THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE IN THE TEACHING
OF
HERMAN BAVINCK

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Divinity
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Bastian Kruithof, M.A., D.D.
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TO

MARIE AND FRITZ

WHO

ENDURED, ENJOYED, AND INSPIRED

ALWAYS REMEMBERING THE THISTLE

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PREFACE

The late Professor R. M. Wenley, formerly of Edinburgh and Glasgow and for many years head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan, said to me, in the summer of 1928, that he considered Herman Bavinck the greatest theologian since Schleiermacher. And he added that we "Dutch boys" should translate him.

In 1952 Dr. W. H. v.d. Pol, a Roman Catholic, thinking especially of the Stone Lectures, compared Bavinck to Karl Barth.

These tributes are reinforced by many others, culminating in the evaluations and testimonials expressed in December, 1954, the centenary of Bavinck's birth.

Bavinck was a man of simple and sincere faith, and a theologian who throughout his life wrestled with the enduring problem of Christianity and culture. As a student of the Word and of the world he was moved by the thought that God continually has great things in store for us.

After a short chapter on Bavinck as a man and as a Christian scholar, this thesis moves on to what he considers the Christian approach to the problem of the relation of Christianity and culture. It then presents the sources of the Christian understanding of that relationship, viz., general and special revelation. There follows a study of the roots of culture, the
significance of the image of God, and the indispensability of the Christian religion. Because Bavinck held that culture is made possible by the divine grace, a chapter is devoted to his distinction between common or general, and special or saving grace. Although he and Kuyper found the distinction in Scripture and in Calvin, these men deepened and expanded the study of the issue, which in subsequent years became a matter of controversy.

Bavinck was interested in the meaning of Christianity for all spheres of life. For that reason a long chapter is given to areas of culture, revealing Bavinck's concern for the practical application of Christian principles.

Because one of the significant aspects of the persistent problem is the future of culture, there is also a presentation of Bavinck's thoughts on the purpose of culture in time and the fulfillment in eternity.

A summarizing chapter deals with a Christian view of the world and of life (a favorite phrase of Dutch Neo-Calvinists) in principle and in practice. This involves a study of Bavinck's influence in the Netherlands and in America.

Lastly, attention is paid to the criticism of Bavinck's teachings, manifesting itself more particularly in a lively debate on the issue of common grace and the meaning of the antithesis.

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to set Bavinck's
teachings within the framework of contemporary thinking. Also, because very few of his works have been translated into English, I have at times, as the many page references indicate, let Bavinck express his thoughts in his own way and in his own words, trusting that my translation will do justice to his thinking, and hoping that his ideas will illumine, rather than darken, counsel.

Bavinck's ideas on the relation of Christianity and culture are scattered through most of his works, and are often found in the least expected places. The exploration and the discovery have proved an adventure indeed.

I am most indebted to my University advisers, The Very Rev. John Baillie, Principal of New College, and to Professor D. M. G. Stalker of Old College for their wisdom, patience, critical analysis, and encouragement; to Dr. J. A. Lamb, Librarian, and Miss Erna R. Leslie, Assistant-Librarian, for their gracious helpfulness; to Mijnheer T. D. Smid, Librarian of the Free University in Amsterdam, and the library staff of the Municipal University of Amsterdam for furnishing me abundant research materials; to Dr. Harry R. Boer for his most helpful correspondence; to Dr. J. H. Bavinck, who read the first half of this thesis and encouraged me heartily; to Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, who offered me his time and the use of his library; and to my wife, who most carefully read the proof and reflected on the manner of expression.
While recalling benefactors and benefits, I must acknowledge the Giver of every good and perfect gift, who enriches heart and mind, and meets our imperfections with abounding grace.

The spelling and punctuation throughout this work, with the exception of direct quotations which are true to the source, follow American standards.

Edinburgh,
May 1, 1955.
CHAPTER I

THE MAN BAVINCK

1. His Life

In the Neo-Calvinistic movement which flourished in the Netherlands during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth the names of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck are inseparable. Far from having spent its influence, this movement still grips the hearts and minds of many in the Netherlands and in certain sections of the United States and Canada. The comprehensive view of life and the world worked out by these two giants of faith and intellect has left its mark on the convictions of scholars, ministers, teachers, tradesmen, laborers, on institutions and causes.

Emerson's familiar remark that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man"¹ may not be wholly acceptable to the Calvinist and may need correction, but it is no exaggeration to say that the names of Kuyper and Bavinck have been and still are mentioned in thousands of homes and in many churches.

Kuyper was older than Bavinck but they shared many years together in the cause of a revived Calvinism and died within less than a year of each other. At times there were minor differences between them; but there was also a mutual influence. They were independent spirits, each a scholar in his own right, each moved by a childlike trust, each aglow with a warm piety

¹ Self-Reliance.
that never became pietistic. In one of his chapters V. Hepp
speaks of Bavinck as the "Lofredenaar van Kuyper,"2 the
"Panegyrist of Kuyper."

Herman Bavinck was born on December 13, 1854 at Hoogeveen
in the province of Drente. His father, a clergyman, was a man
of quiet nature, and of great patience and tolerance. In all
but matters of faith and principle he was marked by shyness and
indecision. And he was a born teacher.

His mother, somewhat the opposite of his father, was a
woman who readily spoke her mind. But "in spite of all these
differences in which they complemented each other, they were
alike in piety, uprightness, and simplicity."3

Hereditary influences are not easily traced, and we must
speak with caution. Bavinck himself warns us in one of his
works that it is not so simple to explain a man. "Although
many traits of Bilderdijk's character are to be noticed in his
parents, that does not disclose the secret of his personality.
For in the first place the laws of heredity are still as good
as unknown to us, and in the second place continuity and heredity
do not destroy variability."4

Certainly there was much of his father and something of his

2 Dr. Herman Bavinck, pp. 238 ff. Cf. Bavinck's praise of Kuyper
as Christian political leader in Het Vierde Eender Eeuw,
1897.
3 Ibid., p. 13.
4 Bilderdijk Als Denker En Dichter, p. 21. Bilderdijk was an
evangelical Christian poet, a Calvinist, leader of the Revival
(Het Reveil), with something of a Goethean nature. Bavinck
refers to him as "a child of the eighteenth century, yet one
of the fathers of the nineteenth," p. 19, and considers him
"the most philosophical and most universal of our poets, and
at the same time the deepest and broadest." p. 147.
mother in Bavinck. Hepp says of the father that to the end of his life irresolution marked him except when it came to matters of principle and his personal faith. It is hardly less true of the son. But he resembled his father in his studious, careful, well-behaved, and reserved nature; and like his father he was a born teacher.

A spark of his mother's nature blazed up at times, though rarely. When Bavinck and his friend, Snouck Hurgronje, had finished their candidate's examination at Leiden, the former was told that he had passed *cum laude*. Convinced that his friend should have received it instead, Bavinck, white-faced, threw the announcement on the table and said that he could not accept it. He preferred to see it torn up. And with that, he left the room.

Hepp records a few other occasions on which the volcanic broke through the calm and generally reserved nature of Bavinck. All this is not very important except as an indication that Bavinck's irenic spirit could flash as well as glow with conviction.

Though Bavinck remained a passionate student all his life, he came to value the family above the school. This is evident

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6 There was a David-Jonathan relationship between the two, a friendship carried on in extensive correspondence. The scholarly interests and the differences in faith remind us of the letters that passed between J.H. Newman and William Froude. Hepp speaks of both men as "destined for a throne, a throne in the kingdom of science." p. 40. Hurgronje, an Arabic scholar, was at one time named successor to Robertson Smith at Cambridge, an offer he declined. Cf. J.H. Landwehr: *In Memoriam: Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck*, p. 15.
7 Hepp, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
from his book on the Christian family. On one of its pages he says, "In the family the incarnation of the human being takes place; here the foundation is laid for the formation of the future man and woman, of the father and the mother, of the member of society, of the citizen, of the subject in the kingdom of God."

For Bavinck, the scholar and the man of God, there is a language of the heart that is not learned from books. This conviction throbs through most of his works and is beautifully expressed in his devotional books, De Zekerheid Des Geloofs and De Offerande Des Lofs.

At the gymnasium at Zwolle Bavinck seems to have completed four years in three and to have stood out in knowledge, zeal and great simplicity.

He desired to go to Leiden to become acquainted with modern theology, but he spent one year at the Theological School at Kampen. After that he went to Leiden in 1874.

At Leiden students were criticising the teaching as one-sided scholarship with too little emphasis on the real meaning of the Word. Bavinck was not moved by the higher criticism of the New Testament by Scholten, but he was definitely influenced by Abraham Kuenen. He gradually overcame the influence of this careful, kind scholar whose personality and way with students remained a model for him. As a silent tribute Kuenen's portrait

9 Het Christelijke Huisgezin, p. 148.
hung in Bavinck's study at Kampen and Amsterdam for years.10

Bavinck's doctoral thesis dealt with the Ethiek van Zwingli. It is marked by an interest in problems and their solution and in its impartial scholarship reveals the impact of Kuenen. He lets Zwingli speak and offers only one criticism, viz., against his subjectivism for its dangerous consequences.12 At times Bavinck even defends Zwingli. In trying to explain Bavinck's uncritical attitude towards the Swiss Reformer, Hepp gives two reasons: the influence of Kuenen's method and a certain oneness of spirit between Bavinck and Zwingli.13

Although in his doctoral thesis Bavinck values Zwingli more than Calvin in some matters, later he says, "In the theology of Calvin the relation of nature and grace is more justly and more deeply understood than in that of Luther and Zwingli."14

After graduation Bavinck became minister of the Word at Franeker, Friesland in 1881. He felt that the time of critical inquiry was past and desired to follow and to defend his convictions.15 Yet at times he was uneasy and yearned for a simple faith.16 He pours out his heart to Hurgronje, "Criticism is not an end but always a means. I do not have a Lessing's nature; not the seeking but the possessing is the highest blessedness."17

10 Hepp, op. cit., p. 55.
11 Ibid., pp. 77, 78.
12 Ibid., p. 78.
13 Ibid., p. 80.
14 "De Algemeene Genade," p. 4.
15 Hepp, op. cit., p. 87.
16 Ibid., p. 88.
17 Ibid., p. 89.
In 1880, at the age of 26, Bavinck refused a professorship at the Vrije Universiteit at Amsterdam; but in 1882 he accepted the appointment as Docent at the Theological School at Kampen. His inaugural address was entitled: De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid. It reveals something of a turning point in Bavinck’s life.\(^{18}\) It stresses the objectivity of theology as based on Scripture itself.

Bavinck was not satisfied with Kampen. His ideal was a Christian university. He desired an environment that would satisfy his scientific and cultural needs.

Already in his student years Bavinck had felt the conflict between the cultural atmosphere of the school and the anti-cultural air of his home. That had something to do with his reserved nature under the parental roof. He was more open, lively, and fun-loving with others outside his home.

At Kampen he criticised the self-satisfaction of his circle. He was the enemy of false separatism. His oration on "De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk" is aimed at the sectarian spirit in his group. He speaks of pietistic, ascetic tendencies and maintains that the Reformation failed to grapple with cultural problems. Art, science, philosophy, the political and social life have never rightly taken up the principles of the Reformation.\(^{19}\)

It is this zealous interest in the cause of Christianity and culture and the problems involved that marks Bavinck’s life.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 121. Bavinck declined two more offers from the V.U. in 1889 and 1893.

and teaching.

On July 2, 1891 Bavinck married Mej. J.A. Schippers. A daughter was born to them in 1894. This only child was married in 1918. Bavinck lived to see the birth and baptism of his grandson in 1920.

In response to an invitation from the Presbyterian Alliance of Toronto, Canada, and the urging of friends in the United States, Bavinck made his first trip to America in 1892. Before going to Toronto he visited churches in Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa, and met friends with whom he had become acquainted in the Netherlands. He revelled in their libraries. His lecture in Toronto was entitled: "The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Situation of Communities and People."

In 1894 Bavinck delivered his lecture on De Algemeene Genade. This address, followed later by Kuyper's exhaustive three-volume work on the subject, influenced greatly the development of Reformed thinking in the Netherlands. Both men militated against a false separatism which withdrew nature from the sphere of divine influence.

Bavinck's desire to teach at a university was fulfilled in 1902 when he received the appointment of professor at the Vrije Universiteit at Amsterdam. His inaugural address was entitled: "Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid." Two years later he delivered his rectoral address: "Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing." In

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20 De Gemeene Gratie, originally appearing as articles in De Heraut.
21 Hepp, op. cit., p. 236.
the same year there appeared his study on *Christelijke Wetenschat*.

Throughout his teaching career the indefatigable preparations for his classes did not stand in the way of his many lectures, his preaching, his editorials, the preparing of his four-volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* and other books for the press, his travels on the continent, and his activity in practical affairs of church, school, politics, and society. Though his first interest was theology, the cultural life appealed to him because of his mentality.22 In 1911 he was elected member of the First Chamber by the Provinciale Staten of Zuid-Holland. However, he was less interested in practical politics than in the underlying Christian principles.23

In 1908 Bavinck made his second trip to America to deliver the Stone Lectures at Princeton. His subject was *Wijzebegeerte der Openbaring* (*The Philosophy of Revelation*), one of the few works that appear in English.

For this furiously active life of an apparently calm man Bavinck paid the inevitable price. The last lines of his Daybook note the death of Kuyper, November 8, 1920. On the 29th of July, 1921 Bavinck passed away quietly.

The words spoken on his death-bed to Hepp, his biographer, are characteristic of the life of this great believer and thinker:

"Life is strange. Dying is stranger."24 But Bavinck knew

22 Ibid., p. 296.
23 Landwehr, *In Memoriam: Prof. Dr. H. Bavinck*, pp. 72, 73.
himself as a child of God, a receiver of boundless grace.

Hepp recalls the words Bavinck once wrote of Calvin: "Posterity can honor its predecessor and leader in no better way than to confess with mouth and heart, with word and deed: from and through and to God are all things, to Him be the glory to all eternity."²⁵

2. Bavinck as "Godgeleerde"

The word "Godgeleerde" is best translated "theologian." The literal meaning is "one learned in God." Bavinck's warm piety and his intellectual gifts and interests make him just that. Both elements equip him for the pursuit of the problems of Christianity and culture.

As a student he took himself to task like Milton for wasted time. As a minister he loved his library but did not neglect his pastoral work.²⁶ After he became professor, he found time to attend the classes of Julius Kaftan, Eduard Zeller, Friedrich Paulsen, B. Weiss, F.A. Dillman, and Kuno Fischer.

Although Bavinck preached and lectured, he was not a man of the people in the usual sense of the word,²⁷ not as Kuyper was. "Over against Kuyper public opinion never was silent, over against Bavinck it was."²⁸ Kuyper was more of a public figure, entering into debate and politics. He was appointed by the Queen to the highest office in the Cabinet. Bavinck remained the scholar.

²⁵ Johannes Calvijn, p. 34.
²⁶ Hepp, op. cit., p. 106.
²⁷ Ibid., Preface, p. vii.
²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.
adored by his students for his character, scholarship, and ability as teacher.

As a scholar he considered honesty as the first requisite of science.\textsuperscript{29} To his students he said, "I do not ask that you solve the problem, but I ask that you begin to posit it clearly."\textsuperscript{30} Dr. J. Th. de Visser, Minister of Education, speaking at the grave, said that Bavinck was respected as a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences and was recognized by the First Chamber as a specialist in education. His influence was due to his thorough scholarship, deep insight, breadth of view, masterly form, and to his steadfast faith and Christian walk.\textsuperscript{31} Dr. T. Hoekstra said, "He was great in understanding, deep in powers of thought, broad of view, spacious in heart, but narrow in his life. What he tolerated in others he did not tolerate in himself."\textsuperscript{32} And Dr. F.W. Grosheide wrote of him, "Bavinck was a scholar in the full sense of the word. Serious and careful, sometimes perhaps too careful, he went on his way .... No opponent can complain of unfair treatment from him."\textsuperscript{33}

The research student finds himself repeatedly writing in the margins of Bavinck's works the word "fairness." A few examples will be sufficient. Writing of revelation and nature Bavinck admits that "neither the supernatural nor the naturalistic conception is able to clear up all the difficulties, to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{Kok, Dr. H. Bavinck}, p. 76.
\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 79-81.
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 83.
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 51.
\end{itemize}
solve all the arguments. He speaks of "the earnest and careful, broad and acute research of Darwin." In his essay on the "Psychology of Religion" he wants to free himself, for the occasion, from all theological presuppositions and limit himself to a few remarks of a general scientific nature. Though a spiritual descendant of John Calvin, he could still say, "Through the violence of his passions Calvin brought damage to his own name and to his cause." But Bavinck adds that the Reformer was consumed by a zeal for God's house.

His fairness is evident in other ways as well. His address to the students at Kampen bore the title: Het Rijk Gods Het Hoogste Goed. It definitely showed the influence of Schleiermacher. For his inaugural address at Kampen Bavinck chose as subject: De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid. In it he shows his appreciation of Schleiermacher though the latter's influence is less apparent. Kuyper praised this address in De Heraut but also criticised the young Bavinck for not grasping the danger of the German thinker's philosophy. Bavinck deserved the criticism and wrote to Hurgronje that he was not yet where he should be as to his conception of Scripture.

Although Bavinck criticised the theology of De la Saussaye, protagonist of the Ethical movement, he also showed his appreciation of this theologian. Again Kuyper, though praising

34 Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, I, p. 383.
36 Op. cit., p. 72, in V.O.
37 Johannes Calvin, p. 24.
38 Ibid., p. 25.
40 De Theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chanteple de la Saussaye.
this brochure, thought Bavinck was too appreciative. 41 The
irenic, scholarly nature of Bavinck and the polemic, fiery, yet
scholarly nature of Kuyper form a study in contrasts.

In their maturity the fundamental convictions of the two
men were the same. Bavinck, more reserved, always ready to
state the position of those with whom he disagreed and his own
position with painstaking carefulness, developed his convictions
more gradually than Calvin42 or Kuyper and became one of the
greatest upholders of the Reformed views in the twentieth cen-
tury.

At the time of his appointment to Kampen Bavinck was the
only Doctor of Theology in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk43
(the Christian Reformed Church). He busied himself with the
"prinzipienlehre" of theology. In determining the encyclopedic
place of that science in the entire system of the sciences he
was influenced by Kuyper. For Bavinck systematic theology is
a science in its own right; and the objectivity of theology is
based on Scripture itself.

At Kampen Bavinck criticised his own church's eclecticism
and stressed the need of a Reformed Theology that would meet
the times. He hoped to satisfy that need with his magnum opus,
the four-volume Gereformeerde Dogmatiek.44 Here, as elsewhere

42 Ibid., pp. 109, 110.
43 This church united with the Gereformeerde Kerk in 1892.
44 The first edition appeared from 1895 to 1901, the second from
1906 to 1911. A third unaltered edition appeared a few years
before his death.
in his writings, he reveals his careful preparation and his concern for the correct statement of his own position and the position of those with whom he differs. His love for philosophy, his grasp of psychology and the natural sciences, and his concern for theology as grounded in Scripture are evident throughout this work. Again and again Bavinck runs through the long course of ideas from Greek philosophy to positivism, and only after giving them a fair hearing does he state his own position based on the Word of God.

A mere survey of all the titles of his works makes clear that Bavinck, although primarily a theologian, but a theologian with the widest interests and appreciation, was always concerned about the problem of religion and culture. His contribution must be dug out of his works, but happily there is something to be mined from nearly all of them.

Bavinck offers no easy solution to the problem. What he faces is what every Christian who believes and attempts to think must face. He states it well in his Convocation Address: Geleerdheid en Wetenschap at the Vrije Universiteit in 1905. "Not the little but the awe-inspiring much brings on perplexity... Everywhere we stand before mountains of problems, the solution of which is of the greatest importance not only to science, but also to life... Only the earnest and faithful application of the cry: back to the sources saves science from standing still and from unfruitfulness."45 And he adds, "What we need above all

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for the cultivation of a Christian science is patience. 46

By a Christian science (wetenschap) Bavinck understands the whole realm of knowledge to which man is exposed and which he can investigate. Revelation does not run parallel to it, but sheds its light from above on it. Faith does not lie outside of it, but illumines the whole realm of knowledge. For the Christian, the Christian faith is a prime requisite towards understanding and also towards an acknowledgement of the limitations of knowledge.

Bavinck's contributions to a Christian view of the world and of life, his thoughts on Christianity and culture live on in the Netherlands and in sections of America. Criticisms have been expressed, and counter-movements have taken shape; but the force of Bavinck's faith and thought is far from spent.

On the occasion of his 25th anniversary as professor, words of praise appeared in various periodicals. Professor H.H. Kuyper wrote:

Beginning his office of Doctor Eeclesiae in the ideal sense, as he pictured it himself in his rectoral address, fruitful in his writings as few have been, he has defended the truth of God against unbelief, maintained the Christian view of life and the world in its richest meaning also for our generation, and sought the answer to the gripping problems with which the science of our time faces us. 48

Ds* J.C. Sikkel said this:

It is generally known that Professor Bavinck is first of all the scholar, the man of study, of broad knowledge, of

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47 Het Doctorenambt at Kampen.
48 Heraut. 1908, number, 1567 (Jan., 12).
* Abbrev. for Dominee from Dominus.
meticulous differentiation and at the same time of synthesis as much as possible in the field of science and life, of culture, study, and religion. In all that he is definitely principal witness to the Christian view of the world.... definite and faithful upholder of the Reformed Confession.49

At the University a group of professors, students, and ministers honored him. Responding to their kindness he re-viewed the twenty-five years under three headings: "What I have lost; what I have won; what I have kept."50 Significantly, what he had kept was the faith.

