts the *telos* of the moral life. The faith, hope, love taxonomy which reappeared with force in his *Ethics as Theology* makes an appearance in this chapter.¹⁵⁸ O'Donovan argues that God's love provides cohesion to the agent's life as they are continually renewed in conversion.¹⁵⁹ For the reality of this transformation O'Donovan points to baptism in which the person's whole life is drawn into Christ's.¹⁶⁰

It is unclear, precisely what O'Donovan means by "continual conversion." He wavers between describing it as a decisive moment and occurring many times.¹⁶¹ Within Reformed theology there exists a distinction between conversion as the "first actual conversion" (*conversio actualis prima*) and daily, "continual conversion" (*conversio continua*), which is framed as repentance.¹⁶² It is perhaps this dual meaning that O'Donovan is leaning on for his account. If it is simply language, then greater clarity would have been

¹⁵⁷ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 11.

¹⁵⁸ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 245-264.

¹⁵⁹ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 256-257. He suggests this is not "continual conversion",

¹⁶⁰ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 258-259.

¹⁶¹ O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 257-259.

¹⁶² See for example Calvin, *Institutes*, Book III, c.3, 3; *RD IV*, 150-151, 173-174.

provided by expressing the distinction as conversion and continued repentance. Nonetheless the continued nature of it becomes confused by his emphasis on baptism. This leads me to believe that is truly the “first actual conversion” that O’Donovan imagines as being repeated time and time again. As such baptism points to the activity of God’s redemptive grace and provides public assurance that the individual too has encountered it.

This is where Bavinck’s *active/passive* program would suggest a small shift. Rather than leaning on baptism solely — to express the reality of conversion and the continued activity of the Christian life — Bavinck would suggest drawing upon the Lord’s Supper. Baptism may then be utilized to sign and seal that initial decisive divine encounter with God in regeneration, which provides cohesion to the life of the agent, as one who has encountered God’s grace. Bavinck would commend O’Donovan to draw upon the Lord’s Supper to provide the ongoing cohesion as the agent participates in an ongoing encounter with God’s grace. In this way, O’Donovan could draw upon the continuity the sacraments provide the agent overall as baptism signifying their incorporation into the body of Christ and the Lord’s Supper signifying God’s continued supplication and nourishment toward those fellowshiping with Christ.¹⁶³ Unity then is provided to the agent, not as one who must always look to their historical past in baptism, but even now in the present, the agent may participate in a sacrament which has theological significance for the past, present, and future.

Overall, I believe O’Donovan would be largely pleased with Bavinck’s “multi-piled” systematic theology home, but like any home buyer desire to do some remodelling. Nonetheless, engaging with O’Donovan and Xu makes clear that Bavinck’s theological system as it arranges dogmatics and ethics has value for contemporary discussions.

¹⁶³ *GICR*, 191-193.

Appendix A— 1918 Speech on Predestination

[1] <i>Praedestinatie</i> 20 Febr. 1918	<i>Praedestinatie</i> Feb. 20, 1918
<p>I. Een v. de gewichtigste problemen: eenheid, veelheid, geest, stof, zijn, worden, substanties, feit en actualiteit, ik, niet- ik. eenheid: ik, zelfbew., pers. synthet. functie veelheid, niet ik, worden, veranderen, in onser geest, lichaam, wereld, streven naar eenheid in veelheid systeem, organisme, in gedachte, <i>globus intellectualis</i></p> <p>Pogingen tot vervoering, op organ., op mechan. Lichaam of tempel Brahm. Vedarel. Buddhism, maja, karma, Elea. Xen. Parm. Zeno, Spinoza, substantie Heraclitus actualiteit, worden Fichte Hegel Nietzsche. Pluralisme: atom. dynam. monadologie, energieën, electronen Theisme: a) derde boven de 2, synthese b) ik pers. eenheid, denken</p>	<p>I. One [of] the most significant problems: unity, diversity, spirit, matter, being, becoming, substance, fact and actuality, I, not-I. unity: I, self-conscious, pers., synthetic function diversity, not I, becoming, to change, in our spirit, body, world, striving for unity in diversity, system, organism, in thought, <i>globus intellectualis</i></p> <p>Attempts to transport, on organ. on mechan. Body or temple Brahm., Veda-rel. Buddhism, magic, karma, Elea. Xen. Parm. Zeno, Spinoza substance Heraclitus actuality, becoming Fichte, Hegel Nietzsche. Pluralism: atomistic, dynam., monadology, energy, electrons Theism: a) third above two, synthesis b) I pers. unity, thinking</p>
<p>[2] II. Eenheid en veelheid in de phys. wereld: hemel en aard, boven, beneden, oost & west, manl. & vrouwelijk, recht, links, licht-duister, dag-nacht overne tegenstellingen. psych: onderscheid in gaven vermogens brachten. Leven- levenloos. Dan: onbewust – bewust, Dan zelfbewust, bewust. Slapende droomende, wakende monad. ethisch: goed- kwaad. ΠΟΘΕΝ ΤΟ ΚΑΚΟΝ <i>Unde</i> <i>malum</i>. Verbijsterend probleem. Buddh: karma. Pyth. Plato: <i>praexistente</i> val. Origens id. Kant. Jul. Muller. Theosophie, karma. Pelag. Maar: a) menscheid zoo atoms, aggregaat. b) onbegrijpelijk, dat ieder viel c) overerving, erfzonde, samenhang der geslachten. Theisme: a) zonde kan niet buiten Gods raad zijn b) God staat er boven, kan zonde gebruiken.</p>	<p>[2] II. Unity and diversity in the physical world: heaven and earth, above, below, east & west, masculine & feminine, right, left, light, dark, day and night, other contradictions. psych: distinctions in offering, to power, to bring to life - lifeless. Than: unconscious con- scious, than self-conscious consciously, asleep dreaming, waking monad. Ethicals: good and evil. ΠΟΘΕΝ ΤΟ ΚΑΚΟΝ. <i>Unde</i> <i>malum</i> Astounding problem Buddh: Karma, Pyth., Plato: <i>praexistente</i> fall. Origens id. Kant. Jul. Muller. Theoso- phy, karma, Pelag. But: a) humanity as atomistic, aggregate b) incomprehensible that all fell c) hereditary, original sin, continuity of the descendants. Theism: a) sin cannot be outside God's council b) God is above it, can sin employ.</p>