Less than three years before this, in 1905, he had expressed the turbulence within him to his friend, Hurgronje. He admitted that the truth of Scripture involved a difficult problem, but that he could not free himself from the authority of the Word even as he could not tear himself loose from the authority of the laws of thought and of morals. He admitted that in the midst of struggle there also came times of peace and surrender. "And now it is again my experience by means of continued study that the Christian view of the world and of life im Groszen und Ganzen is carried through the whole of nature and history."51

Along with the problem of Scripture there were for Bavinck the problems of the future and of culture.52 These impressed themselves on him all the more because of the outbreak of the First World War. As we shall deal with them in the main body of this thesis, we need not linger over them here.

49 "Hollandia," 1908, number 984 (Jan. 11).
50 Hepp, op. cit., p. 299.
51 Ibid., p. 300. Most unfortunately the Bavinck-Hurgronje correspondence has been burned.
52 Ibid., pp. 326 ff.
On one occasion he expressed himself to Valentine Hepp as follows: "Day by day I am impressed by the relativity of all our knowledge."53

But he kept the faith, and it kept him.

What Bavinck said of Bilderdijk in his excellent study of that poet can well be applied to Bavinck himself. He speaks of the poet's aversion to all autonomy and autolatry of man, an aversion that rose from the conception that God is the genuine Being, the perfection of all virtues, and the source of all blessedness and life.54 He goes on to say:

The view of the world and of life which Bilderdijk asserted contained elements of animation in abundance. The ages of Christianity offer mighty proof for it. Christianity has enriched us not only religiously, and ethically, but also aesthetically; Old and New Testaments, church and worship, confession and life have given art the deepest and most glorious motives. And the poetic work of Bilderdijk itself puts its seal on the witness of the ages, that Christianity and art are not hostile to each other and confirms his own utterance that the art of the poet and the religion of the Christian are one, as religion, truth, virtue, and the beautiful are one.55

Though Bavinck was no poet, the preceding paragraph and the following apply to him also as a man of faith and an admiring student of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

What had aroused the love of his heart and had constantly inspired him to his art was the glorifying of God, the worshipping of all the virtues together in the divine Being and in all His works; and, therefore, the spiritual unity of all that is created, the harmony of human personality, the arrangement of family, state, and society according to the steadfast divine ordinances, the liberation of science and art from the bonds of proud understanding, the triumph

53 Ibid., p. 322.
54 Bilderdijk Als Denker en Dichter, p. 53.
55 Ibid., p. 220.
of love over all self-conceit and self-seeking, in a word, the invisible and eternal Kingdom of God which in Christ spreads itself out over the world and which will appear in glory out of heaven upon this earth. 56

In such words Bavinck expressed his own convictions, for all these matters were his chief interest as well.

56 Ibid., p. 221.
CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

1. The Perennial Interest

Bavinck sets out from the proposition that religion and culture are as old as man. "Cultureless people, in the strict sense of the word, there are not, and primitive man without religion and morals, without reason and language is a fiction."

All that is summed up in these terms and in their relationship has been of perennial interest. As we shall see in the following pages, culture has not existed and cannot maintain itself without religion.

We are, however, concerned with the enduring problem of the relation of Christianity and culture, more particularly in the teaching of the man, Herman Bavinck. Christianity itself is not as old as man but as old as the appearing of the God-Man, although its roots are in the Old Testament. A study of the relation of this religion to culture is not an impoverishing but an enriching of the problem. For Christianity is a religion that has a forward and a backward look. It has this because it is centered in Jesus Christ who is the fulness of divine revelation.

Bavinck says, "Christ is certainly the chief center and content of Holy Scripture, but just because He is the center,

1 G. D., I, p. 278.
He is not the point of departure; He presupposes God and man as He appeared not at once but many ages after the promise in history.²

In saying this Bavinck is expressing not only his faith in Christ, but also in Holy Scripture as the Word of God. In the context he contends against those who would deny Scripture for the sake of Christ. "We know nothing of Christ except from Scripture."³

It is therefore Christ, revealed in Scripture as the center, the fulness, and the culmination of revelation, who gives Christianity its content. In His light, made known in the Word, we must approach our problem.

Oscar Cullmann's convincing argument for the "Christo-centric perspective of Biblical history," coming twenty-four years after Bavinck's death, is much to the same point. "All Christian theology in its innermost essence is Biblical history; on a straight line of an ordinary process in time God here reveals himself, and from that line he controls not only the whole of history, but also that which happens in nature."⁴

Both writers are vitally concerned about the relationship of Christ, Christianity, and culture. Contemporary interest in the subject is complementary to Bavinck's great

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² G. D., I, p. 100.
³ Christ and Time, p. 23. (The italics are Cullmann's).
As background to this concern is the marked interest in the problem of Christianity and culture on the part of the Neo-Calvinistic movement in the Netherlands. Abraham Kuyper, 1837-1920, and Herman Bavinck, 1854-1921, were the leaders of this movement which, with some variations, continues to this day.

Among the popular works of Kuyper dealing with this subject are De Gemeene Gratie, Pro Rege, and Calvinism. He did more than develop the principles of a Christian view of life and the world, he crusaded for their practice, even giving up his professorship in theology to become Minister under the Queen.

Kuyper claimed much for Calvinism. In his first lecture at Princeton he said:

Calvinism is rooted in a form of religion which was peculiarly its own, and from this specific religious consciousness there was developed first a peculiar theology, then a special church-order, and then a given form for political and social life, for the interpretation of the moral world-order, for the relation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between church and state, and finally for art and science; and amid all these life-utterances it remained always the self-same Calvinism, in so far as simultaneously and spontaneously all these developments sprang from its deepest life-principle.

5 A listing of the names of several authors and their works upon which we have also relied indicates the aliveness of the problem. There are Cochrane's Christianity and Classical Culture, 1940; T.S. Eliot's The Idea of a Christian Society 1939, and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, 1948; Christopher Dawson's Religion and Culture, 1947, and Religion and the Rise of Western Culture, 1950; Emil Brunner's Christianity and Civilization, 1948; John Baillie's What is Christian Civilization?, 1945, and The Belief in Progress, 1951; Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture, 1951; and Emile Cailliet's The Christian Approach to Culture, 1952. We might also mention two works of a more specific nature by Leon Wencelius: Calvin et Rembrandt, (no date given), and L'Esthetique de Calvin, 1937.

6 Stone Lectures delivered at Princeton, 1898.

The irenic and scholarly Bavinck agreed with Kuyper in principle and shared this thinking. However, Bavinck was primarily a theologian, and with a philosophic bent. That is evident from the choice of subject he made for his Princeton lectures.8

Bavinck's key thought on this subject can be gathered from many a page of his voluminous writings. A few passages from his Gereformeerde Dogmatiek put the problem squarely before us.

All living and knowing rest on a harmony between subject and object. And man is so very rich because he is bound by the most different and multiform relations to the objective world. He is related to the whole world; physically, vegetatively, sensitively, intellectually, ethically, religiously he is in harmony with that world; he is a microcosm. Now the Scripture precedes us in understanding all these relations of man to the world religiously and in explaining them theistically. Man has not placed himself in this relationship to the cosmos. From the start he is fitted for this world, and the world is in turn fitted for him. Because he is the image of God, he is also lord of the earth. God has not only provided these ties between man and the world; He also preserves them and causes them to work continuously from moment to moment. It is the same Logos through whom all things within and outside of man are made. He is before all things, and these exist always together through Him, John 1: 3; Col. 1: 15. More closely Scripture acquaints us with the Spirit of God as principle and author of all life in man and in the world, Gen. 1: 2; Ps. 33: 6, 104: 30, 139: 7; Job 26: 13, 33: 4, definitely also of the intellectual, ethical, and religious life, Job 32: 8; Isaiah 11: 2.9

Man finds his place and purpose in the universe because God willed it so in Christ. Scripture reveals the divine will for man though he has fallen and become a stranger and a pilgrim here.

In speaking of Christ Bavinck says:

He is the Logos in an entirely singular sense, revelator and

8 The Philosophy of Revelation, (Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring), 1908.
revelations at the same time. All revelations of God, all words of God in nature and in history, in creation and recreation (redemption), comprised in Old and New Testaments, have their ground, their unity, and their mid-point in Him. He is the Sun, the special words of God being His rays. The word of God in nature, in Israel, in the New Testament, in Scripture may not for a moment be understood apart from Him. Revelation is possible only because He is the Logos. He is the primum cognoscendi in a general sense of all science; in a special sense, as Logos ensarkos, of all knowledge of God, of religion and theology. Matthew 11: 27. 10

In his chapter on "De Geestelijke Wereld" Bavinck mentions the riches of human life. The relationships which the life of the race and of the family, in state and in society, for work, art, and science brings with it make each person a world in miniature, which in many-sidedness, depth, and riches far surpasses the personality of angels. 11

For man so richly endowed, for the Christian who really can appreciate the endowment, the problem of Christianity and culture is as challenging as it is inclusive. It is so because of the Cosmic Christ who binds man to God and puts meaning into all his relations. 12

Bavinck has such an appreciation for the views of those with whom he disagrees that he has been criticised for it in the Netherlands and in America. But that appreciation is woven into his own thinking, and it makes his judgments more significant. That becomes evident from a study of those views on the subject of religion and culture with which he differs. We must

10 Ibid., p. 422.
11 Ibid., II, p. 488.
12 Cf. R.H. Strachan, The Historic Jesus in the N.T. - "It is impossible for a Christian who thinks at all to have Christ in his heart and to keep Him out of the universe." Quoted by James S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 311.
refer briefly to his criticism of various lines of thought that run from the Greeks to his day.

As a preface to this reference we should remember Bavinck's cautious approach. He feels it necessary to point out "that culture in its widest sense, as including marriage, family, profession, vocation, agriculture, industry, trade, science, art, state, and society, is never to be considered a product of Christianity."13 It is interesting to quote a comparable statement of Brunner: "We have to content ourselves with the fact, that the highest summit of culture and civilization which history knows, developed without any influence of Biblical revelation, and we shall have to keep this fact before our eyes whenever we speak about the relation of Christianity and civilization."14

2. The Classical

Bavinck has high regard for Greek and Roman culture. He speaks of "those classical peoples of old whose rich culture still forms the foundation of our development and civilization according to the providential leading of God."15

Again he says, "Without doubt we may enrich ourselves with the glorious forms of beauty which Greece and Rome have saved for us. For all is ours if we are of Christ; not only Paul and Cephas and Apollos but also Homer and Horace, Demosthenes

13 "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven" in Kennis en Leven, p. 135.
15 De Welsprekendheid, pp. 66, 67.
and Cicero.\(^{16}\) He also uses the phrase: \(\text{"the divine Plato."}\)

Bavinck respects the mind of Plato, the intellectual accomplishments of Aristotle, but finds them lacking the one thing needful, the revelation of God in Christ. We are cautioned to withhold our judgment as to the final destiny of these serious and sincere seekers and all like them, living in a pre-Christian world. Especially the Reformed people, according to their principles, will not determine the measure of divine grace essential to salvation.\(^{17}\)

Bavinck's general criticism of classical religion and culture, and of all heathendom is that these deny divine grace and depend on good works. "The principle of heathendom is negatively the denial of the one, true God and the despising of the gifts of His grace, and positively the thought and striving of man to acquire salvation through his own wisdom and power."\(^{18}\) All religions but Christianity are autosoterical.\(^{19}\) Christianity affirms that God loved the cosmos and therefore sent His Son through whom the world is made.\(^{20}\) A single concept such as that of cosmos shows the chasm which yawns between the Christian and the classical view of life.\(^{21}\)

In a long footnote Bavinck has a quotation from Max Müller giving the latter's conclusions drawn from a study of the Sacred Books of the East. Two sentences give the gist of Müller's

\(^{16}\) Ibid., pp. 78, 79.
\(^{17}\) G. D., IV, p. 810.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., III, p. 553.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 554.
\(^{20}\) De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk, p. 7.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 8.
convictions, "dass der eine Grundton, der eine Accord, der sich durch all hindurchzieht, die Seligkeit durch Werke ist. Sie alle lehren, die Seligkeit müsse erkauft werden und dass den Kaufpreis ihre eigenen Werke und Verdienste bilden müssen."\textsuperscript{22}

Though Max Müller in this passage is not referring to the Greeks, Bavinck would draw the same conclusion as to them. Much as he appreciates their philosophy, it still ends with the question: What is truth? Bavinck finds in their drama, eloquence, architecture, and sculpture a harmony that fills us with wonder, but the true harmony and reality are missing. The Zeus of Phidias is great as art but not as god.\textsuperscript{23}

3. The Medieval

Bavinck sees in Medieval theology a dualism which continues in Roman Catholic thinking to his day. Rome separates the natural from the supernatural order. Because of original sin man has lost supernatural grace. According to Rome he retains the natural gifts; only the supernatural are lost.\textsuperscript{24} After losing the donum superadditum natural man is still able to do good works, if not in a supernatural sense, surely in a natural.\textsuperscript{25} The natural man of I Corinthians 2: 14 is according to Rome not the sinful man, but the man without the donum superadditum.\textsuperscript{26} On this natural level culture is possible and can be fully treasured.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{22} G. D., III, p. 553.
\textsuperscript{23} De Welsprekendheid, pp. 76, 77.
\textsuperscript{24} W. der O., p. 172.
\textsuperscript{25} G. D., III, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{26} "De Algemeene Genade" p. 13.
However, the purpose of human life must be sought not in the natural, but in the supernatural order. Man needs supernatural grace to strengthen the natural man but above all to reach his supernatural goal. The church is the keeper and dispenser of the needed grace by means of the sacraments.

Bavinck offers especially two criticisms of Rome's position. The first deals with her separation of the natural from the supernatural. Although Rome has great respect for the former and therefore for reason, she superimposes the latter on the natural. Bavinck maintains that the revelation in Christ is not opposed to the natural but to sin.27

His second criticism deals with what follows from this separation of the natural and supernatural orders. On the one hand Rome desires to dedicate and, if possible, to control the profane realm; on the other, she teaches a separation from the natural order as the better way, with the result that asceticism, monasticism, and clerical orders are far superior to the kind of life lived by the generality of Christians.28

In this connection we add that S.J. Ridderbos prefers not to speak of a dualism between nature and grace in the Roman system, for he considers it too harmonious for that. He chooses to speak of Rome's viewpoint of the hierarchy and quotes Bavinck as calling it "the spirit and structure of the Romish system."29

   "Rome profanes the cosmos," p. 22.
29 De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper, p. 13.
We recall also Barth's criticism of Brunner (in *Natural Theology*, p. 95) that the latter's "representation of the Roman Catholic conception of the nature and significance of natural theology is sadly distorted." Whether Barth is right or wrong, Bavinck and Brunner seem to stand on the same ground.

4. From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century

"For more than a thousand years western culture had been based on the Christian idea that man is created in the image of God." With the Enlightenment this began to be doubted. Then came metaphysical idealism. This was followed by positivism with its naturalistic philosophy. According to Brunner the movement ran towards a naturalistic and nihilistic goal, and the result was totalitarianism.

Again and again in his works Bavinck deals with the same array of thought-stages in evaluating what to him is the descent from the Christian position.

We shall state briefly Bavinck's reflections on these successive movements which differed from Christianity in their interpretation of religion and culture.

According to him the Enlightenment presented a new form of culture which differed in principle from the culture-ideal of the Reformation. It was the "source of that view of the world which, turning its back on all supernaturalism, thinks to find

31 Ibid., p. 3.
32 W. der O., p. 6.
in this world all that science and religion, thought and life can ask."32

The philosophy of this movement placed its trust entirely in the power of reason.33 "Deism makes man independent of God and the world, teaches the all-sufficiency of reason, and leads to rationalism."34 The declaration of man as autonomous goes hand in hand with deism.34

Rationalism attempted to reach God through reason and separated reason from faith. "For a short time it lived in the delusion that it could get along very well without revelation, faith, and theology."35

Bavinck would agree with the statement of Christopher Dawson that for rationalism religion meant "a leap from knowledge to faith. That is the basic fallacy of the Natural Theology of the Enlightenment."36

Kant’s corrective and his finer distinctions as to the realms of the pure and the practical reason Bavinck appreciates, but he opposes the substitution of the latter for faith.

Of philosophic idealism as it developed after Kant, Bavinck has this to say, "The error of idealism is this, that it confuses the activity and the content, the function and the object, the psychological and the logical nature of apprehension."37

Moreover, it makes God an abstraction, religion an intellectual

32 Ibid., p. 172.
34 G. D., I, p. 65.
35 W. der O., p. 172.
36 Religion and Culture, p. 33.
37 W. der O., p. 47.
experience, and culture an achievement of man.

Romanticism was a protesting voice within rationalism. But it does not do justice to the whole relationship between man and God. "When the feeling of faith is separated from the religious idea and is made to be the only fountain and seat of religion, it loses its quality, becomes independent of the category of true and untrue, of good and evil, and actually each feeling as such is considered religious, true, good, and beautiful. That was the fault of Romanticism." There is a confusion of religion and the aesthetic.

What Emile Cailliet says of the "scholastic entanglement" would apply equally well to rationalism in any of its forms. "To exalt the powers of 'unaided reason' is to invite the self-assertion of a faithless reason, and by the same token, the subsequent revolt of an evangelical conscience." The slighted needs of human nature will have their revenge. Also in the related realms of religion and culture man's proposal and God's disposal are most intimately connected, God often making "out of three sounds, not a fourth sound, but a star." "Unaided reason" took another direction in the nineteenth century with the impetus given to natural science, but the philosophical conclusions were not actually unaided. Bavinck appraises and praises the expansion of knowledge but sees also

38 G. D., I, pp. 272, 273.
39 Ibid., p. 275.
40 Cf. Mortimer's account of his aesthetic conversion and rapture under the spell of churches in France and Italy, especially in Rome. Schiller's Maria Stuart, Sechster Auftritt.
42 R. Browning, Abt Vogler.
a contraction in regard to the fundamental wholeness of man as a creature of God.

Empirical knowledge is of the greatest importance. It should be the first step towards a more complete scientific knowledge.43

What Bavinck objects to is the naturalistic philosophy that bases itself only on the data of experimentation and discovery in the natural realm. Ludwig Stein in Die Sociale Frage im Licht der Philosophie puts the case before us thus: "Heute ist es die Wissenschaft, die gleich der Wahrheit, deren Ausdruck und Offenbarung sie ist, zur Weltherrschaft berufen ist. Der Wissenschaft gehört von nun an anstatt der Gottheit die Weltregierung, der Wissenschaft als der Wohltäterin der Völker und der Befreierin der Menschheit."44

Bavinck contends for the empirical method as applied in natural science. However, he desires a more comprehensive knowledge.

Scientific knowing may perhaps be the noblest fruit of the human spirit, it certainly is not the root out of which life grows. To be sure, the whole of culture includes a certain amount of knowledge; religion, morality, justice, beauty, state, society, industry, agriculture, etc. presuppose the consciousness of man; they are all built on perceptions, representations, thoughts. But the knowledge laid down in these latter is of an empirical nature, it is the fruit of attentive observation, it is related to wisdom and is obtainable by the individual.45

But this first kind of knowledge is related to the unseen

43 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 44.
44 Ibid., p. 45.
45 Ibid., p. 44.
as well as to the seen. Besides certain observable facts around us there are other data. We know there is a difference between true and untrue, good and evil, right and wrong. These concepts we apply without hesitation to religious and moral convictions.46

Of positivism and any variation of naturalistic philosophy which builds only on the empirical, Bavinck has this to say. It "turns its back on all metaphysics, dogma, and dogmatics," and denies the specific character of Christianity.47 According to Comte metaphysics, theology, the spiritual sciences are not really science. Science is limited to the exact sciences.48 But he instituted a worship of humanity and ordained himself as high priest.49

Those who desire to make all science positive and historical try to determine on the basis of history and statistics what is true, right, and moral.50 But they overreach themselves in evaluating what on their own basis they should not consider significant. They also come to lay down a dogma of their own. "Positivism applied to the sciences of the spirit leads not only to the undermining of the foundations of human life, but also to a scientific hierarchy which in a very serious manner threatens our freedom."51

Positivism cannot evade its own metaphysics which goes

46 Ibid., p. 45.
48 Ibid., p. 220.
50 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 68.
51 Ibid., p. 69.
beyond its own data.\textsuperscript{52} One of two things is true:

There is either only empirical, historical reality, but then there is not only no religion except as psychological phenomena, but also no logic, no truth and no virtue, no beauty, and no justice, \ldots{} or there are absolute norms, there is above empirical reality a kingdom of ideas, of the true, the good, and the beautiful, but then the positivistic and empirical concept is not to be maintained.\textsuperscript{53}

Bavinck does not lay his charge against science as such but against certain "practitioners of science who are out to draw all these phenomena of the organic life within the circle of physics, chemistry, and mechanics and to explain them quantitatively in a purely mechanical way."\textsuperscript{54} What is more serious still is that they do not escape a certain metaphysics of their own. The exchange of metaphysics is a loss, for where culture and science separate themselves from Christianity, they lose their genuineness and truth.\textsuperscript{55}

Of Bavinck's thoughts on the significance of Christianity for science and of science for Christianity, of his evaluation of evolution and the psychology of religion we shall speak in chapter VI.

5. \textit{Negativism of Anabaptism}

Both Socinians and Anabaptists separate the natural from the supernatural, the human from the divine as irreconcilable. But whereas Socinianism sacrifices grace to nature, Anabaptism

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 39. Cf. "Physics needed metaphysics; science could not do without philosophy." \textit{Modernisme en Orthodoxie}, p. 24.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pp. 41. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{54} "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap," in \textit{V. O.}, p. 100.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 102.
\end{itemize}
sacrifices nature to grace. Anabaptism rejected the whole ordo naturalis and attempted to establish a kingdom of heaven upon earth. It "proceeded from the strict opposition of creation and re-creation, nature and grace, world and Kingdom of God, and therefore considered believers as people who became something entirely different in regeneration and who consequently must live separated from the world. Its program was not reformation but separation; it wanted an isolated church."

All sects make for dualism. Cut off from the church and despising theology, they have lost their influence upon their age and their tie to culture.

Bavinck, however, is disturbed not only about sects, but about the sectarian spirit with Anabaptistic tendencies in his own communion and in the Protestant evangelical churches in other lands. There have been Christians, and there are still many of them, without a conception of "the Gospel's significance for the natural life, for family, and society, and state, for science, and art. Yes, many have thought that re-creation was hostile to creation, that grace destroyed nature, and that he was the best and most consecrated Christian who withdrew from the world and shut himself up in solitude."

In their reasoning Bavinck admits there is a truth that cannot be denied. Jesus came to take upon Himself natural life.

56 G. D., I, pp. 181, 182.
57 Ibid., p. 314.
58 Ibid., IV, pp. 314, 315.
59 Ibid., I, p. 652.
60 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 69. On the departure from Reformation principles by the sects see Katholiciteit, pp. 45 ff., and De Zekerheid des Geloofs, pp. 45-50; 101-102.
only to deny it and lay it down on the cross. He was not married, had no vocation, no office in the state. He was not a man of science, no artist. His entire life was an offering. He came to die. He asked His disciples to walk in His footsteps in a life of self-denial. Jesus was no statesman nor reformer; His Gospel is not a social program; Scripture is not a handbook for art or science; preaching is not man's wisdom. Says Cailliet, "Culture qua culture was not within the perspective of his mission." And Brunner writes rather strongly, "[Jesus] does not seem to betray any interest in any of those things which we include under the terms civilization or culture."

Bavinck, however, maintains that Christianity, far from opposing culture, lays down the basic principles upon which a genuine culture can thrive. The principles are found in Scripture, in the Old Testament and in the New. The teachings of Jesus and His Apostles are rich for culture, and the Christian era has proved it. The convictions of Tolstoy in his later years are a one-sided emphasis. Of Jesus, Bavinck says, "He considered nothing human strange." He ate and drank and rejoiced with people. He honored the ordering of natural life, for He came not to break down the works of the Father, but of the devil. Jesus counseled obedience to authority. He also

61 Ibid., p. 70.
62 Ibid., p. 72.
63 The Christian Approach to Culture, p. 68.
64 Christianity and Civilization, p. 7.
65 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 73.
loved nature with childlike joy, drawing many of His illustrations from that realm. He did not refuse costly ointment for His anointing. Moreover, Jesus laid down His natural life only to take it up again in His resurrection. "The bodily resurrection of Christ is the decisive proof that Christianity is not hostile to anything human or natural but only desires to save creation from all that is sinful and to sanctify it perfectly unto God." His followers must walk in that realization.

Richard Niebuhr in his book, Christ and Culture, calls the position of anticultural Christianity both necessary and inadequate. Bavinck's teachings agree with that. Says Niebuhr, "In history these Christian withdrawals from and rejections of the institutions of society have been of very great importance to both church and culture. They have maintained the distinction between Christ and Caesar, between revelation and reason, between God's will and man's."67

Therefore, though culture was not the first mission of Jesus Christ, yet His redemptive revelation is aimed also at the transformation of culture in its rich and varied fields.

The Christian is the best citizen. With his confession he does not stand outside of nor over against the natural life. But high and spiritedly he carries it into the world and plants the banner of the Cross everywhere. The Gospel of Christ is glad tidings for all creatures, for mind and heart, for soul and body, for family and society, for science


and art. For it frees from guilt and saves from death.  

6. Bavinck on Calvin's Views

Bavinck was profoundly influenced by Calvin. He draws on him frequently in his works. The appeal of the Reformer lay in his strong personal faith, in his razor-like mind, in his subjecting himself to the Word of God, and in his application of this revelation to the whole of life. His emphasis on the Absolute Sovereignty of God placed all the content of time in the light of eternity.  

Calvin came of a cultured family and enjoyed a literary and juridical training of exceptional value. According to Bavinck he had a sudden conversion before 1533. Farel's challenge to Calvin in Geneva pierced his soul. Culture is good, but duty and service to God come first for the Christian.  

However, according to Bavinck, Calvin in contrast with Luther and Zwingli widened the conception of faith to that of fides salvi cans - "a faith which renews the entire man in his being and consciousness, in soul and body, in all his relations and activities, and hence a faith which exercises its sanctifying influence in the entire range of life, upon church and school, upon society and state, upon science and art."  

Scholars differ as to a dualism between nature and grace in Luther. Bavinck seems to think there is more of it in Luther

68 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 76.
69 See my book, The High Points of Calvinism, Ch. 2.
70 Cf. Q. Breen, John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism.
71 Johannes Calvijn, pp. 9, 10, 13.
72 Katholiciteit, pp. 30-32.
73 "Calvin and Common Grace" in C. and R., p. 112.
than in Calvin, but S.J. Ridderbos, on the basis of Troeltsch and Seeberg, maintains that Luther rejected the dualism as well as the hierarchical attitude of Roman Catholicism. "From many points of view Calvin's view of culture agrees with that of the Wittenberg Reformer."  

At any rate, Bavinck holds that Calvin has poured over all the earthly the splendor of the glory of God and placed the entire natural life in the ideal light of eternity. He protected capital rents, defended the rights of commerce, called art, science, and philosophy rich gifts of God, established in Geneva a school for literary, philosophical, and theological studies, and knew how to relate intimately the earthly and heavenly calling.  

The influence of that is felt to this day among Protestant people.  

Calvin sees the whole of life steeped in the divine glory.  

The entire world is an instrument, an organ, a toy in the hand of His will to honor His name. In this whole world each creature and every circle of life takes its own place, heaven and earth, plant and animal, man and angel, family, state, and society, vocation, science, and art. They are all differentiated according to the divine will which works according to wisdom and election; they all have their own nature and law. But in their differentiation they are one because they have their origin in the same divine will and are all, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, serviceable to the glorifying of God's virtue.

Earthly possessions have a relative value. Between these and the Kingdom of Heaven there must be a proper balance.

74 De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper, pp. 16, 17.
75 Johannes Calvijn, p. 33.
76 Ibid., p. 34. Cf. Hunter's ch. - "Attitude to Art, Music, and Science" in his The Teaching of Calvin.
78 Johannes Calvijn, p. 18.
The recognition of this as a principle appears most clearly in Scripture's teaching that all things, the entire world with all its treasures, including matter and body, marriage and labor, are created and ordained of God; and that Christ, although on assuming a true and perfect human nature, renounced all these things in obedience to God's command, yet through His resurrection He took them all back again as henceforth purified of all sin and consecrated through the Spirit. Creation, incarnation, and resurrection are the fundamental facts of Christianity and at the same time the bulwarks against all error in life and doctrine. 79

It is evident then "that Calvin himself never shunned his cultural task," 80 as Emile Cailliet puts it. His convictions have lived and have been expanded by Bavinck and others.

The secret of Calvin is revealed in his crest: the burning heart in the extended hand with the inscription: "My heart I give to Thee, Lord, promptly and sincerely." It is the flaming heart that we find in his Institutes of the Christian Religion, in his letters and commentaries. Regeneration fed the springs of his life. He knew that God redeems man completely - his knowing, his willing, his feeling, his believing, his acting. That conviction sparks his logic and reveals his trusting and reasoning heart.

For him the Christian hope is certainly jenseitig, for we are but pilgrims and strangers here looking for the City whose Builder and Maker is God. But we are also co-laborers here working on that City. The Christian hope must likewise be the yeast of the diesseitig. Eschatology implies both coming and becoming.

80 The Christian Approach to Culture, pp. 55, 56.
It is understood in the burning heart.
And in that sign Bavinck continued.

7. Bavinck’s Approach

John Livingstone Lowes wrote a fascinating literary-detective work to reveal what elements had entered Coleridge’s mind for the creating of two poems. A study of Bavinck’s thoughts on Christianity and culture uncovers many sources that fed the sweep of his mind and heart.

Bavinck was first of all a theologian, as his four-volume Gereformeerde Dogmatiek and his chairs at Kampen and Amsterdam testify. But he was a theologian with a philosophic, practical, and aesthetic bent. His thirst for knowledge is evident from his carefully prepared and heavily documented works whether they be intended for the class room, the popular lecture platform, or publication. During his rather short ministry at Franeker, his only charge, he poured out his heart to his friend, Snouck Hurgronje, envying the latter’s undisturbed days of study. “I often think of my earlier days of study, and it is difficult for me to get up from my desk.”

Though Bavinck often took himself to task for what he considered his idle moments, he really had few of these. While still in the active ministry he writes his friend that he is busy preparing the sixth edition of Walaeus’ Synopsis Purioris Theologiae to strengthen his knowledge of Reformed theology. He was

81 The Road to Xanadu.
82 Hepp, op. cit., p. 106.
also writing article after article for a religious paper, "De Vrije Kerk.

Bavinck looked upon his short ministry as excellent schooling and appreciated the rich experiences in the congregation he loved. For him doctrine and life, scholarship and pastoral work, faith and practice were complementary.

A mere glance at the first-hand sources in the bibliography makes plain the combination in Bavinck of the scholarly and the practical. As a theologian he is interested in education, contemporary morality, the position of women, the art of speaking, statesmanship and politics, the problem of war, the family and society, science, art, and the simple life of devotion.

There is evident in Bavinck also aesthetic feeling and appreciation. His style often rises to the sweep of poetic prose. That is true of his Dogmatiek as well as of his devotional writings and his lectures. He uses similes and metaphors well. He is sensitive to the great poets. His work on Bilderdijk reveals a refreshing interest such as is also found in Stopford Brooke and Augustus Strong.

Because of his religious, theological, practical, and aesthetic interests we find in Bavinck a rich source of ideas on Christianity and culture. The theme recurs again and again even in his devotional works written to stimulate genuine piety, in his instructions for young people, and in his simplifying of dogmatics.

83 Ibid., p. 119.
84 Bilderdijk Als Denker en Dichter.
85 Cf. De Offerande des Lofs and De Zekerheid des Geloofs.
87 Cf. Magnalia Dei.
A major work on the subject, drawing together all his ideas, would have been significant, but such a work Bavinck did not write. His thoughts are spread throughout his many books, articles, lectures, and notebooks. From these we can gather a comprehensive system of ideas on the subject of Christianity and culture vital to a Christian view of life and the world. The Christian convictions and the wide interests of the man Bavinck are rewarding, not only for Calvinists in the Netherlands, but also for all people of the Reformed persuasion. Moreover, they are of value to whoever calls himself a Christian.

8. Framework of Bavinck's Thinking

Developing his thoughts on the problem that is still a major one today, that of the relation between Christianity and culture, Bavinck evinces the shaping power of his faith. His piety was never pietistic. He contends against pietism and sickly mysticism, against those who "to the hour of their death cripple along complaining and sighing on life's way."88

A nature such as Bavinck's was certainly not free from inner struggle. But in spite of the blessed torments that plague a Christian scholar, in spite of the doubts that came with the years;89 in spite of what he said with reserve to his friends, Hurgronje and Hepp, his warm, personal faith, trust and confidence remained.

Speaking of this intimate aspect of Bavinck's life Hepp says,

88 De Zekerheid des Geloofs, - a choice long passage, pp. 46 ff.
89 Hepp, op. cit., p. 320.
"It seemed a miracle to him that he had kept the faith." Yet, the miracle was not hard to accept for one who bowed before the greater miracle of God's grace.

In a lecture delivered in 1916, in the midst of the First World War, Bavinck rejoices in the triumph of the soul over the isms that seemed rampant.

Bavinck bowed before the authority of the Bible which he regarded as the infallible Word of God. Referring to the Reformation he says:

'This much stands fast, that in the theology of the Reformation faith was not a knowing of certain doctrinal truths but the soul's tie to the person of Christ according to the Scriptures and to Scripture as the word of Christ. The fides salvia was again through and through religious. God's grace in Christ was its object, the witness of God in His Word was its ground, the Holy Spirit was its author.'

That is Bavinck's conviction running through all his works. Faith is both a personal experience and the experience of persons in the Church which is the body of Christ. Bavinck is not a biblicist. "We believe not only that Scripture is true because God reveals Himself in it, but also we believe the fact that God revealed Himself therein because He Himself testifies to it in Scripture. Revelation is at one and the same time the quo and the quod creditur. Unus enim et idem actus credit Deum et Deo." Drawing on Calvin, Bavinck says that Scripture brings its own authority, it is autopistos. And Scripture has authority for us only through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
Centrally and finally revelation comes to us in the person of Christ, and in the Word that testifies of Him. 95

To be a Christian it is essential to believe that revelation. The Christian must believe all that is promised in the Gospel. Revelation, grace, promise are the content of the Gospel, and it is childlike faith alone which can accept and appropriate these benefits of God.

Therefore the Christian faith has not only its own origin, but also its own object: a word, a witness, a benefit, a gift, a promise of God to which it clings, by which it lifts itself up, on which it stakes its entire trust in distress and death. It is not just a subjective mood or experience, but it includes a knowing, a knowing of the only true God in the face of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And that knowing is life, light, grace, and truth. 96

This warm, personal faith does not make Bavinck less of a scholar but assures his Christian scholarship. He pleads for a return to Scripture to see that Christianity's essence and original quality go together. 97 "What Christianity is is decided not by Christians, but by Christ." 98 Christ has a certain dogmatic authority. The chief thought in religion and theology is: "What think ye of the Christ?" 98 Christ's attitude towards divine Being, creation, the world, humanity, the Church, to all culture determines the history of Christianity and Christian dogmas. 99

Of Bavinck's conception of theology as a science in its own right we shall speak later. Here, in order to understand the

95 "Philosophie des Geloofs" in V. O., p. 15.
96 Ibid., p. 16.
97 "Het Wezen der Godsdiens" in V. O., p. 28.
98 Ibid., p. 29.
99 Ibid., p. 34.
framework of his thinking, we shall point briefly to his ideas on a Christian Dogmatics into which he weaves so many references to culture.

Dogmatics is and can be according to its nature nothing other than a scientific explanation of religious truth, a enarratio verbi Dei, a display of the thesauri Sacrae Scripturae, a paradosis eis tupon didaches, Rom. 6: 17, so that in it we have a form and image of the doctrina coelestis. Dogmatics is therefore not the Word of God, it is always but a faint image and a weak likeness of it; it is a fallible, human attempt in our own free way to think and to speak after God what He has spoken before many times and in varied ways through the prophets and in these latter days through His Son.

In defense of a Christian Dogmatics, not as an infallible authority demanding submission, but as a systematic presentation of Scriptural truth, Bavinck delivered a lecture in 1881. It bears the title: Het Voor en Tegen van Een Dogmatisch System. He maintains there is system in the universe, in God, and in man. We must think God's thoughts after Him.

Dogmatics is "the scientific description of the confession of the Church." Again, "A dogmatic system is the demand made by science on theology, and the proof of the reasonable, genuine, scientific quality of Christianity." There are three requisites. It should be scriptural; ecclesiastical; and actual and progressive under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to stress these convictions here in order to grasp the framework of Bavinck's thinking as he faces the problem of the relation between Christianity and culture.

100 G. D., I, p. 37.
102 Ibid., p. 60.
103 Ibid., p. 62.
104 Ibid., pp. 63 ff.
one of his essays he reminds us how easily speculative thinkers forget that Christianity is not a philosophical system but a religion. 105 Systematic theologians must not forget that either, in their endeavor to outline the truths of revelation.

Yet, Christian thought requires system as all thinking does, and in that system the whole revelation of God in the Word and in the world, and the whole realm of religion and culture must be taken up.

In the framework of Bavinck's thinking the word wetsenschap plays an important part. It means science or organized knowledge. In the widest sense it implies all knowledge man has of God and of the world and of his relationship to both. That Bavinck had great respect for such an inclusive concept is evident in all his teaching.

That there is a distinction between knowing God (religion) in the sense of the First Epistle of John, and knowing about God (theology) Bavinck understands fully. Faith and reason are not identical, but for the Christian the one must not rule out the other.

"We must believe; and that we can believe is evidence that we are human." Without faith we are not human. 106 But we have also the thirst to know. To separate believing and knowing is to establish a dualism that leads to illusion. 107 Then theology cannot be considered a science. Scripture,
however, does not separate knowing from believing. In fact Christianity really made science possible in its genuine sense.\textsuperscript{108}

There is no believing without knowing and no knowing without believing. Axioms and hypotheses are always needed. Faith has an intellectual and an ethical element. Subjectively faith is an activity of mind and heart, knowing is an activity of mind only; objectively the object of believing is invisible, moral, spiritual, and the object of knowing is visible, tangible, physical.\textsuperscript{109}

Love and beauty are never comprehended, but they are apprehended through personal experience. They demand a faith. Even the exact sciences do.

In the higher sense, however, the knowledge of faith applies to God who "is the Hypothesis of all hypotheses."\textsuperscript{110} He who believes is sure that God exists. And Christian theology based on the Scriptures puts genuine content into personal faith.

Philosophy is also a science, and as such Bavinck has great respect for it. "Although Christian dogma is not to be explained from Greek philosophy, yet it did not arise without it."\textsuperscript{111} More and more Christians felt the need to think through the thoughts of revelation, to relate these to other knowledge, and to defend them against assault.\textsuperscript{112} Christianity did not take over a whole Greek system but in an eclectic sense took what it

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 12.
\textsuperscript{111} G. D., I, p. 652.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., pp. 652, 653.
could use to build a Christian philosophy. Sometimes Christian thinkers went too far. Calvin, however, "saw in philosophy a praeclarum Dei donum and was followed by all Reformers in this judgment." 113

But for Christian thinkers of all ages the revelation of Scripture, not reason, was the point of departure. Faith has its philosophy also. 114 Bavinck contends against all speculative philosophies as to their point of departure and their conclusions whether they be Greek, rationalistic, idealistic, positivistic, or humanistic. What he says of the proponents of natural theology in the eighteenth century applies in a sense to all speculative systems: "They thought that human reason outside of faith could produce out of itself all the truths of natural theology... Reason was emancipated from faith, from revelation, and both stood independently next to each other." 115

In the framework of Bavinck's thinking there is a large place for the natural sciences. He reveals a great interest in astronomy, geology, chemistry, physics, and biology. He is grateful for their enrichment of our Christian thinking. 116 But he opposes any metaphysics based exclusively on their results.

114 "Philosophie des Geloofs" in V. O., p. 9.
115 G. D., I, pp. 94, 95.
116 See Christelijke Wetenschap, and "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V. O. "Christians have never been so narrow that they rejected all the scientific investigations of non-believers as lies." "Those guilty of disregarding these good gifts are guilty towards men and ungrateful to God." Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 31. Also "We accept with joy the increase and expansion of knowledge." Modernisme en Orthodoxie, p. 12.
Nor is he satisfied with natural science as an exclusive realm. "The maxim of science for science's sake is as onesided as art for art's sake." 117

Bavinck was also very much taken up with psychology and the psychology of religion especially as these are related to education. Of that we shall speak later.

Throughout Bavinck's thinking there is woven his preoccupation with God's purpose as to man and the world. "God is busy doing great things in these times." 118 It forms the substance of the whole problem of Christianity's relation to culture. Man, created by God and living in His inescapable presence, must believe, worship, think, labor, serve in whatever sphere he finds himself and do it all to the glory of God. There is a glory not only in the scholar's study, but also in the work of one's hands. God is also over and in the commonplace. This concept was announced by Scripture long before it was applied by Wordsworth, Burns, and the Dutch painters.

How Bavinck applies Christian theory to Christian practise we shall see in Chapter VI.

9. Towards a Definition

"The well-known preacher, J. Christian Blumhardt, once said that man needs a twofold conversion, first from the natural to the spiritual life and then from the spiritual to the natural."

With this paradoxical statement Bavinck begins his lecture on

117 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 50.
118 Modernisme en Orthodoxie, p. 11.
"Revelation and Culture." 119

It is this double conversion that pictures the Christian's relation to and attitude towards culture. That first conversion is man's spiritual ascent after his descent into sin. The spiritual life tends upward. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" is not merely an echo from the Old Testament but is the cry of the Christian heart as well.