<p>[3] III. Dit alles nog niet zoo erg, maar werkt hiernamaals door. Niet waar, <i>le farce est Jouée</i>. Onsterfelijkheid is Art. Mixtus, esich na de zedel. wereldorde; van zin, doel der wereld, van Gods rijk dat wordt.</p> <p>a.) Niemand durft zegge: 't is onverschillig wat en hoe gij leeft; wat get zijt</p> <p>b.) ernst van 't geweten, van <i>kateg.</i> Imperatief Kant rigorisme. <i>Ethos</i> hoog boven <i>physis</i></p> <p>c.) loon en straf. Alles berecht - onverschillig. Dat leven niet onverschillig voor 't hierna. Theosophie. Reincarnatie. Karma.</p> <p>Dus lot verschil: object van praed. Niet buiten Gods bestuur. <i>Quod ultimum est in executione primum est is intentione</i></p> <p>Praedest. niet los van bestuur Gods over alles <i>providentia</i>.</p> <p>In praed. ligt alles net zoo, als is de werkelijkheid, aanengeschakeld</p> <p>Gods wijze raad, idee en actie, komt in wereld tot openbaring; alles loopt op Gods glorie uit.</p>	<p>[3] III. This is not all that but, but continues to work through hereafter. Not true, <i>le farce est Jouée</i>. Immortality is a mixed article, demands after the ethical world-order; of meaning, purpose of the world, of God's kingdom that becomes.</p> <p>a.) No one dares to say: that it makes no difference what how you live; what you are.</p> <p>b.) seriousness of the conscience, of the categorical imperative Kant's rigorism. <i>Ethos</i> high above <i>physis</i>.</p> <p>c.) reward and punishment. All is judged - indifferent</p> <p>That life is not indifferent to the hereafter. Theosophy. Reincarnation. Karma.</p> <p>Thus a variety of fate: object of predestination. Not outside Gods governance. <i>Quod ultimum est in executione primum est is intentione</i></p> <p>Predest. is not separate from God's governance over everything <i>providentia</i></p> <p>In predest. everything stands the same, as it is in reality connected.</p> <p>God's wise council, idea and action, comes to revelation in the world; everything runs unto God's glory.</p>
<p>[4] IV. Praedest daarom ook niet in strijd met zeden bewustzijn, factoren, want</p> <p>a. Praed. niet besluit vooraf alleen, maar ook werkende, leidende idee en kracht. Eeuwigheid boven, ook in der tijd. Immanent.</p> <p>b. Uit Gods raad komt alles in die orde, verband voort, als in werkel. Dus ook zonde, zed. bew. berouw wroeging verharding, lastering</p> <p>c. In zonde ook een wet: de begeerlijkheid ontvangen hebbende. Sheol der zonde. Dat is vloek der booze daad</p> <p>V. Bron van zekerheid, troost</p> <p>a. Zekerheid in ons 2, maar niet rustend op ons zelf, maar op waarheid</p> <p>b. stemmend daarop dus onze wil ligt in het verlegde v. Gods wil, ligt van het Al.</p>	<p>[4] IV. Predestination is therefore also not in conflict with morality consciousness, factors, because</p> <p>a. Predest. does not determine everything beforehand, but also working, guiding idea and force. Eternity above, also in time. Immanent.</p> <p>b. Everything comes from God's council in that order, connected, as in reality. Thus also sin, moral conscience¹, repentance, contrition, hardening, blasphemy</p> <p>c. In sin also a law: the desire having received. Sheol of sin. That is a curse of evil action</p> <p>V. Source of certainty, comfort.</p> <p>a. Certainty in us 2, but not resting on ourselves, but upon truth.</p>

¹ The word is abbreviated her as "bew.", the word is likely either bewust or bewustheid, meaning consciousness or conscience.

<p>c. Histor bewijs: persoon en werk van X. dood en opstanding. <i>Stirb und werde</i></p> <p>d. troost: 't wordt eens alles goed</p> <p>e. moed, heroïsm</p> <p>f. aan den eindpaal van de tijden</p>	<p>b. Election, then, thus our will lies in the extension of God's will, of which all things lie.</p> <p>c. Historical proof: person & work of Christ death and resurrection. <i>Stirb und werde</i></p> <p>d. Comfort: everything will be good.</p> <p>e. Courage, bravery</p> <p>f. to the end post of time.</p>
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<i>Praedestinatie</i> 20 Febr. 18	<i>Praedestinatie</i> Feb. 20th, 1918
<p>[1] I. Eenheid foundat. Begrip (Eisler) ontspringend uit de zelfbew. over het ik, dat zelf één is, alles tot eenheid verbindt, (eenheids functie, naar eenheid streeft; bron van alle eenheids begripen is. Het Ik is zelf eenheid, identiteits in verleden en hede en toekomst. Niet – ik. Subj. eenheid dus; maar den ook obj. Eenheid, eenheid van een ding (Scholastiek <i>omne quod est ideo est quia unum est</i>), en dan weer <i>unitas puncti, corporis, homogenii, principiorum, substantie, componentium, intelligibilium</i>; of <i>unitas numeralis</i> en <i>transcendens</i>, of <i>metaph.</i> eenheid. En zoo tenslotte zijnleven, bewustzijn: slapend droomende wakende monad eenheid der wereld. Waarligt die in? In God (Theïsme, desime, panth. Atheïsme Volgens kant is 't ik ook schepper, bron van de obj. eenheid in de wereld, door zijn synthetisch functie; de eenheid van 't zelfbew. is bron van alle eenheid in de kennis; brengt samenhang in de kernelementen.</p>	<p>Unity is a foundational concept (Eisler)² springing out of the self-consciousness concerning the self, which is itself one, it connects all things unity (unity of function, striving for unity); the source of everything is the concept of unity. The I is itself unity, identity in the past and the present and the future. Not – I. Thus, subjective unity: but then also objective unity, the unity of a thing (Scholastic <i>omne quod est ideo est quia unum est</i>³), and then again <i>unitas puncti, corporis, homogenii, principiorum, substantie, componentium, intelligibilium</i>⁴ or <i>unitas numeralis</i> and <i>transcendens</i>⁵, or metaphysical unity. And finally it is in conscious-life, consciousness: sleeping, dreaming, waking monadic unity of the world. What does it reside in? In God (Theism, Deism, [Pantheism], Atheism). According to Kant, I am also the creator, the source of the objective unity in the world, through its synthetic function; the unity of the self-consciousness is the source of all unity in the intellect; bringing coherence to the central elements.</p>