However, man is living in a world rich with good things from God. Not only his religious but also his cultural task lies there. His conversion to the natural must follow from his conversion to the spiritual. Neither may be separated from the other. Religion and culture go together. Cultus and culture are sisters bound by love like Martha (culture) and Mary (cultus). 120

The right of culture and the duty to culture are spoken by God: "Be ye fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, and subject it." "Culture exists because God gave us the power to rule the earth. It is the communal calling of humanity to possess the earth, to form it for ownership and as an organ of personality, to turn the whole riches of created life, spiritual, moral, and natural into a pure organism, and to rule it." 121

All culture is a power whereby man rules over nature. Art and science are a triumph of the spirit over matter. 122

119 W. der G., p. 207.
120 "Het Rijk God Het Hoogste Goed" in K. en L., p. 50.
121 Ibid., pp. 49, 50. Cf. "Obedience to God and lordship over the earth, cultus and culture go together." Handleiding, p. 90.
122 G. D., I, p. 388.
culture like cultus must be rooted in the same principle. The relationship to God and to man must bear the same character and must be ordered by the same moral law.123

Although culture is rooted in creation, as we shall see later, in a sense it began in earnest after the fall.124 Culture in itself is by no means sinful or wrong.125 Man’s cultural work after the fall, though attributed to Cain’s descendants, is not condemned in Scripture.125 Though evil and sin brought degeneration, there is evidence of cultural progress. Bavinck disagrees with Bishop South who spoke of Aristotle as the rubbish of Adam and of Athens as the rudiments of Paradise.126

It is only Christianity that gives the proper interpretation of religion and culture. Creation and re-creation cannot stand over against each other as higher and lower. They are both good and pure, both glorious works of the one and triune God.127 "All our modern civilization, art, science, literature, ethics, jurisprudence, society, state, politics are leavened by religious, Christian, supernatural elements and still rest on the foundation of the old view of the world."128 The Christian faith touches on all sides of human life, lets its influence be felt, and sets its stamp on all elements of culture.129

It does this because Jesus came not to condemn the world,

123 Ibid., p. 272.
124 Ibid., III, p. 51.
125 Ibid., p. 7.
126 Ibid., p. 51.
127 Ibid., IV, p. 477.
128 W. der O., p. 15.
129 Het Christendom, pp. 3, 4.
but to restore it. He took on human nature and rose from the
death. 130 Through His incarnation Christ honored the whole
human race. According to the flesh He is brother of all
men. 131 The whole re-creation and restoration of the world and
of humanity are the fruit of Christ's work. 132

There is, therefore, a cultural mandate for the Christian
and for all men. "In its widest meaning culture implies all
human labor expended on nature." 133 But nature has two aspects,
the world of sensation outside of man, and man himself including
body and soul. There is the circle of man's labors towards the
production and distribution of material goods. There is also
the circle in which man ponders the true, the good, and the
beautiful and produces in these fields, thereby developing and
civilizing himself as well. 134

The Gospel and Christianity are not hostile to culture as
such. The former reveals the highest ethical good; it is the
satisfactory answer to man's yearnings. 135 The latter reflects
the Gospel's light for the whole of life.

However, the Gospel brings its own measuring stick. It
relates culture to religion and gives it a moral significance.
It relates culture to the supreme revelation in Jesus Christ.
The crucified Christ also rose and ascended. "In his exaltation
He took back what He had denied in His humiliation, but now freed

130 G. D., I, p. 377.
131 Ibid., III, p. 535.
132 Ibid., p. 510.
133 W. der Q., p. 213.
134 Ibid., p. 214.
135 Ibid., p. 222.
from guilt, purified from stain, renewed and reborn by the Spirit.\(^{136}\)

Thus Christianity is the religion of salvation revealing a kingdom that is like yeast. It is not opposed to what is pure, good, and lovely. It judges sin but loves the good in the manifestations of culture. It has served and it serves civilization well in spite of the imperfections of its confessors. "Christians are still the bearers of culture."\(^{137}\) Man must really become God's son again before he can be in the genuine sense a cultural being. Think of I Corinthians 3:21-23, "For all things are yours.... and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Culture can be a blessing, and it can be a curse. Bavinck refers several times to the poet Da Costa's words about the invention of printing, that it can be "a giant's step to heaven or to hell,"\(^{138}\) and maintains that the same is true of culture. Christianity is the best guarantee of its stepping heavenwards. Christianity came and unlocked for us a thought-world sparkling with life and captivating with beauty. To art a new matter, to thinking a lasting object, to language an eternal content were given.... In Christianity the true reconciliation is found, the reconciliation not only of God and man, but of all the contradictions that are found in the pagan world. All that in thinking and discoursing, in action and delivery (in public speaking) is unbeautiful and disharmonious is in conflict with the essence of Christianity. But all that is true, good, lovely, and well-sounding in the realm of art and science,

\(^{136}\) Ibid., p. 230.
\(^{137}\) Ibid., p. 231.
among us or our opponents, that is Christian. For the middle-point of Christianity is the Incarnation of the Word, and in that there is the reconciliation of God and man, of spirit and matter, of content and form, of ideal and actual, of soul and body, of thought and language, of word and gesture.\textsuperscript{139}

Christian man, then, under God has a cultural calling in the world. That world, though created good, was not "finished." It was man's task to make it true and good.\textsuperscript{140} The coming of sin did not stop man's vocation. With the help that comes from God man now must invade every realm for God's sake to carry out His purpose. In his personal life, in family, society, state, in science, and in art it is both his task and his glory to work at the pile of culture and to permeate it all with the radiance of Christ.

10. How Early Christianity met the Problem

Far from being dismayed, we should be encouraged when we study how early Christianity faced the problem of religion and culture.

Early Christians took a negative attitude to culture partly because of their small numbers and influence as to state, society, science, and art, partly because the existing culture was associated with idolatry and superstition. It was their task to emphasize their faith. "Only gradually could the Church rise to the higher standpoint of trying all things and holding fast to that which is good, and adopt an eclectic

\textsuperscript{139} De Welsprekendheid, pp. 78, 79.
\textsuperscript{140} W. der O., p. 58.
procedure in its valuation and assimilation of the existing culture.  

The early Church had to establish itself and take its position in the world.

Christians in those days took a dark view of the world, and they had reason to do so. They were a small group; they saw the evils of the Empire; and they expected the return of Christ and their triumph at His coming.

However, the early Christian Church did not adopt asceticism. On guard against paganism, it never despised or condemned natural life as in itself sinful. Marriage and family life, secular calling and military estate, the swearing of the oath, and the waging of war, government and state, science and art and philosophy - all these were recognized from the beginning as divine institutions and as divine gifts. Hence theology soon began to form relations with philosophy; the art of painting as practised in the catacombs attached itself to the symbols and figures of antiquity; architecture shaped the churches after pagan models; music availed itself of the tunes which Graeco-Roman art had produced. On every hand a strong effort is perceptible to bring the new religion into touch with all existing elements of culture.

These Christians valued the world as God's creation. What they were opposed to was the sinful in the world. Redemption meant for them not the destruction, but the restoration of nature. All good gifts come from the Father and must be gratefully received.

142 "De Navolging van Christus en het Moderne Leven" in K. en L., p. 129.
143 Katholiciteit, p. 18.
144 "Calvin and Common Grace" in C. and R., pp. 102, 103.
The New Testament presupposes the Old. Re-creation is built on creation; grace follows nature; regeneration follows birth. All the materials of culture are good and perfect gifts from the Father of lights; we owe them to the common goodness of God who lets His sun shine on the evil and the good, His rain fall on the righteous and unrighteous, and fills men's hearts with food and mirth.  

Christ in His triumph had given this new light to His followers. It is interesting to quote Cochrane here.

What they the Christians demanded was a radical revision of first principles as the presupposition to an adequate cosmology and anthropology. The basis for such a revision they held to lie in the logos of Christ, conceived as a revelation, not of 'new' truth, but of truth which was as old as the hills and as everlasting. This they accepted as an answer to the promise of illumination and power extended to mankind and, thus, the basis for a new physics, a new ethic, and above all, a new logic, the logic of human progress. In Christ, therefore, they claimed to possess a principle of understanding superior to anything existing in the classical world. By this claim they were prepared to stand or fall.

If there was any single thing to which Christian teaching pointed, it was to a recognition of the authority of the Master as the one avenue to truth. This authority was conceived as absolute and exclusive.

There were, of course, ascetic elements. "Tertullian repudiated harshly and hastily all natural value." What has Jerusalem to do with Athens? But genuine Christian appreciation and effectiveness were also present. "Churches and monasteries, institutions of mercy, evangelization and missions, family and

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146 Ibid., pp. 135, 136.
147 Christianity and Classical Culture, Pref., p. vi.
148 Ibid., p. 224.
149 Ibid., p. 249. Bavinck has several references to the same.
society, architecture, painting, and poetry, all the materials of our rich culture are eloquent witnesses to Christianity."

In this connection Gibbon's almost reluctant yet significant tribute to the rapid development of the Christian Church is to be remembered.

Bavinck maintains that the Reformation reemphasized these early Christian principles basic to an understanding of the relation of Christianity and culture. This movement opposed asceticism with its Pelagian drive and the domination of the Church over the natural realms. It wanted no other synthesis between Christianity and culture than along moral lines. But it did not always remain true to these principles. Sometimes it allowed emancipation of the natural life from the norms of Scripture and the Confessions, or it misused its power. The Reformation soon lost its youthful courage and fresh strength. "Art, science, philosophy, political and social life have never rightly assimilated the principles of the Reformation." If there is to be a synthesis between Christianity and culture, it can be only in the ethical way of the Church of the first centuries, the way the Reformation emphasized at its best.

Contemporary Christianity must recall and revitalize those early principles and the best emphasis of the Reformation. The

150 Het Christendom, p. 25.
151 History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I.
152 "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven" in K. en L., p. 135.
153 Katholiciteit, p. 39.
154 "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven" in K. en L., p. 125.
religious, the ascetic side of Christianity in the good sense must be filled in by the moral, by the genuinely human side in order not to run to all kinds of false mysticism and monastic piety.\(^{155}\)

Bavinck would very likely agree with these words of Edwin Lewis: "Jerusalem and Athens are antagonistic only in respect of the claim to priority, not in respect of what each ideally embodies and represents."\(^{156}\)

\(^{155}\) *Katholischeit*, p. 48.

\(^{156}\) *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, p. 82.
CHAPTER III

SOURCES OF THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING
OF THE PROBLEM

Bavinck's position is that all knowledge of God, all religion, all culture depend on revelation. "The knowledge of God is to be obtained by man only if and in so far as God freely makes Himself known to man."¹

Revelation proceeds from God and proceeds on the assumption that God exists personally and self-consciously, and that He can make Himself known. It is divine Self-revelation.² It is first of all for God Himself.³

There are two kinds of revelation, general and special. These we must examine in the light of Bavinck's teaching.

1. General Revelation

By general revelation we mean God's revelation in nature, history, and man.⁴ But general revelation, though it belongs in varied measure to all people, is best understood in the light of special revelation. Scripture speaks of God's revelation in nature, history, and man, but these latter require Scripture's interpretation. When the Christian in the light of the knowledge of God lets his eyes feed on nature and history, on heaven and earth, he discovers everywhere traces of the same God whom

¹ Handleiding, p. 8.
² Ibid., pp. 8, 9.
³ Ibid., p. 10.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 11, 12.
he has learned to know and to call upon as Father in Christ. The Sun of Righteousness discloses to him a most beautiful panorama that stretches out to the ends of the earth. Bavinck also says:

This revelation to which faith answers is found in the widest sense in all the works of His hands, in all nature, in all history, in the totality of the universe. If we could see well, we would see God's revelation everywhere; for He is and works everywhere; He never leaves Himself unwitnessed; in Him we live and move and have our being. The pious soul sees God everywhere, in and outside of himself, in his heart and conscience, in the guidance of his life, in the blessings and calamities that are his. In the small and in the big world there is nothing that is apart from God and that in the strictest sense misses the stamp of His glory.

Because man cannot see well, he needs a special revelation. In order to understand the general revelation of God in nature, the special revelation of God in Holy Scripture is objectively necessary, which Calvin compared to a pair of spectacles. Subjectively man has need of the eye of faith to behold God also in His works.

Bavinck describes both revelations from another angle.

General revelation we owe to the Word that was in the beginning with God, that made all things, that has shined as light in the darkness and enlightened every man, coming into the world, John 1:1-9. Special revelation we owe to that same Word as it became flesh in Christ and is now full of grace and truth. Both revelations have grace as content, the one a general, the other a special grace; but in such a manner that the one needs the other.

There is much general revelation in creation, but "creation

5 M. D., pp. 28, 29.
6 "Philosophie des Geloofs" in V. O., p. 15.
7 G. D., I, p. 314. See Calvin, Instit., Chapters 1-5.
8 M. D., p. 29.
is the first revelation of God, the origin and foundation of all revelation that followed. The biblical conception of revelation is rooted in creation.⁹ So also creation, preservation, and government are a mighty continuous revelation of God. No nature poetry has ever surpassed or equalled that of Israel.⁹

From the beginning of time there was an original revelation with reference to the ideas of Deity as almighty and all-wise origin of all things, of the world established by wisdom, of the harmony of creation, of the visible and invisible worlds, of the contrast between truth and the lie, the conflict between good and evil, of a golden age and of the coming of evil, of the immortality of the soul and the expectation of judgment.¹⁰

The revelation of Israel is joined to this original one. The former is built on the latter and rests upon it, and it is also the continuation, the development, and completion of it.¹¹

The distinction between general and special revelation begins at the call of Abraham. Before that they intermingle, and in so far have become the property of all peoples and nations.¹¹

Bavinck maintains that the distinction between natural and supernatural revelation is not quite the same as between general and special revelation. The general has supernatural elements, and not everything in the realm of the special is supernatural.¹²

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⁹ G. D., I, p. 317.
¹⁰ W. der O., p. 159.
¹¹ Ibid., p. 160.
¹² G. D., I, p. 322.
Scripture makes no distinction between the natural and supernatural; it uses the same words for both. "Strictly from the point of view of Scripture all revelation, that in nature as well, is supernatural." See Job 12:22; 33:16; 36:10, Rom. 1:18-19. The biblical understanding of revelation is rooted in the understanding of creation under the arch of God.

Without the supernatural in general revelation there is not the beginning of a satisfying answer to man's problems. "The supernatural was that, not only because it belonged to a higher order, but also because it went far beyond the thoughts and wishes of fallen man."  

In the light of general revelation there is some value in heathen religions. According to the Bible there is a revelation to the heathen, an illumination of the Logos, a working of God's Spirit, Gen. 6:17, Ps. 33:6, Mal. 1:11, John 1:9, Rom. 2:14, Gal. 4:1-3, Acts 14:16-17, 17:22-30. Christianity is not exclusively antithetical to heathen religions; it is also the fulfillment of them.

This general revelation that is important for all people, though insufficient, has significance for the Christian religion.

1. By means of it the Christian feels at home in the world. A person standing in the faith and in the light of special revelation finds in nature and in history traces of the same God

13 Ibid., p. 317.
14 Ibid., p. 314.
15 Ibid., p. 330.
16 Ibid., p. 332.
who is his Father. The discovered ground is very rewarding.
The Christian sees God in all and all in God.  

2. General revelation gives a common ground on which to meet non-Christians. God speaks in creation, nature, and history, in the heart and conscience to all people.  

3. Moreover, this revelation keeps nature and grace, creation and re-creation, the world of reality and the world of value, together, and makes the relationship possible. In that setting man comes to a knowledge of the Creator. That the rational creature may know God and serve Him applies also to general revelation. Man is not isolated from the world. That world also reveals God. In it God makes Himself known in all His works.  

4. General revelation also arouses in man the sense of need for a special revelation.  

5. Then again "general revelation is that which makes possible special revelation, prepares for it, and carries it continually; special revelation in turn leads general revelation to itself and makes it serviceable." The former has as purpose the keeping, the latter, the saving of the human race. Both glorify God.

17 Ibid., pp. 333, 334. Cf. "The new sciences of nature and history are methods and means to show God's eternal power and majesty." Modernisme en Orthodoxie, p. 34.  
19 Ibid., p. 357.  
20 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 84.  
21 Handleiding, p. 17.  
22 M. D., p. 30.
Bavinck gives three reasons why general revelation is not complete and satisfactory.

1. It does not make known the person of Christ who alone is the way to the Father, Matt. 11:27, John 14:6, 17:3, Acts 4:12. It is insufficient for man as sinner. It knows of no saving grace and forgiveness. It can illumine the conscience of man somewhat and check sin, but it can re-create neither the nature of man nor the world.23

2. The knowledge which general revelation gives is unsure, mixed with error, and unreachable by many. Even great systems of thought have not given final assurance.24

3. The fact remains "that no single people have been satisfied with a so-called natural religion,"24 based on such a revelation. The abstractions of the eighteenth century and the historical sense of the nineteenth have left much to be desired.25 If thinkers have found a measure of satisfaction, the great mass of the people have not.

All revelation implies grace. General revelation has as its content common or general grace.26 We shall take up Bavinck's thoughts on this later. But that revelation is not sufficient for man's final happiness. Although "there is on every side evidence of a primitive revelation in the light of general revelation,"27 and although all men have some knowledge of God and

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23 G. D., I, p. 324.
24 Ibid., pp. 324, 325.
25 Ibid., p. 326.
26 Handleiding, p. 11.
a kind of faith in Him as Principal John Baillie says, more is needed and more is provided by Scripture. "To the Christian believer, he Paul declares, God has revealed His righteousness, but to all the Gentiles He has at least revealed His wrath." 28 Rom. 1:19-20 and Rom. 2:14-15, quoted by Principal Baillie and by Bavinck, show what the Gentiles possess in the way of revelation "so that they are without excuse." What they need is the fuller revelation given in and through Jesus Christ.

The basis of our faith and of the faith of those who have gone before rests on a revelation distinct from the general one. The two revelations differ in method and content. General revelation gives us some conception of God, of His goodness, righteousness, and anger, of His greatness and majesty. But nature presents no God of love. The Bible does that definitely. 29

Of that fuller revelation with its meaning for Christianity and culture Bavinck has much to say under the heading of Special Revelation.

2. Special Revelation

General revelation, which reveals something about God, is far from adequate. There is needed a special revelation that has as its content Christ with the fulness of grace and truth in order to annihilate sin with its fearful consequences of death and misery in individual man, humanity, and the world. 30

29 Modernisme en Orthodoxie, pp. 32-34.
That revelation is contained in Holy Scripture. The Bible is not the revelation but the record of it.31 In saying this Bavinck warns against those who not only distinguish between the revelation and the record, but who also separate them. "Scripture is differentiated from the preceding revelation, but it is not separated from it. Scripture is not a human, accidental, arbitrary, defective addition to revelation, but it is itself an element in revelation. It is the enclosure and completion; it is the corner- and the keystone of revelation."32

Bavinck accepts organic inspiration. "The drive of the Holy Spirit was given to prophets and apostles and consisted in an awakening and a spurring on in order to make known the revelation of God's counsel which they had received."33 In his chapter on "De Theopneustie der Schrift" Bavinck marshals all the data of the Old and New Testaments to prove the inspiration and the authority of Scripture.34

Also he sees, what Christians must see, a material difference between the prophets of the Old Testament and the sages of Greece, between the apostles and the heralds of Mohammed, between Bible miracles and heathen magic, between Scripture and the sacred books.35

The difference lies essentially in the fact that the Bible is the revelation of grace. The difference between general and

31 Ibid., p. 29.
32 Ibid., p. 30.
33 Ibid., p. 38.
special revelation does not lie first and foremost in this, that special revelation always in all its parts carries a strict supernatural character, but that it is a revelation of grace.36

Behind this manifestation of grace lies the revelation that began with the human race. "The segregation and election of Israel served the sole purpose of maintaining unmixed and unadulterated, in a continuing and perfecting manner, the original revelation which threatened more and more to be lost, so that it might again in the fulness of time be made the property of the whole of mankind."37

The significance of Israel lay in its being chosen and set apart as a people with the greatest mission to the world. Israel was not a people of science and art but of passion and imagination. It was not to philosophize about God but to listen to His word. The knowledge it was to reveal has an exceptional, deep, and rich meaning.38

Neither for Israel nor for us Christians who have come to know Israel's mission "does Scripture make any effort to prove the existence of God, but it assumes His existence; and it proceeds on the assumption that man has an ineradicable conception of it and a certain knowledge of the being of God."39

When Scripture uses the word knowing, it implies more than

36 Ibid., p. 357.
37 W. der O., p. 162.
39 G. D., II, p. 3.
rational assent. The Hebrew word is used of the union of man and wife. There is the element of possession. God owns Israel and His people of the New Testament Church. God's knowing and our knowing make the first links in the chain of salvation. They imply the meeting of God and man in Jesus Christ.40 "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John 17:3. Scripture gives true knowledge and wisdom centering in Christ who is both the fulness and the fulfillment of revelation.41

Such knowledge is more than rational perception. It is not opposed to reason, provided reason does not make too great a claim. This experiential knowledge applies to the whole of man who is a creature of thought, emotion, and will.

The revelation that reveals this knowledge is reasonable, and it requires expression in language. "Language carries the ideal wares of man, and the sarx of language is the written word."42 The Bible is the servant's form of revelation. Even the Logos became not simply man but doulos, sarx.42

The language of the New Testament is not the most beautiful from the point of view of grammar and linguistics, but it is indeed the most fitting for the impartation of God's thoughts. The word in this sense has become truly and universally human. Organic inspiration alone does justice to Scripture. In the teaching of Scripture it is the working out and the application of the central fact of revelation, the incarnation of the word. The Logos has become flesh, and the word has become Scripture; these are two facts that run parallel but are also most intimately related.43

40 "Kennis en Leven" in K. en L., p. 233.
41 Ibid., p. 236.
42 G. D., I, p. 400.
43 Ibid., p. 459.
In order to appropriate the truth of God revealed in Scripture and culminating in Christ, the Word made flesh, man needs faith. The Christian does not approach Scripture in an a priori sense, but he lets God speak. He goes to work not speculatively, but positively; he does not prescribe to God whether or not He should reveal Himself or how He should do this, but he listens to what God has to say.  

The revelation in Christ which comes to us through Scripture does not lower itself by asking our approval or disapproval, but it places itself far above us and urges us to faith and obedience. Scripture itself declares emphatically that physical man does not understand the things of the Spirit, that they are foolishness to him, that as an enemy he rejects and misunderstands them. "The revelation of God in Christ asks no support, no justification on man's part. It posits and maintains itself in high majesty. Its authority is normativa but also causitiva. It strives for its own triumph. It makes itself irresistible."  

However, this revelation is irresistible only when it becomes subjective in the believer. Objective revelation must complete itself in subjective. "For this reason the Christian Church at all times made confession of the testimonium Spiritus Sancti. God is the author of objective revelation; but He

44 Ibid., p. 310.  
is also the One who chooses the congregation, establishes the Church, and witnesses in her of Christ. 46 Revelation is given not to the Church as institution (as Rome holds) but as organism. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is the property of all believers. 47

This testimony of the Holy Spirit has as its real object not the authenticity, nor the canonicity, nor even the inspiration, but the divinitas, that is, the divine authority, of Scripture. 48 Moreover, this testimony is evident in the witness of the Spirit in the Church of all ages in regard to Scripture. And it is evident also in the heart of the believer who holds firmly that God's Word is the truth. 49

Scripture remains the basis of faith, but the testimony of the Holy Spirit is the moving cause of faith. We believe Scripture not because of, but through the witness of the Spirit. 50

Bavinck maintains spiritedly that the doctrine of the testimony of the Holy Spirit is by no means the Achilles' heel of Protestantism. "It deserves rather to be called the cornerstone of the Christian confession, the crown and seal of all Christian truth, the triumph of the Holy Spirit in the world." 51

It "is the triumph of the foolishness of the Cross over the wisdom of the world, the victory of the thoughts of God over the deliberations of man." 52

46 Ibid., p. 534.
48 Ibid., p. 642.
49 Ibid., pp. 643, 644.
50 Ibid., p. 644.
51 Ibid., p. 646.
52 Ibid., p. 647.
3. Insufficiency of Natural Theology

Since Bavinck's day the problem of general and special revelation has issued in a vital and at times almost furious debate. In this thesis it is not our task to enter into the controversy between Barth and Brunner on the possibility or impossibility of natural theology and of general revelation. If Bavinck were living to-day, it is almost certain that he would not take sides but would find something to appreciate and accept and something to reject in the positions of these thinkers.

At this point it is clarifying to quote from Principal John Baillie.

The question is further complicated by the growing tendency to substitute for the old distinction of natural and revealed knowledge of God the new distinction between a general and a special revelation. This changed way of regarding the matter was sometimes hinted at by the older writers who pointed out that there was a sense in which even natural knowledge could be spoken of as revelation - an internal revelation, as the Reformer Zwingli called it in his De Vera et Falsa Religione, (1529); but the full development of the usage would appear to be modern. It will be seen at once that the old and apparently so clear distinction between natural and revealed knowledge is in this way traversed and superseded; and that not because the revealed knowledge is naturalized but because the natural knowledge is now drawn up into the sphere of revelation. It is now asserted that God has revealed Himself, His mind and His will, not only in Christ and the Scriptures, but to some extent also in the pre-Christian and non-Christian religious traditions of the world, in the ordinary processes of thought, in philosophy, in external nature, in human history; though only in Christ and the Scriptures are we put in possession of the special revelation of His saving grace.53

53 In Revelation, Preface, pp. xviii-xix. Cf. also his Our Knowledge of God, pp. 37, 38.
From our study of Bavinck we can say that his teachings agree with this statement of the problem, although he goes back to the early centuries of the Christian Church to find mention of the two revelations. "In former times Christian theology drew the distinction between special and general revelation." Already in the old church fathers he finds "the distinction between the revelatio (religio, theologia) naturalis and supernaturalis." He finds it also in Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. But in scholasticism the distinction between natural and revealed theology developed into "positive contradistinction", which is evident in Rome's dualism as to reason and faith, natural and supernatural revelation. Even Calvin did not get altogether beyond this dualism at times.

Bavinck appeals above all to Scripture which "knows and teaches this revelation that in later theology was referred to as revelatio naturalis or generalis." That rational man may know and serve God applies also to general revelation, Acts 14:17; 17:27, Rom. 1:19-20.

There is, however, a necessary distinction to be made. In general revelation there is a natural knowledge in the objective sense which must be accompanied by a subjective revelation. Bavinck prefers to call this subjective revelation an enlightening. "To the objective general revelation there answers such an

54 W. der G., p. 22.
56 Ibid, p. 315.
57 Ibid, p. 354.
enlightening of the Logos, John 1: 9, or of the Spirit of God in the understanding and conscience, in the heart and emotions of man, by which he can understand the general revelation of God in nature and in history."58

That subjective revelation comes to its own only in the light of special revelation, which also has its objective and subjective side. The light that lightens every man is at its fullest and brightest only in Jesus Christ whom to know by faith is everlasting life. Bavinck refers to the mistake of Rousseau who thought that God could be known much better from His general than from His special revelation. And he adds that Rousseau forgot that whatever he understood of general revelation he owed to Scripture.58 Since the coming of the Christian era natural theology has been indebted consciously or unconsciously to the Christian revelation.

What Bavinck says of Calvin, that he did not get altogether beyond the dualism at times, applies seemingly to Bavinck as well and to all thinkers who grapple with the problems involved. At any rate Bavinck opposes a natural theology that overthrows special revelation. There is a revelation in nature, history, and man, but there is no understanding of it apart from special revelation contained in Scripture. "There is not a single religious or ethical truth which has been acknowledged everywhere, always, and by all; actually a natural theology has never existed."59

59 G. D., II, p. 47.
There is, however, the subjective side to be considered. In religion we always come back to a *semen religionis*. Scripture itself points this out. "It binds man as strongly as possible to the objective revelation in nature and grace, but it recognizes at the same time that man is God's image, that in the *nous* he possesses a faculty to see God in His works, and that he carries the work of the law written in his heart, Gen. 1:26, Acts 17:27, Rom. 1:19; 2:15."  

Scholasticism, rationalism, philosophical idealism, and naturalistic humanism stress reason before faith or at the expense of it. The revelation in these systems and the revelation upon which they prefer to feed have value but again only under the illumination of the Word.

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born"

may well be the picture of natural theology that desires to prove how far it can go on its own power and in its own light.

Bavinck is on the side of Calvin who in his commentaries and the Institutes maintains most strongly that "the whole of man's intellectual wisdom must be submitted to the foolishness of the Cross," and that natural theology has no "relatively independent status." A single passage from Calvin's writings is representative of other passages in which the Reformer stresses this truth.

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60 Matthew Arnold, *Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse.*  
62 Ibid., p. 173.
Therefore, though the effulgence which is presented to every eye, both in the heavens and on the earth, leaves the ingratitude of man without excuse since God, in order to bring the whole human race under the same condemnation, holds forth to all, without exception, a mirror of His Deity in His works, another and better help must be given to guide us properly to God as Creator. Not in vain, therefore, has He added the light of His Word in order that He might make Himself known unto salvation, and bestowed the privilege on those whom He was pleased to bring into nearer and more familiar relation to Himself.63

In this connection it is enlightening to quote from two twentieth century writers. Cullmann says, "The concept of 'natural revelation' which emerges only later, is still foreign to the New Testament."64 And as to this concept, Christopher Dawson, who sees some value in it but holds that natural theology cannot solve the most formidable problem of healing "the breach of communion between the spiritual and the rational order," writes, "The humanist Natural Theology is a rational superstructure erected on the foundation of the Christian theology of revelation."65

Our study reveals that Bavinck's teachings agree with some of the emphases of Brunner. Together they stress that general revelation is rightly understood only from within the Christian faith. Speaking of the differences of views between himself and Barth, Brunner says,

The real difference occurs, in the main, at two particular points: (1) that in agreement with Scripture and the Reformers I hold that God is still revealing Himself in His work of creation at the present time, (2) that the distinctively human element in man is not a trifle but a

63 Instit., I, 6, 1 (Beveridge's translation).
64 Christ and Time, p. 180.
65 Religion and Culture, p. 44.
theologically relevant fact understood only from the point of view of the truth that man has been created in the image of God.66

To that Bavinck's teachings subscribe.

When Brunner states that "it is the task of our theological generation to find its way back to a right natural theology"67 and later in Man in Revolt explains that he means a Christian natural theology, it reminds us of Bavinck's attempt to overcome the dualism between nature and grace. Bavinck does not speak of a Christian natural theology, but he is very much concerned about a Christian interpretation of what has come to be called general revelation.

Bavinck's teachings also agree with Brunner's when the latter, speaking of natural theology, distinguishes between the objective and the subjective sense, describing the subjective as sinful man's trying, in his own power, to make something of revelation.

With some of Barth's emphases also Bavinck's ideas concur. When Barth says, "It is just under this bondage to the name of Christ that the Christian apprehension of revelation finds its freedom"68 and when he states that "theology cannot become philosophy, and it cannot permit its task to be usurped by any philosophy,"69 we are reminded of Bavinck's convictions. It is true that the latter called his Stone Lectures The Philosophy of Revelation, but the very title bears out the contents, that the

66 Man in Revolt, pp. 527, 528.
67 Natur und Gnade, p. 44.
68 In Revelation, p. 43.
69 Ibid., p. 80.
Christian faith, not unaided reason, is the first requisite. However, Bavinck would have more than reservations about Barth's statement that "we must say that only the man who knows about Jesus Christ knows anything at all about revelation."\(^{70}\) Certainly the Event of Christ, "the once for all" as Barth puts it, has made a profound difference, in fact, has made all the difference in our views of revelation. But Bavinck holds that we know Christ only from Scripture, and that Scripture reveals much about God. The Old Testament historical writers, the poets, and the prophets are inspired to write about God. To be sure, the revelation centers in Christ and finds its culmination in Him, but it is a revelation before the Event and leading up to it. It is perhaps putting it more bluntly than wisely to say that there is more to revelation than Christ although the more needs its clarification in Him. Yet, Bavinck's respect for Scripture and his conviction that it is the Word of God implies that. Accepting Christ as the acme of revelation, he still will not lessen the significance of Scripture. It is wrong to deny Scripture for the sake of Christ, for only from it do we learn of Him. It is the Word made flesh in language that gives us the Word made flesh in Christ. Gustaf Aulen seems to have this in mind when he refers to the danger of "the isolation of the revelation of God in Christ."\(^{71}\)

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\(^{70}\) Ibid., p. 48.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 290.
Bavinck, like the Reformers, like Barth, Brunner, Baillie, and other Christian thinkers, cannot speak of natural theology apart from the Christian revelation. If he had been invited to deliver the Gifford Lectures, he would have found it not only difficult, but also impossible to meet the requirements of Lord Gifford "to treat [the] subject as a strictly natural science." He would have had to speak his convictions as to the supernatural revelation, and he would have stated how much natural theology has fed from the springs of that revelation. He would have expressed thoughts akin to William Temple's closing sentences in *Nature, Man, and God*:

> Natural theology ends in a hunger for that Divine Revelation which it began by excluding from its purview. Rightly sifting with relentless criticism every argument, it knows what manner of Voice that must be which shall promise relief to mankind; but the Voice is not its own, nor can it judge the message that is spoken. 'Come unto me...and I will give you rest;' it is not philosophy that can estimate the right of the Speaker to issue that invitation or to make that promise; that right can be proved or disproved only by the experiment of life.

And for Bavinck that experiment would have been full of the experience that comes with God's initiative most fully in Christ.

Christ is our Redemption; He fulfills the law of our personality. Because they understood this, the Reformed thinkers allowed Natural Theology to precede Revealed Theology. Nature and Scripture are not hostile to each other but belong together. The one without the other is incomplete.

74 "Het Geweten" in *K. en L.*, p. 27.
For Bavinck there is a vast difference between a supernatural revelation and the revelation found in nature, in history, in the religious, poetic, and heroic inspiration as we find it outside of Christianity. Such a supernatural revelation implies three elements: (1) the existence of a personal, divine Being who makes Himself known, (2) a truth, a fact, a happening not known before, (3) a human being to whom revelation occurs. 75

Scripture gives full content to each element. That content is at the heart of Christianity. "All knowledge of God comes to us out of His revelation, and....we cannot appropriate the content of revelation except through an upright Christian faith. Only he who is born of water and spirit sees the Kingdom of God." 76

It may well be asked at this point what the relevance of the preceding argument is to the subject of Christianity's relation to culture. The answer is that Christianity is the religion that lays claim to and is built on the special revelation of God in His Word. That revelation does not ignore general revelation but casts the best light on it. Therefore, it also illumines the entire realm of culture. It relates creation and redemption. The foundations of creation and redemption are one. 77

The Word made flesh is the First-begotten of the dead and of all creatures. In Him God comes nearer and nearer to man. The

75 G. D., I, pp. 303, 304.
76 Ibid., p. 208.
77 W. der O., p. 23.
realm of general revelation with all the riches of culture does not lie beyond the reaches of God's grace. It even has its significance in proclaiming the Creator. But as the heavens declare the glory of God only to the believer, so general revelation declares that glory only under the aspect of special revelation.

As a disclosure of the greatness of God's heart special revelation far surpasses general revelation, which makes known to us the power of His mind. General revelation leads to special revelation, and special revelation points back to general. The one calls for the other and without it remains imperfect and unintelligible. Together they proclaim the manifold wisdom which God has displayed in creation and redemption.77

There is a difference between God's thoughts and man's thoughts as the history of religions reveals. Bavinck speaks of God's thoughts and man's errors.78 Those errors can find their corrective only in the revelation of God in His Word culminating in Jesus Christ. Without that special revelation general revelation and all the manifestations of culture lose the best meaning God intends for them.

4. Relation of Revelation and Culture

What more specifically is the relation between revelation and culture?

Culture is inseparable from revelation, for the latter implies meanings, God's meanings and intent as far as man can assimilate them.

It will help us to consider God's attitude towards man and

77 Ibid., p. 16.
the world. From special revelation we learn that God is the
Creator and the Redeemer of man and the world. He is interested
in the natural and the spiritual. In fact, the natural takes
on significance only in the light of the spiritual. "Actually
the natural precedes the spiritual, but logically the spiritual
is first."79

God did not reject fallen man and the world. On the con-
trary, He upholds them by His mighty providence and is working
out His plan of redemption for them. The fallen world in which
we live rests on the foundations of a creation which was very
good because it proceeded from the hands of God.80 Far from
letting that fallen world go, God has His increasing purpose in
it. In civilization and culture He is working out His plan.
As we have seen before, culture, in a certain sense, really
begins after the fall.81

All the elements of culture exist only because God has
laid down thoughts and powers in His creation, which man under
His leading learns to understand.82 God is concerned even with
such a simple matter as instructing the farmer how he should
develop his acres, Isaiah 28:24-29. How much the more is He
concerned with all the significant affairs of mankind! He re-
veals Himself in these, and casts the light of His revelation
upon them.

79 G. D., II, p. 86.
80 Ibid., III, p. 2.
81 Ibid., p. 51.
82 Ibid., I, p. 356.
Now it is true that nature and history can be studied in themselves, but the results we do not call revelation. "As soon as the creatures are brought into relationship with God and are viewed sub specie aeternitatis, they take on for us the character of a revelation and make God known to us more or less."83 The supernatural cannot be explained from the powers and according to the laws of created things.84

But Scripture, which is the clearer revelation of God, will not hear of the despising of the body and of the world. It evaluates them in the divine and human setting. It teaches that man in body and soul is the image-bearer of God and that by means of his body he is related to the visible world. "But this bond is not a slave's chain; on the contrary, the world in which man is placed does not lead him from God but up to Him. It is a creation of God, a mirror of His virtues, a manifestation of His thoughts."85

God purposes a restored cosmos; He desires to wrest the whole world in its organic consistency from the power of sin and to let the glory of God shine in all creatures.86

In all this God is to be considered first. "It is always God and God only whose glory in creation and redemption, in nature and grace, in world and Church is to be pondered and described. It is knowledge of Him alone that these display."87

83 Ibid., pp. 356, 357.
84 Ibid., p. 371.
85 Ibid., II, p. 45.
86 Ibid., I, pp. 362, 470.
87 Ibid., II, p. 2.
The more we ponder Him, the more our knowledge will change into wonder and prayer. 87

However, God also looks away from Himself, looks upon His creature and His creation with the eye of grace. Nature and grace are not opposites; God is the God of both. 88 Grace did not destroy nature, but it has renewed and sanctified it. 89 Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to restore it.

The revelation of God in Christ is hostile to all corruption in man and in the world, "but it takes up, confirms, and completes all that from the beginning has been put into human nature by revelation and has been preserved and increased subsequently in the human race." 90

There are many ideas regarding the chief concerns of life, but,

all these fundamental ideas form the beginning and the foundation of history, the principle and the starting point of all religion, morality, and justice, the bond of all social relations, the germ and the root of all science and art, the harmony of thinking and being, of being and becoming, of becoming and acting, the unity of logic, physics, and ethics, of the true, the good, and the beautiful. All these fundamentals are given from the beginning in human nature.... They are grounded in the very nature of man.... They all point back to a divine origin.... Knowledge in this sense flows from revelation. 91

Christ in His cosmic significance gives unity to these fundamental ideas, a unity which, from the viewpoint of the doctrine of descent, must be considered a miracle. 92

88 Ibid., pp. 52, 53.
89 Ibid., IV, p. 657.
90 W. der Q., p. 160.
91 Ibid., p. 159.
92 Ibid., p. 158.
Revelation discloses to us that man and the cosmos have a beginning and a destiny. The illumination spreads over the whole realm of culture.

The arguments for the reality of revelation derived from the nature of thought, the essence of nature, the character of history, and the conception of religion are finally strengthened by the course of development through which mankind has passed, and which has led it from paradise to the Cross and will guide it from the Cross to glory.93

God's concern for man and the cosmos, for religion and culture is made known in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Revelation, while having its center in the Person of Christ, in its periphery extends to the uttermost ends of creation. It does not stand isolated in nature and in history.... With the whole of nature, with the whole of history, with the whole of humanity, with family and society, with science and art it is intimately connected... The foundations of creation and redemption are the same. The Logos who became flesh is the same by whom all things were made. The First-born of the dead is also the First-born of every creature. The Son, whom the Father made heir of all things, is the same by whom He also made the worlds.94

Without that revelation in Christ man, the cosmos, and the whole realm of culture have little or no meaning. For revelation is a disclosure of the mysterion tou Theou. What neither nature nor history, neither mind nor heart, neither science nor art can teach us, it makes known to us, the fixed, unalterable will of God to rescue the world and save sinners, a will at variance with well-nigh the whole appearance of things. This will is the secret of revelation. In creation God manifests the power of His mind; in revelation, which has redemption as its center, He discloses to us the greatness of His heart.95

The wisdom of such a revelation must always be brought into relationship with the divine revelation that comes from the world.

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93 Ibid., p. 144.
94 Ibid., pp. 22, 23.
95 Ibid., p. 21.
When that occurs, the whole realm of culture in all its varied manifestations takes on the meanings God intends.

That makes possible the Christian's appreciation of culture. He may cherish all that is good and grand in men and all that has been brought about by men. Although according to the Christian confession a creature has nothing that he has not received, he should guard against the despising of gifts and the deifying of man.96

The Reformers, looking upon nature in the light of God, saw it not as a deceiving, satanic power, but as a revelation of divine glory, a wonderful work of unity and harmony.97 So also the Christian can look around him and within and enjoy all that is true, good, and beautiful. Assured of his being a child of God, he can freely look around and enjoy without restrictions all good and perfect gifts coming down from the Father of lights. All is his because he is Christ's, and Christ is God's.98

Faith for the Christian is not only the way of salvation, it is also the conquering of the world. The spiritual life does not shut out family and civic life, the social and political, the artistic and scientific. On the contrary it is the power that enables the faithful carrying out of the earthly calling and stamps the whole of life as a serving of God.99

96 Het Vierde Eener Eeuw, p. 5.
97 "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V.O., p. 98.
98 De Zekerheid des Geloofs, p. 103.
99 Ibid., p. 104.
The world under God offers both challenge and enjoyment. Priest in God's temple, the believer is, therefore, king over the whole earth... He loves the flowers that grow at his feet and marvels at the stars that twinkle above him. He does not despise art which is a costly gift of God, and he does not rail at science which is God's gift... He believes that every creature of God is good, and that nothing is to be rejected but to be accepted with gratitude.... He is like a flower which unconsciously spreads its fragrance. In a word, he is a man of God equipped for all good work. And while his life is Christ, dying will be gain.100

Such ecstatic words must be understood in their setting and from the point of view Bavinck is taking at the time. We find such statements in Calvin. We make them ourselves. They do not at all deny the reality of sin and evil, and the darker picture of man.

Bavinck is aware of the light and the darkness as Rembrandt was. That is why he maintains that apart from the full revelation in Christ culture has its limitations. Culture and civilization "in themselves do not guarantee the truly human character of life,"101 says Brunner. Bavinck writes, "Arts and sciences may be mighty weapons in the struggle for existence, and culture may contribute to the agreeableness and enriching of life, they are nevertheless all powerless to give man a lasting happiness, an eternal good."102

He asks several questions in which the answer is implied.

Why does man not satisfy himself with the powers present in nature?

100 Ibid., p. 105.
101 Christianity and Civilization, II, p. 129.
102 G. D., III, p. 552.
Why does he not seek in science, art, industry, etc., in all the factors of culture the help which he needs in the struggle against nature? How is it to be explained that man continues to believe in the gods, creations of his desire, even when they so often disappoint him and leave him to his lot? Why does he offer his most precious possessions to the gods? And how is it to be accounted for that he continues to worship the gods while his lordship over nature extends itself?103

The answer is that man has longings which culture cannot fulfill. No matter how great his attainments, man has never been satisfied by these, and by means of them he has never reached the salvation after which he thirsts. For all culture gives satisfaction but also creates and awakens needs. Culture has its great incalculable, but it also brings its peculiar burdens and dangers.104 Proud of his progress, man nevertheless sees the long way he must go. "That is why religion has always existed alongside culture, or better still, religion preceded culture, and culture everywhere came into existence and developed under the influence of religion."104

Feeling that culture lacks the one thing necessary for his happiness, man looks for another, a better redemption; he seeks a lasting happiness, a durable, an eternal good for body and soul in time and forever. God alone can give him this, but no science or art, civilization or culture can.105

103 Ibid., I, p. 284.
104 Ibid., III, p. 351.
105 Ibid., pp. 351, 352.
Under God's direction the culture-process goes on, and it is to be appreciated. But Bavinck asks if folk will be happier with all the development. His answer is that it is the Christian mission to the world to give mankind the comfort of the Christian faith, that all the goods of earth come to man not by chance, but from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rules heaven and earth, and in whose light alone life with its prosperity and adversity is to be understood. And he quotes these lines from Fr. Rückert:

Die Natur ist Gottes Buch,  
Doch ohne göttliche Offenbarung  
Misslingt der Leserversuch,  
Den anstellt menschliche Erfahrung.