[2] Eenheid sluit verscheidenheid, veelheid niet uit. Veelheid (Eisler) is een aantal van eenheden (monaden,	[2] Unity does not exclude multiplicity, diversity. Multiplicity (Eisler) is a variety of oneness (monads,
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² See Rudolf Eisler, *Wörterbuch Der Philosophischen Begriffe*, 307-313. Eisler (1873-1926) was a Kantian philosopher who was indebted to William Wundt and Herman Cohen.

³ Eisler, "Einheit" in *Wörterbuch*, I, 307-313, 308. Translation: *everything that is, is, insofar as it is one.*

⁴ Eisler, "Einheit" in *Wörterbuch*, I, 308. Translation: *the point of unity, of the body, uniformity, principles, substances, components intelligence.*

⁵ Eisler, "Einheit" in *Wörterbuch*, I, 308. Translation: *numerical unity and transcendent.*

<p>individua, atoma); en we nemen die veelheid om op grond , ervaring. Hoe beide eenheid, veelheid (verscheidenheid, ongelijkheid) te verenigen. Vele pogingen. Vanwaar de ongelijkheid, veelheid. Organ. En mechan. Beschouwing tegenover elkaar; beeld van groei en van bouw, van lichaam en tempel (Paulus)</p> <p>(Monisme)</p> <p>Van de eenheid gaan uit de Veda filosofie, volgens welke alles een is en de veelheid schijn, maja. Het Brahmanism dat 2 ontwikkelde op grondslag was 4 Veda (=wetenschap) boeken, vooral de Rig-veda. ‘T Brahm is een panth. stelsel: wereld ontvouwen van Brahm ‘t eene wezen grondslag v. alles; maar de werelds zoo apart bestaande is een kwaad, waarvan veelossing door ascese; wereld, ziel moet: ‘T Een terugkeeren. ‘T Berust dus op eeuwigen kringloop der dingen, des wereld, sluit en oneindige opvolging van geboorte en wedergeboorte, lijden en verlossing, dood en leven, terugkeer tot ‘t abs. wezen, onderdakeling van ‘t indiv. bestaan; scheiding der ziel van de materie oorzaak van ‘t indiv. bestaan is in ‘t Buddh. het</p>	<p>individual, atoms); and we call this multiplicity on the ground of experience. How both unity and diversity (multiplicity, difference) may be combined, there have been many attempts. From whence dissimilarity, diversity. Organism and mechanism are considered in opposition to each other; image of growth and construction, of body and temple (Paul).</p> <p>The unity of Monism is derived from the Veda philosophy, according to which all is one and diversity is an appearance, an illusion. Brahmanism was developed on the foundation of 4 Veda (=knowledge) books, especially the Rig-Veda. [Brahmanism] is a pantheistic concept: the world develops from Brahm, [the] one being, the foundation [of] all things; but the worlds distinct existence is an evil, wherein there is redemption through asceticism; world, soul must return to the one. [It] rests therefore on the eternal cycle of things, the world, a closed and infinite succession of birth and rebirth, suffering and redemption, death and life, return unto the Absolute being, from the shelter of individual existence; separation of the soul from the material origin of the individual existence is in Buddhism</p>
<p>[3] karma, de zedel acts (maar bestond die voor de schepselen? (Silbernagl, <i>Der Buddh.</i> 31¹), die nu lot voortdurend bepaalt, totdat men wil om te leven doodt.</p> <p>Zoo Eleat. School: ‘t zijnde is één, veelheid beweging is schijn. Heel de ziellijke waarneembare wereld is phaenomenaal. ‘t Al is in zijn natuur onveranderlijk, louter zijn, zonder worden. Xenophanes Parmenides, Zeno. Worden hier ‘t probleem. En zoo in alle panthe. stelsels; overgang van zijn tot worden, eenheid tot veelheid, God tot wereld is niet te vinden. ‘t Panth maaken zich van of door beelden: velaar en golven, zon en stralen. En dan af emanatie is God overvloeïend² zijn, of evolution (Hegel): <i>vernunft</i> is niet wordt alles.</p>	<p>[3] karma, the ethical acts (but did it exist before the creatures? (Silbernagl, <i>Der Buddhism</i>, 31), which now continually determines my destiny, until one who desires to live, passes away.</p> <p>Thus, the Eleatics school: [The] being is one, movement is an appearance of diversity. The entirety of the spiritual and visible world is phenomenal. Although in its being its nature is uniform, pure being, without becoming. Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno. Becoming is [the] problem here. Thus, it is also in all [Pantheistic] systems; a transition cannot be found from being to becoming, unity to diversity, God to the world. Pantheism constructs itself from or through images, sound and wave, sun and rays. And then from</p>

¹ Isidor Silbernagl, *Der Buddhismus: nach seiner Entstehung, Fortbildung und Verbreitung* (Munchen: Verlag von E. Stahl, 1891), 31.