5. Culture and the Kingdom

In spite of its limitations when considered by itself, culture forms a very important part of the Kingdom of God. The Christian, not of the world but in it, has his cultural task. Moreover, he must appreciate the best offerings of culture wherever he finds them. As a cultural being, active and receptive, the Christian enriches the Kingdom and takes part in the realization of its coming.

It is true as Cochrane says that "Christianity (over against the barbarians) concerned itself with the problems of economic and cultural life only in a secondary sense; despite the fumbling and uncertain character of its efforts, its real object was still to build the Kingdom of God." It is true that the City of God and the City of Man are different realms as Augustine

106 "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V.O., p. 104.  
107 Christianity and Classical Culture, p. 357.
maintains in his at times fascinating, at times dull classic. But these realms are both in this world and in relation as Christians and non-Christians are.

There is a Kingdom to which Christians belong by regeneration and that gives them a task in this world, a task which calls for their best under God.

Bavinck speaks of that Kingdom, its King, and its citizens. Prophecy awaited another, a better king than David and Solomon, viz., the anointed Servant of the Lord. "As such a king Christ appeared; He founded a kingdom which now exists spiritually and morally but is meant to reveal itself outwardly and bodily in the City of God from which all the godless are banned and in which God will be all in all." 108

Christ is first of all King over His people, in the regnum gratiae. 109 But as Mediator He has power over all creatures, Ps. 2:9; 72:8; 110:1-3, Matthew 28:18, I Cor. 15:24, 27, Ephes. 1:22, Phil. 2:9-11, Peter 3:22, Rev. 1:5; 17:14. This does not imply that the world is positively ruled by Christ, but that it is under His power, subject to Him, and that one day, even though unwillingly, it will acknowledge Him as Lord. He has power also over the kingdom of Satan. 110 At the end of time when He has completed His mediatorial work, Christ will give His kingship to the Father, for God is the Eternal King. 111

109 Ibid., p. 546.
111 Ibid., p. 549. Cf. M. D., pp. 636, 644. Bavinck makes a distinction between Christ as Mediator of salvation and Mediator of reunion. In the latter sense Christ remains Eternal King.
Bavinck makes no distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ. It is one Kingdom. It has temporal and eternal significance. "The regeneration of men is completed in the regeneration of creation; the Kingdom of God will be fully realized when it is spread visibly over the earth."\textsuperscript{112}

We shall deal with the future of culture in Chapter VII of this thesis. Here we are concerned with the divine mandate that lies in the Kingdom concept. That mandate places the cultural challenge before the Christian in his daily living.

He who believes does not fulfill the will of God by fleeing from the world but by being true to the calling entrusted to him on earth. The life on earth is an important preparation for what is to come. It does not form a contrast with the life for heaven. The new heaven and earth are built up out of the elements of the world which now exists, and the Church is the restored humanity under Christ as head.\textsuperscript{113}

For the Christian, therefore, there is a very close relationship between what is, what is becoming, and what finally is to come. The Kingdom of righteousness and peace, entered only through regeneration, is a present reality. In the hearts and lives of believers it is the rule of God manifesting itself in the world. It is a yeast in all fields of life.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., IV, p. 801.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 805.
On the contrary, He took upon Himself the full human nature and came into the world not to condemn it, but to preserve it; He has planted His Kingdom in that world and has taken care that in the world it can exist and work renewingly as a yeast in all spheres of life.114

The Kingdom is God's one-increasing purpose. It must be that also for the Christian. It is that when out of the rich life of personal and communal faith he works at the structure of culture. Culture can find its purpose and reason for existence only in the Kingdom of God. Only the child of God is the lord of the earth.115

In the Kingdom the true, the good, and the beautiful are realized and become one; nothing good is destroyed, but all is dedicated. The history of the nations finds its leading thought and explanation in the Kingdom of Heaven.116

From the Christian point of view, therefore, life is not only a matter of soul-saving. It is that, to be sure, first and foremost. But the limitation often set by fundamentalists does not do justice to the Christian impact. Bavinck's ideas of Christianity and culture consider life also a matter of soul-making and soul-building under God who is Sovereign. Two of the theologian's favorite texts which recur thematically are I Cor. 3: 21-23, "For all things are yours,... all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's;" and Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,

114 Ibid., p. 450.
115 "Het Rijk God Het Hoogste Goed" in K. en L., p. 50.
116 Ibid., p. 51.
whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ¹¹⁷

Herman Ridderbos, writing thirty years after Bavinck, and speaking of the idea of the Kingdom of God, puts it well in these words: "It is oriented not only to the salvation of God's people, but also to God's maintaining Himself in all His works, because it reveals not only Israel, but also the heathen, also the world, yes, all creation and creatures under the great aspect of the realization of all God's kingly rights and promises." ¹¹⁸

On another page the same author, writing of the disciples of Christ, says, "Also the norm according to which they had to live remains the same; no 'interim-ethics' or 'exceptional-lawgiving' forbids them the loyalty to life, the earth, and culture." ¹¹⁹

With such statements the teachings of Bavinck agree.

Revelation that comes from God spreads its light over the whole of life. The full revelation in Jesus Christ leaves no part of life untouched. In the illumination culture becomes meaningful. It is also a revelation. But only for the Christian who sees all things sub specie aeternitatis can this really be so. For by grace he knows personally that divine redemption undergirds his life and the entire cosmos. By faith he understands that the City of God far surpasses the City of Man and will outlast it.

¹¹⁷ Revised Standard Version.
¹¹⁸ De Komst van het Koninkrijk, pp. 39, 40.
¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 396.
CHAPTER IV

THE ROOTS OF CULTURE

1. God and Creation

According to Bavinck the roots of culture lie in creation, and behind and above creation stands the eternal, triune God, the Creator of heaven and earth. The words "In the beginning God" form the starting point of all our believing and thinking. The Bible assumes God and never attempts to prove Him. The Word, written by divinely inspired men, sets the example we must follow.

Creation is a work of God's wisdom, a free act according to the divine counsel and will.

The purpose of creation is the showing forth of the glory and majesty of God. Scripture says that all nature is a revelation of God's virtues, a proclaimer of His praise, Ps. 19:1, Rom. 1:19. Christ has come to glorify HIm, John 17:4. All the benefits of grace He gives for His name's sake, for redemption, forgiveness, sanctification, etc., Ps. 105:8; 78:9, Isaiah 43:25; 48:11; 60:21; 61:3, Rom. 9:25, Eph. 1:6 ff. He gives His glory to no other, Isaiah 42:8. The final purpose is

1 After I had decided on this chapter heading, I discovered these words in David Cairns' book, The Image of God in Man, p. 158: "This relic [of the image], while insufficient to enable man to perform any works that would justify him before God, yet did enable theologians to give a theological significance to the universal humanity of man, that singularity of our race which distinguishes us from the animals. And on this basis the moral responsibility and guilt of man before God were given a theological foundation, and the whole of human culture, civilization and art, were held to be a flowering from this slender root."


3 Ibid., pp. 199, 200.

4 Ibid., pp. 226 ff
that all kingdoms will be subjected to Him and all creatures will bow before Him, Dan. 7:27, Isaiah 2: 3-13, Mal. 1:11, I Cor. 15:24 ff. Here already honor is brought to Him by His people, Ps. 115:1, Matthew 6:13. One day God alone will be great and will receive glory from all His creatures, Rev. 4:11; 19:6. He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, Isaiah 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8; 22:13. From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things, Rom. 11:36. On the basis of this revelation Christian theology has almost unanimously taught that the glory of God is the final purpose of all God's works. All this implies the divine love as well.

Bavinck compares God to an artist and creation to His masterpiece. "God is not less than an artist. Even as the latter realizes his idea in his work of art, so God creates all things according to His thoughts that He has formed. The world is a divine work of art. He is Artist and Builder of all that exists."6

This is well expressed by the Greek word cosmod and the Latin word mundus which place the beauty and the harmony of creation in the foreground.7 As Paul compares the church to a body and a building and Peter likens believers to living stones, so the world is both a history and a work of art. It is like a body that grows and a building that is erected, spreading itself

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5 Ibid., p. 457.
6 Ibid., p. 199.
7 Ibid., p. 461.
out in the breadth of space and advancing itself in the length of time. It is to be viewed both horizontally and vertically; from the lowest creatures it strives upwards to meet the light and the life of God, and it moves forward to a God-glorifying end. In that way it displays God's virtues and perfections, in principle at its beginning, and increasingly in its progressive development, and perfectly at the end of time.7

Using another figure of speech, Bavinck speaks of the world as a book all the pages of which are written by God's almighty hand.8

Man is the crown of creation as the first chapters of Genesis reveal and as all Scripture implies. God realizes His purpose in creating man who was made to love, worship, and serve Him, and to understand the divine purpose in all creation. Creation runs out into man. In him the spiritual and material world join themselves.9 The first chapter of Genesis gives a general history of creation, which finds its purpose and end in man, the second deals in particular with the creation of man and the position in which the other creatures stand to man. In the first report man is the end of nature, in the second he is the beginning of history.10

Sin brought great changes, but it did not frustrate the purpose of God. The world and man remained meaningful.

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7 Ibid., p. 528.
8 Ibid., p. 543.
9 Ibid., p. 544.
The form is changed, but the materia of man, plant, animal, nature, earth is the same before and after the fall. All the essential elements that now exist were present before the fall. The distinction and inequality between man and woman, parents and children, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends; the manifold institutions and positions in the social life, such as marriage, family, education, etc.; the changing of day and night, labor days and days of rest, work and recreation, months and years; the lordship of man over the earth by means of science and art, etc.; they are undoubtedly altered by sin, but they nevertheless have their principle and foundation not in sin, but in creation, in the ordinances of God.  

God is still rulor of all He has made, and His providence is over all His works. Providence goes hand in hand with creation. Even before the fall man was dependent on his Creator, and after that he is more so than ever. God has never ceased sustaining what He has made. By means of creation He called a world into existence, "which deserves to be named both a cosmon and an aion, and which in space and time is a speculum lucidissimum gloriae divinae. Providence serves now to lead the world from its beginning to its final purpose, it begins working at once with creation and maintains and brings to development what is given in creation."  

In the light of creation and providence man's task is clear. As a religious being, related to God by virtue of creation and redemption, man finds his cultural opportunity and challenge. Culture must flower in him. As Brunner says, man comes before culture, and he "becomes human, not by culture and civilization,  

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11 Ibid., pp. 620, 621.  
12 Ibid., p. 656.
but by understanding his human destiny." But his destiny includes the cultural mandate. With the coming of sin man did not cease to be a cultural being even as he did not cease to be a religious being. After the fall man is sent into the world to subject and rule it with hard labor.

As God did not leave man without the hope of restoration, so God did not leave him without the shining ideal of a service that takes in the entire cultural realm, a service that, if rightly carried out, glorifies God and enriches life. And as the divine purpose is to restore man in all his relationships, to God, to man, and to the world, more is needed than man's efforts, however valiant or weak they may be. Divine grace is essential not only in religion, but also in culture. "Man must really become God's son again before he can be in the genuine sense a cultural being."

This rather strong statement, standing by itself, could well imply a minimizing of culture outside the pale of Christianity. It must be understood paradoxically, like the statement that only the Christian is really human. Bavinck has too much respect for culture wherever he finds it to minimize it, though he is aware of the good and the evil in its history. Bavinck also has too much respect for the grace of God (of which we shall speak in our next chapter) to deny it where it is evident. He

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13 Christianity and Civilization, II, p. 133.
14 G. D., III, p. 204.
15 W. der O., p. 229.
also honors the doctrine of the image of God in man and its significance for religion and culture.

To a study of that image we now turn.

2. The Image of God

Within the last decades the doctrine of man has come much to the fore in theological thinking. At the heart of that doctrine lies the idea of the image of God in man. Scripture gives us this all-important concept the meaning of which has been and is being debated with some heat and some light. In the debate Barth and Brunner take a significant part.

As a preliminary to taking up Bavinck's views on the image of God we shall deal briefly with the views of Barth and Brunner. We are indebted to Principal John Baillie, Professor of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, and to Professor David Cairns of Christ's College, Aberdeen, for clarification of the issue.

In his argument with Brunner, recorded in Natural Theology, and in his *Dogmatik*, I, 1, Barth holds that the image of God in man is wholly lost as a result of the Fall; that there is no point of contact where God and fallen man meet; and that only in faith is there a miraculous restoration of the image and the point of contact. But according to Cairns there is a change in *Dogmatik*, III. "Barth no longer holds that man's existence in the image has been lost."\(^{16}\) Man is God's image in as much as

\(^{16}\) *The Image of God in Man*, p. 166.
he is man. "The nature of man remains unchanged by his sin, since sin cannot recreate man, making him bad where he was originally good. It can, and does, conceal the real nature of man from himself and his fellows, but his true nature is not concealed from God."17

Barth sees in the man-woman relationship "a parable and promise of the other relationship of men to God in Christ.... In both relationships the image is universal."18

This universal image of God in man in his relationship to woman and to his neighbor is made up of "a bond of willing-helpfulness which is man's by nature and not by grace."19 And it entails four points:

"Firstly, that I should see my neighbor as a real man.
"Secondly, that I should speak to him, and receive his answer as a real answer.
"Thirdly, that I should help him.
"Fourthly, that I should do these three things gladly."20

Barth here shows a warm interest in man for which he deserves credit, a credit which some critics have not been ready to give him on the basis of what they understood of him in his previous writings.

For Barth, however, only the man who is redeemed, who loves God and obeys His call is truly in the image. There is no

18 Ibid., p. 179.
19 Ibid., p. 173.
restoration of that image except through Jesus Christ.

In spite of Barth's latest views on the universal image, problems still remain. We share with Professor Cairns the difficulty of harmonising Barth's views on the universal image with his refusal to allow for a general revelation, a universal confrontation of man with God, and a knowledge of God except in the incarnate Christ. Certainly there must be something of divine grace even in the four points mentioned above, not a grace unto salvation, to be sure, but a general grace.

We agree with Barth that the image must be restored in man only through salvation in Christ. That view we find also in Calvin, Brunner, Baillie, and Bavinck. Principal Baillie gives a clear and satisfying presentation of the universal image in these words:

It is thus possible to hold that the selfsame image of God, which by the power of Christ is restored in the souls of the saints, is to be found dimly and brokenly reflected in all human nature, behind and below the ravaging defacements of sin's corruption; and at the same time to magnify to the utmost the implacably urgent need of the restoration itself, of the new creation and the new birth.21

We must now turn to a brief consideration of what Brunner considers the image of God in man to be.

Brunner speaks of "the dangerous and vague concept of the remnant of the image."22 He prefers to distinguish between the formal and the material side of the image.

21 Our Knowledge of God, p. 102.
22 Natural Theology, p. 23.
The formal image is not lost. Man is still human; he still has a superior position in creation; he is still a responsible being, a subject.\textsuperscript{23} The formal image is the point of contact.\textsuperscript{24} Man has the capacity for words, and he has responsibility. "The Word of God could not reach a man who had lost his consciousness of God entirely."\textsuperscript{25}

According to Brunner "the point of contact includes everything in man on which the Word of God takes hold in order to give us faith. He lays claim to that which He created, our outward presence and our outward hearing, our power of understanding logic and grammar, our rational personal existence, and above all, its center, our knowledge of responsibility."\textsuperscript{26}

The universal or formal image consists in man's standing before God as a responsible being in the I-Thou relationship. This responsibility in love, the true nature of man, is expressed not only to God, but also to our neighbor. The image, therefore, reveals itself also in man's relation to man. The "I" is related to the human "thou" as well as to the Divine "Thou."\textsuperscript{27}

Man is God's image both in soul and body.\textsuperscript{28} This agrees in general with Calvin's view, as we shall see.

Brunner maintains that the material image is completely lost. Man is through and through a sinner who needs the redemption

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., pp. 23, 24.
\textsuperscript{24} Natur und Gnade, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{25} Natural Theology, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{26} Cairns, op. cit., p. 163. See Brunner, Man in Revolt, pp. 536, 537.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 150. See Man in Revolt, pp. 97-99, 105, 106.
\textsuperscript{28} Man in Revolt, p. 388.
that alone will restore the image of God in him. That redemption is possible only through Christ.

Barth, Brunner, and Baillie, and, as we shall see Calvin, and Bavinck, agree that the universal image allows no alternative way of salvation. Cairns sums it up well when he says: "It is clear that where a theologian has left room for such a way of salvation, if logical consistency is preserved, the role of Christ as Saviour must be drastically reduced, and the weight of sin seriously under-estimated." 29

Cairns prefers to call the formal or universal image the Old Testament image. He finds this Old Testament image referred to in James 3:9 and in Mark 12:16. 30 He sees the New Testament image in "Christ's perfect humanity, in which by faith men can share, and in which they hope to be perfected." 31 The latter requires regeneration and faith.

How the image of God in man is related to our subject, the relation of Christianity and culture in the teaching of Bavinck, we hope to show later after studying the views of Calvin and Bavinck. But before leaving Brunner we quote one statement from Man in Revolt that bears directly on the subject. "In the interpretation of the phrase 'Created in God's image' was decided from the first, and is decided still to-day, the precise relation between reason and revelation, church and culture.

29 Cairns, op. cit., p. 87.
30 Ibid., p. 30.
31 Ibid., p. 35. For a full discussion of his own views see Cairns' book, pp. 9-52, 187 ff., 238 ff.
faith and humanity. The significance of culture is determined by the presence of the image of God in man.

We come now to a short study of Calvin's views on the image of God in man. This will help us in considering Bavinck's views which in the main agree with Calvin's.

For Calvin, the image and the likeness are not differentiated. He considers the image in a two-fold sense. God images Himself in nature by beholding His works and in man by man's intelligible response to the Word.

That response by man is expressed in humble and adoring gratitude for God's grace, and the gratitude becomes evident in activity to the glory of God's name.

The image is characterized by rectitude, the integrity of the whole soul. It implies constant dependence on God and obedience to His Word and will. "That is man's true rectitude: to be created in the image of God is to be opposite to or to respond to Him in such a way that God may be able to behold Himself in man as in a mirror."

Even in the body, man reflects the image of God. "And though the primary seat of the divine image was in the mind and the heart, or in the soul and its powers, there was no part even of the body in which some rays of glory did not shine."

Also the community of men, characterized by rectitude, may

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33 Instit., I, 15, 3.
34 Ibid., II, 12, 6.
35 Ibid., III, 19, 8.
36 T. F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man, p. 51.
37 Instit., I, 15, 3.
image the glory of God. The community of saints, the body of Christ, having a relationship to God and to one another, reflects the image.

It is often said in Reformed theology that the image of God consists in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But these terms are derived from Col. 3:19 and Eph. 14:24 which refer to what happens in regeneration. Though Calvin admits that these forms of expression are elliptical, "this principle cannot be overthrown - viz., that the leading feature in the renovation of the divine image must also have held the highest place in its creation." But he adds that "the image of God constitutes the entire excellence of human nature as it shone in Adam before the fall." But this that remains will never direct men to

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38 Ibid., I, 15, 4.
40 Ibid., p. 102, Instit., II, 2, 1, II, 2, 10.
Christ. Also as to skill and wisdom he says, "In this diversity we can trace some remains of the divine image distinguishing the whole human race from other creatures." 41

What man needs to have the image restored is salvation through Christ who is the most perfect image of God. 42

Because man is in the image of God, he must apply himself diligently to his calling. There is a dignity in human labor of whatever kind it may be. Man's life must be one of faith and of active and strenuous obedience. Submitting their lives to God's righteousness, men become partakers of His glory. 43

It is at this point that the whole realm of culture opens up to man as the field in which he must labor with all his talents and powers to the glory of God. Though the image is restored in man only by divine grace, in man's response the image of God comes to its own again. He has a calling to fulfill, a God to glorify. He must preach the Gospel but also live it in whatever spheres he moves.

Calvin's appreciation of the truth in profane authors is very significant.

Therefore, in reading profane authors, we should be reminded by the admirable light of truth displayed in them, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to Him, not to reject or contemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts we insult the Giver. 44

41 *Instit.*, II, 2, 17, 18; III, 7, 6.
43 Torrance, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
44 *Instit.*, II, 2, 15.
In the same paragraph he goes on to say:

Therefore, since it is manifest that men whom the Scriptures term carnal are so acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior things, their example should teach us how many gifts the Lord has left in possession of human nature, notwithstanding of its having been despoiled of the true good. 44

In the next paragraph, however, he cautions "that the whole power of intellect thus bestowed is, in the sight of God, fleeting and vain whenever it is not based on a solid foundation of truth." 45

If the relic of the image accounts for some truth wherever it is found, even in fallen man, how much more should the restored image account for the greater appreciation of truth, and also of goodness, and beauty. Because this is so, not only the appreciation, but also the cultivation of these should be the Christian's challenging task.

That brings us to a study of Bavinck's views on the image.

For Bavinck, image and likeness are not different concepts. They simply strengthen each other to show that the image of God in man was perfect and revealed likeness to God. 46

Man was created in God's image, and the image included a spiritual and bodily health which was indicated as knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, or original righteousness in accordance with Eph. 4:24, Col. 2:10, cf. also Rom. 8:29, II Pet. 1:4, and in Reformed theology was distinguished as image of God in

45 Ibid., II, 2, 16.
the narrower sense from image in the broader sense. 47

As a result of sin man lost the image of God in the narrower sense, but he retained it in the broader sense. Though the image was spoiled, man is still a rational, moral creature.

Because man was created in God's image, not in some spiritual attributes, but in his entirety, and through sin did not become an animal or a devil but remained man, that is, a rational-moral being, he might still be called after the fall the image of God as Scripture itself suggests, Gen. 9:6, Acts 17:28, James 3:9. While, however, through sin he lost the spiritual attributes of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness and can partake of them again only in communion with Christ, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10, the image of God in the broader sense must be distinguished from that in the narrower sense. 48

Loss of the image of God did not mean that on the one hand man lost the relationship to God in every sense, and on the other hand he kept the image in the broader sense undisturbed. "But the loss of the divine image in the narrower sense affected the image in the broader sense in such a way that it was not destroyed but entirely damaged and spoiled. There remain small remnants which are enough to deprive man of all guiltlessness."

God preserves these remnants in man and also in creation by His general grace. 48 In Gen. 9:6 murder is forbidden because man was made in the image of God, and the assumption is that something of that image must have remained after the fall.

Ps. 8 also gives a humble yet glorious description of man under God and His heavens. In Acts 17:28 Paul speaks of men as God's

47 Ibid., p. 93. Cf. "The image of God is nothing other than the spiritual health of man, the righteousness of his understanding and heart and of all his faculties and powers."
"Kennis en Leven" in K. en L., p. 230.
offspring. And James 3: 9 refers to men as being made in the likeness of God.

Man, even in his fallen state, cannot be understood apart from God who is the Archetyp. It is part of his very nature and being to be in the image of God.⁴⁹ "When he loses the image, he does not cease to be man with soul and body, understanding and reason; but he ceases to be spiritually healthy man" and falls short of God's idea.⁵⁰

As theft and disturbance of the image of God the stain of sin is common to all men, except Christ; qualitatively there is no difference. But there is a quantitative difference. All are turned from God and walk the path that leads to destruction. But all have not walked equally far on the wrong way, and in a quantitative sense all are not equally estranged from the kingdom of heaven. There is an endless variation and transition between the beginning and the highest development of the sinful life. Human beings, households, generations, families, classes, peoples, and nations differ in sin. There are those who are not far from the kingdom of God; there are those also who drink sin like water, who are given to unrighteousness and are hardened in it so that they are not susceptible to any good impression.⁵¹

But sin destroyed neither man nor creation. Something remains, and it is a very important something. It is the Reformed view that sin has spoiled and laid waste everything, but because sin is not a substance, it has not been able to change the essence, the substance of creation. Though a sinner, man has remained man; and likewise all other creatures, earth, heaven, nature, plant, and animal have remained essentially and

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 86, 87.
⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 89. Cf. De Offerande des Lofs, p. 82, where Bavinck says that the sense of shame proves man did not become animal or devil.
⁵¹ G. D., III, pp. 177, 178.
substantially the same in spite of the curse of sin and the
dominion of destruction. "Sin has taken away no substance,
grace gives back no substance. The materia of all things is
and remains the same, but the forma, given in creation, was
deformed by sin, and by grace it will be entirely reformed." 52

Bavinek maintains that flesh and spirit, body and soul,
partake of the image. 53 Matter and body are also holy.
Scripture does not look upon them dualistically. "The image
of God stretches out as far as the human in man. It includes
also his body, not in its material elements, but in its formal
perfection as the organ of the soul, Gen. 1:26-27, Rom. 6:12-13,
I Cor. 6:19. The body belongs to the essence of man." 54

The image of God in man is more evident in the soul than
in the body, in the ethical virtues than in the physical
powers. Yet, this does not take away from the truth that the
whole man is the image of God. 55

This relationship between soul and body, this sharing in
the image finds its counterpart in God's relation to the world
which He created.

God and world, spirit and matter are according to Scrip-
ture not opposites. In matter there is nothing despicable
and nothing sinful. The visible world is just as much a
beautiful, rich revelation of God as the spiritual world
is. In the former He manifests His virtues as well as in
the latter. All creatures are the embodiment of His divine
thoughts and all display the vestigia Dei. But all these

52 Ibid., II, pp. 617, 620.
53 B. en R. P., p. 90.
54 Beginselen der Psychologie, p. 9.
vestigia, spread out next to each other in the spiritual and material world, are caught up in man and are mutually related and lifted up in such a way that they clearly form the image and the likeness of God. The whole world lifts itself upwards, sums itself up, completes itself, receives its unity, its purpose, its crown in man. In order to be the image of God man had to be a holding together of all nature.... Man is the unity of the material and spiritual world, the mirror of the universum, vinculum, compendium, epitome totius naturae, mikrokosmos, and precisely because of that, also image and likeness of God, His son and heir, mikrotheos.56

The divine image is not limited to individual man, not even to man and woman together. It is unfolded most fully in entire humanity. The image of God is much too rich to be realized in a single human being no matter how richly endowed.57 It comes to its fullest expression in a humanity with its millions of members.

There is a relationship between man and man and between man and the world in which a great many vestiges of God are displayed in time and space.

As the cosmos is a unity and receives in man its head and lord; as the vestigia Dei scattered throughout the world are caught up in and carried up to the imago Dei of man; so also humanity in its turn is to be thought of as an organism which just as such is really the fully unfolded image of God. Not as a heap of souls on a piece of ground, not as an incoherent aggregate of individuals, but as created out of one blood, as a household, a family, humanity is the image and likeness of God.57

What that implies for culture and man's cultural task we shall see below.

It is true that Bavinck is speaking of the image of God in

56 Ibid., p. 604.
57 Ibid., p. 621.
man in its ideal sense. He is fully aware of what has happened to that image through sin. He speaks of man's dishonoring God and the divine image, and of his making a sad caricature of the latter. While man remains man, essentially and substantially the same, nevertheless "the nature, the inclination, and the direction are so altered that now they fulfill the law of the flesh instead of the will of God. The image is changed into a caricature." 

There is, however, the renewing of the image through Christ, and man can partake of it only through regeneration and faith. That renewed image consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10.

In speaking of the image Bavinck does not make the distinction between the formal and the material image as Brunner does. Nor does he distinguish between the Old Testament and the New Testament image as Cairns puts it. He speaks of the image in the broader and in the narrower sense. He sees the knowledge, righteousness, and holiness of the renewed image also in the original creation of man. The words Paul uses are definitely borrowed from that. "The second creation, according to the whole teaching of Scripture, is not a creation ex nihilo, but a renewing of what already existed.... Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10 imply that man was originally created after God's image and is now in the re-creation renewed according to it." 

59 C. D., III, p. 137.
60 Ibid., II, pp. 567, 568.
Grace and the redemption which flows from grace restore the image of God in which man was created. That image is not entirely new, but it is renewed. Bavinck speaks in the same breath of restored man and restored creation. "When grace takes away entirely sin with its guilt, stain, and punishment, then it has accomplished its task. Then man is again image of God, for the image is not a donum superadditum but belongs to the essence of man."^61 Grace restores nature and leads it to the highest heights, but it does not add a new, heterogeneous element to it.\^62

When re-creation removes sin out of creation, it does not take away anything essential.... For sin does not belong to the essence of creation;.... it is unnatural and against nature, it is deformitas. When re-creation takes away and removes sin, it does not touch nature, suppress it, nor constrain it, but it restores nature.... Regeneration, in a word, takes nothing from us than what we should get along without, and it returns to us that which we should have according to our essence and which we lost through sin. It re-creates us in principle after the image and likeness of God.^63

Creation and re-creation are so closely related that definitely the creation of man after God's image is a presupposition of and preparation for the Incarnation.^64 God, who was able to create and to reveal Himself to beings essentially different from Him, must also be able to become man.^64 It is through the Incarnate Christ, who is the perfect image of God, that man and the creation are finally restored.

^61 Ibid., III, p. 665.
^62 Ibid., p. 666.
^63 Ibid., IV, pp. 79, 80.
^64 Ibid., III, p. 295.
But what of man's plight before and without the restoration? In spite of evil, in spite of man's falling away through sin, there is still by God's general grace a point of contact. Call it the universal or formal image, or the Old Testament image, or the remnant or relic, or the image in the broader sense, that point is still there. For God has not given up His creature entirely. Man has a certain freedom. "With that freedom man, even as fallen, is still an image and likeness of God. The freedom with which he serves sin is still a shadow of God's sovereignty." 65

Like Calvin, Bavinck holds that there is more to the image than knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, that the image implies the entire human excellence of man's nature as it appeared in Adam before the fall. It may be that this more follows from knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

Bavinck relates the image to man's lordship or dominion. It is true that Calvin warns against making man's lordship the sum-total of man's likeness to God. "Nor is there probability in the opinion of those who place likeness to God in the dominion bestowed upon man, as if he only resembled God in this, that he is appointed lord and master of all things." 66 The likeness must be within man and not just external. But according to Bavinck the lordship is part of the image, for the divine mandate implies not only God's will as to man's calling, but also the gracious qualification for that calling.

65 B. der E., p. 191.
66 Instit., I, 15, 4.
"Man is a microcosm and as such, image of God and lord of the earth." 67 The creation of man in God's image appears in lordship over all animals and plants, and the subjection of the whole earth. 68 "If we gather together the subjecting of the earth under the word culture, this is the purpose, in the widest sense, for which God made man in His image." 69

In Gereformeerde Dogmatiek we read that lordship over the earth is in reality man's possession, a part of the image of God. Christ gives it again to his own whom He makes not only prophets and priests, but also kings. 70 Only man is the image of God, and as the highest and richest revelation he is the head and crown of the whole creation. 71 Though the full image is unfolded nowhere, yet, Genesis 1:26 points clearly to the fact that the divine image appears in man's lordship over all creation, Ps. 8:; I Cor. 11:7. 72

In his chapter on "The Destiny of Man," after speaking of God revealed in the whole of humanity, Bavinck writes:

To that humanity also belongs its development, its history, its lordship continuously spreading out over the earth, its progress in knowledge and art, its subjection of all creatures. All this is also the unfolding of the image and likeness of God after which man was created. As God did not

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67 B. der Ps., p. 35.
68 M. D., pp. 197, 198.
69 Ibid., p. 224.
71 Ibid., p. 566.
72 Ibid., pp. 569, 570, 603. Cf. Lordship over the earth, guided by religious and ethical principles, is an unfolding of the divine image in man. Het Christelijke Huisgezin, p. 148.
reveal Himself once in creation, but continues that revelation and increases it from day to day and from age to age; so also the image of God is not an unchangeable greatness, but it spreads itself out and unfolds itself in the forms of space and time. It is at the same time Gabe and Aufgabe; it is an unearned gift of grace which already was loaned to the first man in creation, but it is at the same time principle and germ of a whole, rich, glorious development. In reality humanity in its entirety as a perfect organism, gathered together under one head, spread over the whole earth, as prophetess declaring the truth of God, as priestess dedicating itself to God, as queen having dominion over the earth and all of creation, is the most fully worked-out image, the most telling and most impressive likeness of God.

Man's calling, then, is clear. At his best he must possess knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and he must appreciate and cultivate truth, goodness, and beauty. In it all he glorifies God and serves his fellowman.

With his entire being as created in the image of God, as possessing the remnant of the image, but above all as renewed in the image through the redemption in Christ, man must react to God's grace. Heart and head must co-operate. "The new man who dwells in the believers was created in them even as the first man according to the example of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth." The truth revealed in Christ, accepted by faith, brings righteousness and holiness. So man becomes what he was in the beginning, a prophet, priest, and king. "Head, heart, and hand are restored in their original harmony and are made serviceable to the will of God."

73 Ibid., pp. 621, 622.
75 Ibid., p. 231.
Even our speech must reflect the image. Our word is what it ought to be when it is image and likeness of ourselves, and when we are again image and likeness of God.76 "Also in this sense is man created after God's image. He received from his Creator not only mind and heart, but also tongue and language, and is therefore called not only to think and feel, but also to speak and witness."77 The lips must also take part in the sacrifice of praise.78 The confession must be continually personal and congregational, never frozen but vital.

What has been said above prepares us for a consideration of the relation between religion and culture.

3. **Relation of Religion and Culture**

T. S. Eliot calls attention to two errors we must avoid in speaking of religion and culture. We must not hold that religion and culture are two separate things related; and we must not identify the two.30

Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma* has thrown much light on the subject, but he fails to do justice to religion by making it an element in culture.31 We are indebted to his excellent service in reacting against arid speculation and theological dogmatism, against narrow Puritanism.

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76 *De Welsprekendheid*, p. 23.
77 *De Offerande des Lofs*, p. 79.
80 *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, p. 37.
81 We are aware of Cailliet's splendid tribute to Arnold in his book, *The Christian Approach to Culture*, and we pay a tribute also on the basis of a rather full study of Arnold at the University of Michigan and in subsequent years.
Philistinism, and Scientism.  

We are indebted to him for his emphasis on conduct and righteousness, and for opening up new vistas upon the concept of culture. But does he do justice to the Christian faith?

For Arnold, culture is "the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world." It is "a study of perfection." Its purpose is "the harmonious perfection of our whole being;" "to render an intelligent being yet more intelligent;" "to make reason and the will of God prevail."

For the enrichment of religion and the religious outlook this can all be very excellent. But if, for the moment, we let stand that "conduct is three-fourths of life," it seems to us that Arnold underestimates religion, more particularly the Christian faith as expressed in the very personal relationship of the soul to God, the Creator and Redeemer.

Religion certainly is more than "morality touched by emotion." And Arnold's description of God as "the Eternal Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness" is rather vague. It is not compatible with the revelation of God in Scripture, nor does it answer to Christian experience. Arnold's ideas on religion

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82 Cf. his debate with Thomas Huxley.
83 Literature and Dogma, Pref., p. xix.
84 Culture and Anarchy, p. 77.
85 Ibid., p. 38.
86 Ibid., p. 78.
87 Literature and Dogma, p. 14.
88 Ibid., p. 16.
seem to be of a piece with his conception of God.

We agree with Principal Shairp’s criticism.

Mr. Arnold sets before us a lofty aim—he has bid us seek our good in something unseen, in a spiritual energy. In doing this he has done well. But I must hold that he has erred in his estimate of what that spiritual energy is, and he has missed, I think, the true source from which it is to be mainly derived. For in his account of it he has placed that as primary which is secondary and subordinate, and made that secondary which by right ought to be supreme.

The relation to God is first, this relation [that of man to man] last, and Culture should fill up the interspace—Culture, that is, the endeavour to know and use aright the nature which He has given us, and the world in which He has placed us. Used in this way Culture is transmuted into something far higher, more beneficent than it ever could become if it set up for itself and claimed the chief place.

The emphases of other Christian thinkers are also very significant.

T. S. Eliot reminds us that “the first important assertion is that no culture has appeared or developed except together with religion.”

Christopher Dawson makes valuable comments. He holds that there is every reason to believe that religion held just as large a place in primitive life and culture as in that of any historical civilization. Religion has been the great central unifying force in culture throughout the greater part of mankind’s history, in all ages and states of culture. As such it has been the guardian of tradition, the preserver of the moral law, the educator and teacher of wisdom.
is a two-sided relation between religion and culture. "The way of life influences the approach to religion, and the religious attitude influences the way of life." Even Arnold and Emerson, who secularized the tradition, were "the social products of an hereditary priestly tradition." Speaking of the co-operation between religion and culture, Dawson asks and answers an important question as to the conditions which made a fruitful co-operation between religion and culture possible. On the one hand we must interpret the assertion of the absolute transcendent spiritual claims of religion as a denial of the limited, historically conditioned and temporal values of culture, and on the other, we must not regard the forms of a particular culture, even when they are inspired or consecrated by a religious ideal, as possessing universal religious validity. Culture must recognize the higher order.

Referring more specifically to Christianity's significance for culture, Eliot speaks of "the common tradition of Christianity which has made Europe what it is," and we might add, America. He goes on to say, "I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian Faith." Brummer, elaborating on the culture transcendent factor, maintains that it "affords the possibility for a spiritual force like Christianity to enter the field of culture and give

95 Ibid., p. 57.
96 Ibid., p. 105.
97 Ibid., pp. 208, 209.
98 Ibid., p. 211.
it a certain direction and character." Reaching back into history, Cochrane draws the conclusion that the Church helped to civilize the barbarians through preserving the classical literature, imparting something of the spirit of order and discipline acquired through association with the empire, and offering a better faith.

In a well-expressed sentence Edwin Lewis says, "How fruitful a mother the Christian faith has been of education, of music, of painting, of poetry, of architecture, history is a sufficient witness."

And Cailliet adds another thought in saying, "While it is true, then, that the primary concern of Christianity is not for culture, its most immediate contribution to culture is in the realm of Christian character, which knows how to live for eternity in the midst of change."

In the main Bavinck's ideas of the relation between religion and culture agree with those of the Christian thinkers quoted above. He does not identify the two nor keep them apart. There is not only a relationship but an interrelationship. The one cannot really be thought of without the other.

Because God is man's highest good, religion has the primacy. But man is related to God, to his fellowmen, and to the world. This threefold relationship enables man to be a religious, moral, and cultural being. It not only enables him but also requires him to be just that. In that relationship God's purpose for man in time and eternity is expressed.

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100 Christianity and Civilization, I, p. 11.
101 Christianity and Classical Culture, p. 357.
102 A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation, p. 82.
Divine revelation and divine authority are the foundations of religion. Religion is never man-made, nor man-inspired. No matter in how degraded a form it may manifest itself, it still depends on divine revelation. In Bavinck we find many excellent definitive and descriptive passages on religion at its best. One of these runs as follows:

Religion is fellowship with God; without it man cannot be a true, complete man.... Fellowship with God is a unio mystica; it far surpasses our understanding; it is an exceedingly close union with God through the Holy Spirit, a unio personarum, an unbreakable and eternal bond between God and man, for which ethical is much too weak a term, and therefore is referred to as mystical; it is so earnest that it changes man after God’s image and makes him participate in the divine nature, II Cor. 3:18, Gal. 2:20, II Peter 1: 4.

Man is religious from the very outset. He is by nature a social creature born out of, in, and to the fellowship, and he cannot exist without that relation, but he is first of all a religious being bound to God with the strongest tie. Religion is given immediately with creation in God’s image and is therefore indestructibly part of his nature. From his very origin, because he is man, because he is created in the image of God, man is a religious being. To know God belongs to his very essence. The knowledge of God is the health of man.

This answers to man’s higher longings which reach out beyond the passing and the changing. Man is not satisfied with the temporal. "This desiderium aeternitatis, this longing for eternity, which God has planted in the heart of man, in his

104 De Zekerheid des Geloofs, p. 58.
106 Ibid., IV, p. 296.
107 Godsdiensit en Godgeleerdheid, p. 17.
innermost being, in the pith of his personality, is the cause of the undeniable fact that he is not satisfied with all the temporal." Religion preceded all civilization, and up to the present it takes its own independent place next to science, art, and technic. (By independent Bavinck, of course, does not mean that there is no relationship). The implication is that nothing else can satisfy man. Religion gives that much stronger certainty which, e.g., no science can give. There is rest alone in God's witness.

Man must, however, also be concerned about the temporal, which in the light of divine revelation has eternal meaning. He was created also for this world. God made him a religious and cultural being with a calling to carry out. That is why religion and culture are most intimately bound together.

Religion and civilization have not appeared as contradictory and opposing principles, but religion has been the source of all civilization, the basis of all orderly life in the family, the state, and society. From the beginning it has always been the vitalizing element of all culture. It "has been the deepest cause of the process of civilization, the mother of arts and all the sciences.... Natural and spiritual life, religion and morality, knowledge and art, the sense of beauty and the consciousness of value have been united in man.

108 M. D., p. 9.
109 Ibid., p. 290.
110 G. D., I, pp. 547, 548.
111 W., der Q., p. 2.
112 Ibid., p. 122.
from the beginning."  

It is foolish of man to concentrate on culture without considering the higher reference implied in God's revelation. He who contends against religion impoverishes the life of his own soul and violates the foundations on which the entire human fellowship rests. These foundations are most closely related to religion. Always the deepest foundations on which marriage and family, society and state, justice and morals, art and science rest are of a religious nature. Nature and history lose their value; science limits man to the temporal; morality seeks in vain for security; art conflicts with its own history and stops the most significant fountain of its inspiration without a religious basis. Science, art, and morality are indebted to religion everywhere.

In religion God's general calling is implied. That calling has great value, for it results in man's living together, and in a civil righteousness. These in turn prepare the way for a higher civilization, a richer culture, and the growth of arts and sciences.

To God's general and effective calling man must answer.

Work and rest, lordship and service, earthly and heavenly calling, civilization and religion, culture and cultus go together from the beginning, belong together, and constitute the great, holy, glorious destiny of man. The whole of culture, that is, all work which man undertakes to subject

113 Ibid., pp. 123, 124.
114 Opvoeding der Rijpere Jeugd, p. 147.
115 Ibid., pp. 147, 148.
116 W. der O., pp. 222, 223.
117 Handleiding, p. 164.
the earth, farming, cattle raising, industry, trade, science, and whatever we may think of, all that labor is a fulfilling of a divine calling. But if it is truly to be and remain that, it must be done in dependence on and obedience to God's Word. Religion must be the principle that animates and sanctifies the whole of life to the service of God. 118

God demands man's whole self, both body and soul with all their faculties and in all their relations.