² Above this Bavinck has written: “Spinoza’s substance” (See also *GD2* II, 144; *RD*, II, 155).

<p>Aan tegengestelde zijde gaat men uit van veelheid, [van voortdurende verandering, wisseling]³ worden. Heraclitues laste alle zijn op in een eeuwig worden, zoowel natuur en geschiedenis. Niet substantialiteit maar actualiteit, en zoo J. G. Fichte, Hegel, Wundt, Nietzsche. Het zijnde is dus eeuwige werkzaamheid, scheppend doen, eeuwig produceren, kracht, wil (Schopenh.), drang, drift.</p>	<p>emanation to the abundance of God's being or development (Hegel): <i>vernunft</i> is nothing, becoming all things.</p> <p>On the opposite side, one proceeds out of diversity, [out of continuous change, fluctuation], becoming. Heraclitus joined all being up in an eternal becoming, both nature and history. Not substantively but actually, as did J.G. Fichte, Hegel, Wundt, Nietzsche. The being is thus eternal activity, creative activity, eternally producing, power, will (Schopenhauer), impulse, passion.</p>
<p>[4] <u>Pluralism</u> gaat van de veelheid uit. Werkelijkheid is veelheid van <i>individua, atoma</i>, zelfst. wezens van elkaar abs. gescheiden. Die wezens kunnen nu weer matter op spirit. opgevat. Dan krijgt men 't atomisme (mater/ in de oudheid v. Democritus. Atomen in ledig ruimte, gescheiden, gelijk in kwaliteit, alleen onderscheiden in vorm, [ἀπαθης] niet kunnende lijden, eeuwig in beweging. Dingen zijn verbindingen v. atomen, mechanisch, aggregaat. Toeval⁴ (gelijk bij panth: noodlot εἰμερμενη)⁵.</p> <p>Geestelijk eenheden, <i>henaden</i>, monaden, monadologie, moniden meer psychisch, eerstelijk gedacht bij Leibniz. Niet ééne substantie (Spinoza) maar vele; niet mater, on-deelbare (atomisme), maar onlich.⁶ onuitgebeurd punctueel, eenvoudig psychisch, onvernietigbaar in zz. metaphunter, points de substance, onveranderlijk, zonder venster, innerlijk & ontwikkelend tot bewustzijn, met soort bew. en wil. En zoo in nieuweren tijd bij Lotze, I.H. Fichte, Ulrici, Busse, enz. En dan na mater, opgevat als wils acties (Wundt), energieen (Ostwald),</p>	<p>[4] <u>Pluralism</u> proceeds out of the diversity. Reality is a diversity of <i>individua, atoma</i>, independent beings absolutely distinct from each other. Those beings can again now be understood as material or spiritual. Then one gets Atomism (matter) in the ancient times of Democritus. Atoms in empty space, separated, equal in quality, distinguished only in form, ἀπαθης,, unable to suffer, eternally in motion. Things are compounds of atoms, mechanical, aggregate chance (like in pantheism: destiny εἰμερμενη).</p> <p>Spiritual unity, <i>henaden, monaden</i>, monadology. Monaden were more psychological, initially conceived by Leibniz. Not one substance (Spinoza) but many: not matter, undivided (atomism), but incorporeal, undepicted diversity, punctual, simple, psychological, indivisible in itself, metaphysical points, simple substances, unchanging, without windows, intrinsic and developing into consciousness, with a sort of conscience and will. And thus in more recent times by Lotze, I.H. Fichte, Ulrici, Busse, etc. And then after</p>

³ This bracketed section is written in-between the lines and seems to fit best here in the sentence. Bavinck has written also in the same marginalia “Nergens, rust stilstand. Niet 2 keer baden in zelfde stroon rust is schijn, **παντα ρε** (English: Rest is nowhere. It is not bathing twice in the same stream. Rest is an appearance (everything flows)). This is a phrase commonly attributed to Heraclitus (535-475 BC).

⁴ In the margin above Toeval is written *fortuna*.

⁵ In the margin above εἰμερμενη is written *fatum*.

⁶ In the margin above onlich. is written verschillend, meaning “different.”

<p>dynamiden (Hartmaan), uitgangspunten v. beweging en doel, kracht centre (Liebmann), cf. electronen, ionen (Hale Vries).</p> <p>Niet twee, maar drie: Derde hoogere synthese, leven bevestigd. Christ. Christ. geeft oplossing in wijsheid en wil Gods: eenheid en veelheid in 't denken gegeven, systeem; als wereld nu systeem v. gedachten is, is eenheid, veelheid gegeven in haar; in 't aan zijn geroepen door Gods <u>wil</u>, zedelijke wil, heilig.</p>	<p>matter, the will understood as action (Wundt), energetics (Ostwald), dynamics (Hartmaan), the starting point of motion and purpose, force centre (Leibmann), cf. electrons, ions (H. de Vries).</p> <p>Not two, but three: Third higher synthesis, life confirmed. [Christianity] provides the solution in the wisdom and will of God: unity and diversity in [the] thinking given system; if the world is presently a system [of] thought, its unity, diversity are given in her; called into being through Gods will, his holy, moral <u>wil</u>.</p>
<p>[5] wijl geen van beide beredigt, bemiddeling gezocht tusschen zijn en worden, eenheid, veelheid. Zoo 't Buddhisme met het karma. Pythagoras Plato met veelheid v. ideen, gecentraliseerd in de idee van 't goede, en met <i>praexistenten</i>, gelijke zielen, wegens val in den kerken van 't lichaam geplaatst.</p> <p>II Maar eenheid en veelheid in phys. wereld al groot, schokt ons niet. In psych. wereld reeds meer: was onderscheid in gaven en krachten, verstand, gemoed, hart wils kracht. Nog meer schokkend in relig-eth. wereld: goed en kwaad, rechts en onrecht boozen & goeden enz. Van maar deze veelheid in de eenheid van 't menschelijk geslacht. <i>Unde malum. Ποθεν το κακον?</i> Antwoord gezocht door 't Buddh in het karma (zie boven). Door Pythagoras - Plato in veelheid v. ideeën gecentraliseerd in idee van 't goede en veelheid van gelijke zielen <i>praexistent</i>, die vielen en toe straf geplaatst werden in lichaam al naar gelang van haar boosheid (steeds door, na den dood: reincarnatie). Door Plutonis, Gnostics in de verbinding des zielen, lichte elementen, met de mater die oorzaak v. onderscheid is. Door Origenes met <i>praexistente</i> zielenleer. Door Kant met intelligible vrijheid daad. Door Julius Müller etc.</p> <p>Alleen hebben dit gemeen, dat zij 't <u>ethisch</u> onderscheid</p>	<p>[5] "While neither of them satisfies mediation sought between being and becoming, unity and diversity. Thus Buddhism with Karma, Pythagoras, Plato, with the diversity of the idea, centralized in the idea of the good, and with the <i>pre-existence</i> of like souls, are placed in the sanctuary of the body."⁷</p> <p>II. But unity and diversity in the expansive [physical] world does not shock us. In the [psychological] world, even more: there was a distinction in gifts and powers, intellect and mind, heart and will-power. Yet more shocking in the [religious-ethical] world: good and evil, justice and injustice, evil people and good people, etc. But from this diversity in the unity of [the] human race. <i>Unde malum. Ποθεν το κακον?</i>⁸ The answer is sought by [Buddhism] in Karma (see above). By Pythagoras and Plato in diversity [of] ideas centralized in the idea of the good and diversity of equal <i>praexistenten</i> souls, who fell and were punished in their bodies according to her anger (always through, after death: reincarnation). Through Plutonis and Gnostics in the connection of souls, light elements, with the material origin, which is the cause [of] the distinction. By Origen with his study on the <i>praexistente</i> of the soul. By Kant with intelligible freedom of action. By Julius Müller etc.</p> <p>They all have this in common, that [the] <u>ethical</u> distinction</p>

⁷ This paragraph was crossed out in the original manuscript.

⁸ Translation: *Origin of Evil*

<p>[6] willen afleiden uit ethische daad uit wils daad. Cf. het Pelag., dat zonde niet afleidt uit voorwereldlijk daad, maar uit val v. iedere mensch apart, elk mensch ethisch tot een Adam maakt. Maar a.) ‘t menschel. geslacht wordt zoo opgelost in individeren, aggregaat, b) ‘t eth. gebied wordt totaal gescheiden van ‘t physische en psychische. Totaal geïsoleerd, c) onbegrijpelijk, dat dan <u>ieder</u> gevallen is zonder uitzondering, d) blind voor ‘t feit van der eth. samenhang des menschen, voor de erfelijkheid ook van psych. en eth. eigenschappen, e) is in strijd met alles vroomen belijdenis : wij allen hebben gezondigd, zijn gelijk de anderen, en bevens met die van de genade, door elk vroomen erbeid in ‘t gebed. Niet de Farizeer, maar de Tollenaar.</p> <p>‘T Christ geeft hier verzoening en oplossing, in de wijsheid v. Gods raad. Zulk een ontzettend verschijnsel als de zonde, die in alles inrit enz, kan niet aan Gods raad, voor onttrekken zijn. Dan ware de wereld buiten zijn voors. Dan willekeur, toeval alom; einde en doel des wereld onzeker. Alle menschen zelfstandig, autonoom, handeled naar willekeur. Atomisme, pluralisme, anarchie.</p>	<p>[6] they want to derive from an ethical act, from an act of the will. Cf. Pelagius⁹, that sin is not derived from an act at the beginning of the world but from the fall [of] each man, making each man ethically into Adam. But then, a.) [the] human race becomes thus dissolved into aggregate individuals, b.) [the] ethical domain is thus totally separated from [the] physical and psychologically. Utterly isolated, c.) it is incomprehensible, then that <u>everyone</u> has fallen without exception, d.) it is blind on account of [the] reality of the [ethical] connection of humanity,¹⁰ for the hereditary and also of their own [psychological] and [ethical] attributes, e.) [it] is in a conflict with every pious confession: we all have sinned, are like the others, and tremble with that one of grace, recognized through every honourable pious prayer.¹¹ Not the Pharisee, but the tax collector.¹²</p> <p>Christianity here gives reconciliation and resolution, in the wisdom of God’s council. Such a terrible phenomenon such as sin, which enters into all things, etc., cannot be extracted from God’s council. Then the world would be beyond his control. Then randomness, chance everywhere, the end and purpose of the world uncertain. All people would be independent, autonomous, acting as they please. Atomism, pluralism, anarchy.</p>
<p>[7] III. Nu ware dit alles nog zoo erg niet, als òf met des dood alles uit is, òf allen na den dood zalig werden. Doch dat is niet zoo. <i>La farce est Jouée</i> is omvaar. Niemand is daar gerust op. Onsterfelijkheid staat vast, is element van nat. religie; de mensch is voor de</p>	<p>[7] III. Now this would have not been all so bad, if either with death everything is through, or all would be delivered after death. But that is not the case. <i>La farce est Jouée</i>, is over.¹³ Nobody is comfortable with that. Immortality stands fixed, it is an element of [natural]</p>

⁹ Cf. *RD II*, 347-355, 376-382.)

¹⁰ In the marginalia, Bavinck notes that ethics then becomes “alleen navolging” [English: only imitation]. Indicating that ethics must be more than imitation.

¹¹ Romans 3:23

¹² Luke 18:9-14.

¹³ The phrase “*The farce is over*” is from French Renaissance humanist François whose apparent last words were “I am going to seek the great perhaps; draw the curtain, the farce is over.” Rabelais writing is often associated with crudeness, opulence, and over-indulgence.

<p>eeuwigheid bestemd. En was 't tweede aangaat: men durft nog wel zeggen: 't doel er niet toe, wat ge gelooft, maar niemand: 't doel er niet toe, hoe gij leeft, <u>wie</u> en <u>wat</u> ge zijt! Dat kan niemand zeggen, die eerst maakt met zijn geweten, met de zedewet met den kateg. imperatief, met 't recht der zedewet, met het wezenlijk onderscheid v. goed & kwaad, met de ervaring dat er goeden en boezen, rechts en onrechts zijn. Ook door Kant, en door moderneren op vergad van mod. Theologen is dit erkend. We moeten 't aanvaarden, dat er hierna maals verschil v. lotsbedeling bestaat, in veel grooter verscheidenheid dan de termen hemel en hel aanduiden, want graden zijn er eindeloos in hemel en hel, in loon en straf. Verscheidenheid blijft.</p> <p>Welnu, dit zoo zijnde, moet er een <i>praedestinatie</i> zijn, een raad Gods gaande niet alleen over de ongelijkheid is dit, maar ook in 't Toek. leven; eene verkiezing en eene verwerping. Maar praedest. niet op zich maar in verband met raad en voort., ook heel de wereld, de physisch, de ethische en de geestelijke</p>	<p>religion; man is destined for eternity. And concerning the second, one dares to say: "in the end it doesn't matter what you believe," but no one, says: "the end does not matter, it is how you live, <u>who</u> and <u>what</u> you are!" That no one can say, who first deals with his conscience, with the moral law, with the categorical imperative¹⁴, with the justice of the moral law, with the real distinction of good and evil, with the experience that here is a good and evil, justice and injustice. This is recognized by Kant, and by moderns at the meeting of the modern theologians. We must hereafter accept, that there is hereafter a difference of the lottery of existence, in much greater diversity than the terms heaven and hell indicate, because there are endless degrees in heaven and hell, in reward and punishment. Diversity remains.</p> <p>Well then, this being the case, there must be a praedestinatie, a council of God that is not only about disparity in this, but also in the future life; an election and repudiation. But predestination not on its own, but in connection with the council and foreknowledge, also of the entire world, the physical, the ethical, and the spiritual</p>
<p>[8] wereld, (2 wereld der gelovigen, zaliger), Natuurorde, zedel. Orde, geestelijke orde: <i>physis, ethos spiritus</i> (pneumatische). Te samen één raad, één besluit, ééne godd. conceptie van 't al.</p> <p>Voorts deze raad Gods niet eenzijdig op bevatte als stilliggend besluit in de eeuwigheid, en dan wereld als uitvoering, ontw. daarvan (deistisch, Hastie), maar als wilsgedaan, tevens, als actief, kracht in werkend op alles sprinkvader v. alle gebeurt in nat. en gesch. Eeuwigheid is tijd, alomtegenw. In ruimte, God in schepsel. In Hem leven we en bewegte we ons. God draagt alles door</p>	<p>[8] world, (two worlds of believers, the living and the passed on), natural order, moral order, spiritual order: <i>physis, ethos, spiritus</i> (pneumatic). Together one council, one decision, one [divine] conception of it all.</p> <p>Furthermore, this council of Gods was not conceived as a one-sided summary at rest, then stretched out into eternity, with the world as the execution, becoming conscious of it (Deism, Hastie)¹⁵, but is an act of the will, at the same time, a dynamic force in operation on all, the fountainhead of everything that happens in nature and in history. Eternity in time, omnipresent in</p>

¹⁴ Directly above this in the margin Bavinck has written "Kant's rigorism."

¹⁵ Bavinck is likely referencing this section of William Hastie (See William Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 173-177). Hastie suggests that Reformed Theology improves upon the imperfections of the theological positions of the 20th century, while being in harmony with their ideals, namely the philosophies of agnosticism, deism, pantheism, and pessimism

<p>‘t woord zijner kracht. Alles bestaat saam in Hem. Rede - wil grondslag en wortsel v. alles (Hegel en Schopenh. vereenigd.)</p> <p>En dan als raad: idee en wil van een wijs heilig rechtvaardig God, die zz. rechtvaardige zal, op wier wij vertrouwen kunnen.</p>	<p>space, God in creation. In Him we live and move.¹⁶ God bears all things by the word of his power.¹⁷ All things exist together in him.¹⁸ Reason - Will the foundation and roots of all things (Hegel and Schopenhauer) combined.</p> <p>And then as a council: idea and will of a wise, holy, and righteous God, who will justify himself, on whom we can rely.</p>
<p>[9] IV Maar deze <i>praedestinatie</i> is dikwerf misverstaand, en moet goed opgevat. Men kan er licht een caricatuur van maken, en moet er voorzichtig met omgaan. Geen curieuze onderzoekingen (Dordsche Synode).¹⁹ Ter toelichting dus: a) de <i>praedest.</i> is niet besluit, dat als Damocles zwaard²⁰ boven ‘t hoofd der menschen veels, en op gegeven oogenblik, willekeurig, neervalt plotseling. Maar ‘t is de raad en de wil van een God, die niet alleen transcendent, doch ook immanent is en <u>alle dingen</u>, alle gebeuren draagt en voortbrengt. b) de wijsheid en de tijd niet alleen een vóór en na, maar de eeuwigheid is in den tijd, klopt in polsslag van ieder oogenblik. c) in den raad Gods ligt alles precies zoo ineen²¹ geschackled, geordend, gesystematizeerd als in de werkelijkheid, dus ook ‘t verband van oorzaken, gevolgen, van geloof en zaligheid, van ongeloof, ellende. d) de redelijke, zedelijke natuur v. d. mensch, zijn zedelijk bewustzijn, rede, geweten, plicht besel, verantwoordelijkheid, berouw, bekeering, geloof enz. staan in den raad Gods in ‘t zelfde verband, als in werkelijkheid. De raad Gods is grondslag, dragen, bron van die zedelijke en</p>	<p>[9] IV. But this <i>praedestinatie</i> is often misunderstood and must be understood correctly. One can easily make a caricature of it, and it must be handled with care. No curious investigations (Synod of Dort). To explain, thus: a.) [<i>praedestinatie</i>] is not decreed, such as Damocles’ sword, above [the] heads of many men and at any given moment, arbitrarily, suddenly strikes down. But [it] is the council and will of a God, who is not only transcendent, but is also immanent in <u>all things</u>, and who supports and brings forth all that happens. b.) Wisdom and time are not only before and after, but eternity is in time, it beats in the pulse of every moment. c.) in the council of God everything is arranged precisely, jointed, orderly, systematized, as in reality, thus also from the beginning of the causes and effects, of faith and salvation, belief and misery. d.) Morality, the moral nature [of humanity], his moral consciousness, reason, conscience, sense of duty, responsibility, repentance, conversion, faith, etc. stand in the council of God in [the] same connection as in reality. The council of God is the foundation, support, source of morality, and</p>
<p>[10] en zedelijk natuur van den mensch e) de wereld is in heel haar lengte en breedte een ontvouwing van de gedachten Gods, van eeuwige ideren. Ook van de godd.</p>	<p>[10] of the moral nature of man. e.) The world in her length and breadth is an unfolding of the thoughts of God, of eternal ideas. Also, of the divine idea [of] sin,</p>

¹⁶ Acts 17:28

¹⁷ Heb. 1:3

¹⁸ Col. 1:17

¹⁹ This is also present in *Reformed Dogmatics*. See *GD2*^e, II, 369-370; *RD* II, 360.

²⁰ Bavinck also references Damocles sword in *Reformed Dogmatics*. See *GD2*^e II, 414-415; *RD* II, 396.

²¹ In the margin above ineen is written “even rijk gevarieerd” “equally richly varied.”

<p>idee van²² de zonde, die zelf om zoo te zeggen haar eigen wet heeft. Dat is de vloek den booze daad, dat ze altijd weer booze daden voortbrengen moet. Wie de zonde doet, is er wordt steeds meer haar staaf. De begeerlijkheid ontvangen hebbende baart zonde en de zonde des dood. Er is in de zonde een process, leidende tot verharding (Farao), zelfs tot lastering van den H. Geest. f.) Maar omdat we te doen hebben met een persoonlijk God, met een wijzen heiligen raad, daarom geen fatalisme en geen Toeval, geen wanhoop en geen willekeur.²³ Maar vertrouwen, dat alles toch aan het einde goed zal zijn, zooals God het wil. g.) ‘T is ook niet panth. (Hastie 252)²⁴ God niet auteur van de zonde (253)²⁵ zonde geen entiteit; menschel. vrijheid wordt gehandhaafd, maar vrije wil geen <i>lib. indifferentiae</i>²⁶ onderstelligheid, abs. neutr.; vrijheid sluit alleen dwang uit (257)²⁷, in handelen naar eigen natuur.</p>	<p>which itself has its own law, so to speak. That is the curse of the evil action, that she must always bring forth evil actions again and again. Whoever commits the sin is increasingly becoming their own rod. Desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin, and sin brings forth death.²⁸ There is within sin a process, leading to death (Pharaoh), even to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. f.) But because we are dealing with a personal God, with a wise, holy council, therefore not fatalism, and not coincidence, no despair, and nothing arbitrary. But trust, that everything will be good in the end, just as God wills it to be. g.) [It] is also not pantheism (Hastie 252). God is not the author of sin (253), sin is not an entity; human freedom is maintained, but free will not of the <i>libertas indifferentiae</i> hypothesis, absolute neutral; freedom excludes only coercion from (257), in acting according to your own nature.</p>
<p>[11] V. Daarom tenslotte is deze belijdenis bron van zekerheid en troost. a) Wij menschen hebben vóór alles zekerheid v. noodzaak zekerheid aang. de wereld en ons zelve. We kunnen die niet krijgen uit ons zelve, zijn te onvast, niet door komt, wetenschap, goede werkn, maar alleen door vast vertrouwen, geloof. We hebben</p>	<p>[11] V. That is why finally, this confession is a source of certainty and comfort. a) We humans, prior to everything given certainty, essential certainty [of] the world and ourselves. We cannot get this out of our own selves, we are too unstable, it does not come through science, good works, but only through firm</p>

²² Word is illegible, but likely “van.”

²³ In the marginalia, Bavinck writes “Calvijn bij Hastie 253.” Hastie writes of Calvin, “The objection that the system was a form of *fatalism* was taken up and clearly refuted by Calvin. He showed that the his a doctrine, so far from being identical with the ancient view of an unintelligent, necessary Fate working out and determining all events, was founded upon a living faith in the personal God who foresaw and foreordained all events by his perfect intelligence and wisdom.” This quote appears in a larger section dealing with common objections to “The Principle of Absolute Predestination.” Albeit in a different order, Bavinck follows Hastie’s objections, in this section. This is the second objection Hastie refutes, that of fatalism. (See Hastie, Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church*, 253.)

²⁴ Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church*, 252.

²⁵ Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church*, 253.

²⁶ This is a Kantian term. Kant defines it as in the *Metaphysics of Morals* as “But freedom of choice cannot be defined- as some have tried to define it – as the ability to make a choice for or against the law (*libertas indifferentiae*), even though choice as a *phenomenon* provides frequent examples of this in experience” (See Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.

²⁷ Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church*, 257.

²⁸ James 1:15

<p>ze in dezen tijd van twijfel, onvastheid, vereenigen stelsels, vooral noodig b) Hoe krijgen we die? Modern uitgedenkt: doordat we vast overtuigd zijn, dat ons denken, kennen, gevoelen, willen handelen ligt in de lijn van de wereld ontwikkeling in tune is with the infinite (Trine)²⁹, in harmonie met het al, eenswillend met God in zijn raad, vooreeuwigheid Dus vastelijk gelooven, dat de wereld zin heeft, ondanks allen onzin, doel ondanks alle toeval, besteming ondanks al 't onredelijk, nu ook is dezer oorlog.</p> <p>c) Bewijs daarvoor. Er zijn er vele, ook van wetensch. aard. Maar het relig. bewijs bij uitnemendheid is de persoon van X en zijn werk. Wat was zijn werk? De schikking van kon. Gods, tegenover rijk v. wereld en Satan. Welnu, dat is 't doel Gods met de wereld. Jezus was Gods eigen Zoon. Zijn woord 't woord Gods. Bij Hem ons aan</p>	<p>trust, faith. We have it in these times of doubt, instability, to unify schemes, when it is particularly needed. b) How do we get this? From modern thought: because we are firmly convinced that our thinking, knowing, feeling, and wiling actions lie in in the line of the development of the world, <i>in tune with the infinite</i> (Trine), in harmony with it all, being of one will with God in his council, for all eternity. Thus, I firmly believe that despite all of the poppycock - the world makes sense, despite all chance -purpose, despite all the irrationality – destiny, now also is this war.</p> <p>c)Previous proof. There are many proofs also of scientific nature. But in the end the ultimate religious proof is the person of Christ and his work. What was his work? The settlement of God's kingdom, against the empire of this world and Satan. Well then, that is God's purpose for the world. Jesus was Gods only Son. His word, the word of God. By Christ</p>
<p>[12] sluitend, ons latende opnemen in zijn rijk, dat is, geloovende in zijn naam - dan zijn we zeker, dat we zijn denken handelen als God wil, in de lijn van Gods wereldbestuur.</p> <p>d) dat geloof geeft zekerheid voor de wereld, en ook pers. voor ons zelve. Geen nood; en zijn zeker, dat niets ons scheiden zal van de liefde Gods in X; we zijn kinderen en erfgenamen (Rom. 8). Zoo God voor ons is, wie dan tegen!</p> <p>e) en door kennen, zullen we kloeke daden doen.³⁰ De belijdenis der praed. bevestigt een zedelijk, actief leven. De gesch. bewijst dat. Ritschl terecht tegen Rome: we moeten eerst kinderen Gods <u>zijn</u>, dan gaan</p>	<p>[12] connecting us to him, allowing us to partake in his kingdom, that is believing in his name – then we are certain, that we are thinking, performing, as God wills in line with God's governance of the world.</p> <p>d) That faith provides certainty of the world, and also personally for us. Do not worry; and be certain, that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ; we are children and heirs (Romans 8). If God is for us, who can be against us!</p> <p>e) and through knowing, we shall do bold deeds. The confession of <i>praedestinatie</i> fosters a moral, active life. History testifies of this. Ritschl rightly states against Rome: We first must be children of God, then we go</p>

²⁹ The italicized phrase was written originally in English and is an allusion to Ralph Waldo Trine's book. Trine was an American Philosopher who was a leading thinker of the New Thought movement. Bavinck references his book here as a reflection of moving with Christianity fulfilling the ideals of the New thought movement, but with a purer foundation. Above infinite in the marginalia is written "universe." See Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite* (Dodd: Mead, 1897).

³⁰ In the margin above Bavinck has written "heroic."

<p>we <u>werken</u> als kinderen Gods. Niet om loon, maar uit dankbaarheid. Niet als knecht, maar als kind.</p> <p>f) en dan troost in omstandigheden, Heid. cat. vr. 1; in leven en streven, voor tijd en eeuwigheid. Geen Luth. scheiding van vroomheid, leven, religie en wetenschap, Theol. en philos (cf. Ritschl) Hastie 11.³¹ Maar alles voort gaande onvouwing, ontplooiing van Gods glorie in zijne schepselen, van lager tot hooger, door natuur, ethos, genade heen. <i>Electie</i> de kroon! Daarom loopt alles uit. Zonde ellende zelf middel tot dit doel. Zoo komt Gods ontfermis uit. Uit door tot God alles. God alles in allen.</p>	<p>work as children of God. Not for wages, but out of gratitude. Not as slaves, but as children.</p> <p>f) And then comfort in circumstances, Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1: “in life and death’ for time and eternity. Not a Lutheran separation of piety and life, religion and science, Theology and philosophy (cf. Ritschl) Hastie 11. But all ongoing, unfolding, developing of God’s glory in his creatures, from lower to higher, through nature, ethos. <i>Electie</i> the crown! That is what all things proceed from. Sin and misery are means to this end. Just as God’s mercy proceeds out of it. From, through, and to God are all things. God is all in all.</p>
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³¹ Hastie, *Theology of the Reformed Church*, 10-11.

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