Religion comes into contact with all other powers of culture, especially with science, morality, and art.... Religion as relationship to God points out the place in which man stands over against all other creatures. It comprehends dogma, law, and cultus and therefore stands in close relation with science, morality, and art. It embraces the whole man in his thinking, feeling, and activity, in his whole life everywhere and at all times. Nothing escapes religion. It spreads its might over the whole of man and humanity, over family, society, and state. It is the foundation of the true, the good, and the beautiful. It brings unity, coherence, life into the world and into history. Science, morality, and art owe their origin to it; to it they return and find rest. 119

Bavinck adds an important distinction. "Religion is central; science, morality, and art are partial.... Religion means nothing less than eternal blessedness in communion with God; science, morality, and art are limited to the creature and desire to enrich life through the true, the good, and the beautiful." 120

All culture serves man, but it must first of all serve and glorify God. Culture does not end in man but through man, who is the image of God, it turns back to God who is the First and the Last. 121 God's honor demands not only the Church, but also the family, the state, and society; it demands art and science.

118 M. D., p. 201.
120 Ibid., p. 278.
121 M. D., pp. 224, 225.
the rich, full life in all its depth and breadth.\textsuperscript{122} It is religion that gives this dimension to culture, for religion is not something added, but life, life that must be a serving, praising, and glorifying of God.

Man should appreciate this overwhelming and challenging truth. He should appreciate the Reformation's emphasis which restored this biblical truth and turned the Christian's face to nature and to culture and showed him his field of labor,\textsuperscript{123} and the glory of each honest job as a calling under God.

In studying the problem of the relation of Christianity and culture we must do what Cailliet suggests, "take into account the entire landscape of reality and survey it in the light of Scripture."\textsuperscript{124} That is what we have found Bavinck doing thus far, and as we continue, we shall find him faithful to this method of procedure.

There are two questions that remain for us in this chapter. Has culture no claims of its own? And what does it do for religion? As Cailliet says, "It would be a strange thing to deal with culture without ever learning anything from culture."\textsuperscript{125}

Bavinck faces these questions and answers them. What we quote of him here will be strengthened by more evidence in the following chapters.

Bavinck writes, "Culture in all its branches leads its own

\textsuperscript{122}"De Eere Gods" in K. en L., p. 113.
\textsuperscript{123}\textit{Het Christendom}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{125}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.
life and brings along its own laws." Christianity may not destroy the life of culture and withstand the laws of life. On the contrary, it must honor this life with all its rules. Grace does not suppress nature but restores it. Christianity's Gospel is not a new law, neither over against the law of Moses nor against the laws which God has established in nature and for natural realms. All phases of culture are bound to the ordinances which, according to God's revelation in nature, apply to each and which become known to us in the way of experience and investigation. To know nature, one must study nature; to become a farmer one must practise agriculture; to do business one must go into business, etc. No study of Scripture informs man as to these, but only careful investigation of what God teaches him through creation and providence.  

Culture, therefore, has its rights and laws, and the Christian religion must respect them. Christian principles should motivate but not domineer. Besides inspiring culture Christianity should contend not against culture, but against sin in all its forms in private and communal life, and only with spiritual weapons of the Word, of faith, truth, and justice. It must distinguish between the good and the bad. Christianity's task has become more difficult because many no longer consider conversion as a liberating, but rather as a deterring, of understanding.  

126 "De Navolging van Christus, en Het Moderne Leven" in K. en L., p. 136.  
127 Ibid., p. 138.
What does culture do for religion?

It helps to put body into man's religious life and makes his calling more concrete, whatever his labor may be. It enriches his days and his years with truth, goodness, and beauty wherever he finds them. It does this, at its best, not apart from religion, but in close relationship with it.

For Bavinck culture is also a revelation of God. It will not satisfy man's ultimate longings, for that religion only can do. But it will add purpose and joy to his pilgrimage. And in the end, which for the Christian is also beginning, it will be neither forgotten nor lost. For man's total response awaits these words spoken by Another, "Well, done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master."

CHAPTER V

HOW CULTURE IS PRESERVED

1. Common Grace

In the writings of contemporary theologians the doctrine of grace is a recurring theme. This is due to the fact that the Bible deals with it profoundly. Christianity is the religion of grace. Cochrane in his Christianity and Classical Culture says, "The doctrine of sin and grace marks, in its most acute form, the breach between classicism and Christianity."¹ He writes that Augustine considered it rank heresy to say, "God helps those who help themselves." Augustine held that "God also helps those who do not help themselves in order that they may help themselves."² Grace is the deciding and decisive element without which man cannot be man.

There is a distinction between common or general and special or saving grace. This distinction with the underlying relationship is stressed by Bavinck, as also by Kuyper, and their followers have maintained it. They derive their evidence from Scripture and from Calvin's interpretations.³

² Ibid., p. 504.
³ To-day the distinction and the relationship do not seem to be stressed much outside of the writings of the Dutch Calvinists in the Netherlands and in America. But occasionally we find a hint as, for example, in Principal John Baillie's book: What is Christian Civilization? Speaking of the Christians under the Roman Empire, he represents them as believing that "God has His restraining hand" upon Roman civilization and that "meanwhile God is graciously concerned to restrict the more unruly results of its sinfulness," p. 7. As we shall see, this divine, restraining power is a significant part of common grace.
We have said that Bavinck delivered his lecture on Common Grace, "De Algemeene Genade," in 1894, and that some years later Kuyper's articles appeared in three volumes under the title of De Gemeene Gratie. Both men dwell on the subject in many of their writings. Q. Breen in his study of Calvin refers to Kuyper and Bavinck and speaks of the latter's scholarly contribution in the Gereformeerde Dogmatiek.4

Bavinck, like Calvin and Kuyper, makes the distinction between common and special grace and shows their relationship, but he is very careful, as Calvin and Kuyper are, not to confuse the two. Common grace does not extend to salvation in any sense. Kuyper purposely called his work De Gemeene Gratie in order to avoid any misunderstanding in this matter.5 General grace extends to all mankind; special grace is effective only for the redeemed.

As we progress, it will appear why so much is made of common and special grace in their distinction and in their relationship. At this point it is sufficient to state that for Bavinck and Kuyper the foundations of culture lie in these two kinds of grace. Culture would have been impossible if God in His general goodness had not restrained the activity of sin and the resultant

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4 John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism, p. 159.
curse and had not revealed something of His mercy in His gifts to all men. So also God's saving grace triumphs over sin, brings redemption, and assures the restoration of God's creation, bringing it beyond tragedy.

Before taking up Bavinck's views more specifically we must consider briefly Calvin's thoughts on the subject, for Bavinck was indebted to Calvin. Another reason for presenting the Reformer's views here is that in certain sections of the Reformed churches in America the whole matter of common and special grace has come to the fore again and is being debated with animation.

Of Calvin Breen says, "The distinction he drew between sin and grace, instead of between sin and nature, so common among Roman Catholics, is significant. Now this theory which best interprets his conception of the good that exists in the world at large, even in the reprobate, is his theory of common grace."6

Bavinck begins his lecture on *De Algemeene Genade* by referring to the earnest, somber figure of Calvin and to the wrong interpretation many have made of Calvin and of Calvinists in general. "Therefore, it is the more remarkable that Calvin in his system gives a place and ascribes a value to the entire natural life, which are looked for in vain in other conceptions of the Christian religion."7 In his doctrine of common grace Calvin has expressed a principle that is uncommonly fruitful,

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which later was misunderstood and neglected altogether too much. In this lecture Bavinck weaves together Calvin's thoughts against the background of Rome's interpretations and of Socinian and Anabaptistic onesidedness. As these thoughts are also Bavinck's, we shall reserve them for our study of Bavinck's own views.

A few quotations from this lecture reveal the impact of Calvin and the Reformation. "The Reformation could not shut its eyes to all the good that the natural man brought about." "Nature and grace are both necessary; neither of the two may be misunderstood or despised." "Calvinism, in part because of its rigorism, is the Reformation of the natural."

In some of his other works Bavinck pays tribute to Calvin's views. The Reformer's point of view is theological and theocentric. He sees all creatures and all creation in relation to God. "Calvin could not be satisfied with a religious reformation and a restoration of the pure preaching of the Gospel; his gaze went farther and penetrated deeper." State, society, and family are also to be under the discipline of the Word. Nature speaks of God's majesty. So also human society must mirror His glory.

9 Ibid., p. 16.
10 Ibid., p. 22.
11 Ibid., p. 50.
12 Het Christendom, p. 49.
That mirroring is possible because of divine grace. "The grace of God in Christ is the kernel of Calvin's 'Instruction in the Christian Religion'.... The essence of Christianity remained for Calvin that God says how He loves us."13

The divine love and the divine glory are inseparable.

There is not a small part or piece of the world in which [God's] glory does not shine. There is not one person who in the strictest sense is shut out from all grace of God. There is a common grace which spreads over the whole world, which lets the sun rise on evil ones and good ones and rains on the righteous and the unrighteous. By means of that grace God deals out benefits to all His creatures, maintains in man the religious sense, the consciousness of good and evil, the conception of law, natural love, and makes possible an ordered living together among men, which in its turn brings into existence a wealth of material and spiritual goods.14

Even though redemption is not universal, for Calvin reprobation does not mean the withholding of all grace.15 Although because of man's blindness a special revelation is necessary, there exists also a generalis gratia which dispenses to all men various gifts.15 Calvin "is more generous in his recognition of what is true and good, wherever it be found, than any other Reformer. He surveys the entire earth and finds everywhere the evidence of the divine goodness, wisdom, and power."16

The rich culture of Greece and Rome, the rich stream of natural life are with us. Christianity's relation to these can be explained best in the light of God's general grace. The gracious and omnipotent will of God revealed in the Gospel alone

14 Ibid., p. 17.
15 "Calvin and Common Grace" in C. and R., p. 117.
16 Ibid., p. 120.
is encompassed, supported, and reinforced by the operation of
the same will in the world at large. Special grace is encircled
by common grace; the vocation which comes to us in faith is
connected, and connects us, with the vocation presented to us in
our earthly calling. 17

The two kinds of grace are related and together fulfill the
purpose of God. "The divine will which created the world,
which in the state of sin preserves it through common grace and
makes itself known through special grace as the will of a
merciful and gracious Father, aims at the salvation of the world,
and by means of its omnipotent energy brings about this salvation." 18

Calvin and his followers have kept the proper relation
between nature and grace. They have also honored the virtues
of unbelievers and made them examples to Christians. 19

Turning now to those passages in the Institutes upon which
Bavinck and others draw, we find Calvin stressing again and
again the corruption that sin has brought, yet maintaining also
that all is not lost. Reason is a natural gift that could not
be destroyed; it is partly weakened and corrupted, and only a
shapeless ruin remains. Man is endued with intelligence, but
it is darkened so that it cannot shine forth to any good effect.
Yet, "to charge the intellect with perpetual blindness so as to
leave it no intelligence of any description whatever is repugnant

17 Ibid., pp. 126, 127.
18 Ibid., pp. 127, 128.
not only to the Word of God, but to common experience." 20

There is ample proof that in regard to the constitution of the present life no man is devoid of the light of reason. 21 God has endowed men with admirable gifts that Christians certainly should not despise. 22 The Divine Spirit dispenses excellent blessings to whom He will for the common benefit of mankind.

Speaking of God's gift of reason to man in varying degree, Calvin refers to "the general kindness of God" and to "the grace of God in a common nature." 23

It is true that reason unaided cannot have a true knowledge of God and of His grace. Whatever discernment men may have on occasion is like a lightning flash followed by darkness. 24 Yet, John 1: 4, 5 says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." There is, therefore, a beam of divine light in the soul so that it is not in complete darkness; but the spark is not great enough to enable man to comprehend God. 25

Calvin goes on to say "that, notwithstanding the corruption of our nature, there is some room for divine grace, such grace as, without purifying it, may lay it under internal restraint.... God by His providence curbs the perverseness of nature, preventing it from breaking forth into action, yet without rendering it inwardly pure." 26

20 II, 2, 12.
21 II, 2, 13.
22 II, 2, 14, 15.
23 II, 2, 17.
24 II, 2, 18.
25 II, 2, 19.
26 II, 3, 3.
The believers' contempt for this present life must never beget hatred nor ingratitude to God. For though this life is full of wretchedness, it is still one of the divine blessings meant to promote their salvation.27

Calvin's mind, moving from one pole to the other, recognizes the ravages of sin and the blindness of the mole in sinful man, yet, he also holds that man is still a rational being in varying degree by the general grace of God. That grace, though not a saving power, is to be appreciated as a gift and as an explanation of much that is still appealing in man and in the human scene.

Human life has significance for God, and it has significance for man. No gift of God may be despised wherever it is found. Man and the world are subject to change and decay, but the divine general grace restrains, maintains, and explains.

Hepp holds that Calvin was the first to teach common grace, and that his view was even broader than that of Bavinck or Kuyper.28 Allowing the latter part of this statement to stand as debatable, we are convinced that Calvin stresses a general and a saving grace.29 He emphasizes the former to explain much that is still significant in sinful man and a stricken world. He emphasizes the latter because God's way of salvation revealed in Scripture and most clearly in Jesus Christ leaves man no

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27 III, 9, 3.
29 See Herman Kuyper: Calvin on Common Grace, 1928.
alternative. The redemption and the restoration of man and the world are made possible only by that special or saving grace of God made concrete in the Cross and realized in the Church and the Kingdom.

We turn now to a more detailed study of Bavinck's ideas on common and special grace. Bavinck finds the two kinds of grace in Scripture. To them he attributes the preservation and the progressive realization of culture.

He finds grace expressed in the eternal counsel of God and as such purposive for man and the world.

More than it was recognized in former times common grace also must come to its rights in the counsel of God and must be considered as to its own worth. In a word, the counsel of God and world history which answers to it must not be presented, as infra- and supralapsarianism did, as a straight line with simple before and after, as cause and effect, as means and purpose, but it is also a whole in which things stand next to each other and work together towards what has always been, is, and will be the deepest reason for existence, the glorifying of God. As in an organism all members hang together and mutually determine one another, so the world is a divine work of art in which all parts are organically related. And of the world both in its length and its breadth the counsel of God is the eternal idea.30

Therefore, common grace, coming to expression in creation, in nature in all its fulness, has its origin in God's eternal plan or predestination. Because God is long-suffering, He revealed not only His saving grace that alone would fully bring restoration, but also His general grace that would benefit mankind and the world in the long history over which the sinister shadow

of the fall casts its spell. The providence of God is over all His works and applies to nature and to man.

In a certain sense the grace of God shines forth in the very act of creation and all that it implies. But the divine grace did not stop at the fall of man. In fact, the revelation of God continues but changes in character. It becomes a revelation of grace.

When God, in spite of man's trespass, again calls and visits him and establishes enmity instead of the concluded friendship, an entirely new element appears in the revelation, viz., that of the pity and the mercy of God. From now on, everything flows towards man out of grace.... This has become the source and vein of all life and blessing for man. It is the overflowing fountain of all good, Gen. 3: 8-24.31

This grace, however, does not remain one and inseparable. It divides into a general and a special grace. Cain is driven from before the face of the Lord, but he remains alive and even becomes the father of a generation that sets as its purpose the dominion of the earth and begins the task of culture.31

Even the punishment for sin, spoken of in Genesis 3, is a revelation of God's grace which is extended to all mankind. Common and special grace run in one river bed.32 In the punishment pronounced by God upon Adam and Eve the divine mercy is more evident than the anger. It is both punishment and promise.32

In these there is implied the origin and the assurance of the continuation, the expansion and development, the struggle and the

31 De Algemeene Genade, pp. 4, 5.
triumph of humanity. Religion and morality, cultus and culture have their origin there. In the long period from Adam to Noah all these develop under the influence of God's common and special grace. The original powers placed in man by God through creation are indeed broken, but they are active for a long time after the fall. In God's promise Adam sees the generation, existence, development, and preservation of the human race assured. Culture began with agriculture, cattle raising, the building of cities, etc., Gen. 4: 2, 17, and the development of arts and sciences also had its beginning, Gen. 4: 20 ff.

The period from Adam to Noah is characterized by God's long-suffering and forbearance, Rom. 3:25. Man and the earth are the objects of God's grace. The swelling tide of evil that led to the flood called forth the divine grace in a mightier manner still to check the evil. God made a covenant with Noah in which all subsequent generations were caught up. This covenant springs from God's grace.

It is most closely related with the foedus gratiae because it bears this and prepares for it; but it is not identical with it. It is more of a foedus longanimitatis established by God with all men and even with all creatures. The curse upon the earth is limited by it; nature is controlled; its destructive power is checked.... All irrational nature is subjected to ordinances that lie fast in God's covenant; and the rainbow is given as a sign and pledge.

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33 Ibid., pp. 224, 225.
34 Ibid., p. 205.
36 Ibid., pp. 226, 227.
In the covenant of nature with Noah there were included the whole earth, all living souls, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, the ordinances of heaven and earth, Gen. 3:21, 22, Jeremiah 33:20, 25. The gracious will of God expressed in the covenant withstands the degenerating forces in man and the world.

To this general grace of God, emphasized so strongly in the covenant of nature, we owe humanity's existence and life, the expansion and development of peoples, the states and societies that arose, the religion and morality that were not obliterated even in the most degenerate peoples, the arts and the sciences; everything that is still good in sinful man, all civil justice, are the fruit of God's general grace. God did not withdraw from the heathen but revealed Himself in His works. The Logos illumines every man coming into the world. The Holy Spirit is the author of all life, power, and virtue also among the heathen. By means of this grace and under the dispensation of this foedus naturae humanity before Christ is guided and is also prepared for His coming.

Bavinck is aware of the objections raised to the use of the term "common grace." But he finds the concept in its fullness in Scripture, and he sees the significance and purpose of this divine goodness in and for creation.

37 B. en R. Ps., p. 182.
Common grace is indeed termed rightly common; it is positively universal; it extends itself not only to the world of man but to all living souls, to the ordinances of heaven and earth. And it may be called grace because the existence and continued existence of the world after the trespassing of God's law is no longer a matter of course and is no longer natural, but it is made fast and is assured by means of a special promise of God; the ordinances of creation have come to rest through this promise upon a designedly immovable covenant.39

The manifold significance and purpose of common grace is most revealing. This general goodness implies much.

First, there is the glory of God. Man and all creation exist for God's sake. Not only the heavens, not only the earth, but also man is telling the glory of God. Sin and evil brought changes, but the glory of Divine Being is still manifest in much of the fallen. God's purpose is not frustrated.

Then there are the benefits that come to man through common grace. With the fall man was not entirely separated from his Creator. The sense of shame, "the conscience of the body,"40 and the feeling of fear were met by divine grace.41 Man remained and remains human, a rational being, a citizen of a higher world of ideas and ideals, a religious and a moral being with a capacity for God because God did not leave Himself unwitnessed.42 He retained small remnants of the divine image, and there was offered to him the prospect of the restoration of that image through saving grace.43

40 Ibid., p. 192.
41 Ibid., pp. 192-194.
42 Ibid., p. 198.
43 Ibid., p. 186.
There are also the benefits to religion as a possession common to all peoples. "Not only in science and art, in morals and justice, but also in the religions there is evident a working of God's Spirit and of His common grace." Christians have held that God had not left Himself without witness to the heathen. There was an original revelation which, though corrupted, survived in tradition. There was also in paganism a continued revelation through nature and reason, in heart and conscience, — an illumination of the Logos, a speech from the wisdom of God through the hidden working of grace. The fragments are profitable and good.

The three sisters, logic, physics, and ethics, are like unto the three wise men from the East, who came to worship in Jesus the perfect wisdom. The good philosophical thoughts and ethical precepts found scattered through the pagan world receive in Christ their unity and center. They stand for the desire which finds its satisfaction in Christ; they represent the question to which Christ gives the answer; they are the idea of which Christ furnishes the reality. The pagan world, especially in its philosophy, is a pedagogy unto Christ; Aristotle, like John the Baptist, is the forerunner of Christ. It behooves the Christians to enrich their temples with the vessels of the Egyptians and to adorn the crown of Christ, their King, with the pearls brought up from the sea of paganism.

Common grace is also a blessing to the Christian in that it preserves him as man, as image bearer of God, and preserves nature and the world, giving him an environment full of challenge and promise. Besides, as we shall see later, this grace prepares for that saving grace which alone enables man to overcome

44 G. D., I, pp. 331, 332.
45 "Calvin and Common Grace" in C. and R., pp. 103, 104.
the evil he has brought upon himself.

While by this divine goodness man still finds his place in nature, nature itself has been blessed by the continuing grace of God. By nature is meant, not simply that sphere to which natural science applies to-day, but the creation, preservation, and government of the whole world as it is expressed in Article 2 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith. Bavinck maintains that the doctrine of common grace and the healthy appreciation of nature are a distinctive contribution of Reformed theology. He says that the relation of grace to nature comes up again and again in our own thinking, living, and acting, also in church and state, family and society, art and science. In the spiritual realm the same law rules as in the natural. We all share in a natural life which we have received through our parents from God, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. That we possess this life is not a matter of course. We have not given it to ourselves, we have not earned it, we have forfeited it through our guilt; it is in the absolute sense a gift, not of God's special, but nevertheless of His common grace. Nature and grace do not exclude each other. Grace is opposed to sin, not to nature. The latter in itself is not of less value than the former. As a creation of God, nature is subject to God's providence. The natural life among races and individuals under God's leading has a pedagogical significance.

46 B. en R. Ps., p. 201.
48 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 62.
49 Ibid., p. 18.
50 G. D., III, p. 657.
"Grace [in its saving power] restores nature and leads it to the highest heights, but it does not add to it a new, heterogeneous element." But common grace is also very important because it prevents chaos in creation and spares man the unrelieved tragedy that would result if all grace were cut off.

As we have seen, the covenant of nature with Noah, which preserves and amplifies general grace, extends to nature as well as to mankind so that through all the centuries both benefit, and will go on benefiting, till the end of time.

In nature and history there are working, according to God's ordering, not only degenerating but also regenerating, not only corrupting but also preserving and redeeming powers. In a most wonderful manner in the history of man, curse and blessing, anger and mercy, righteousness and long-suffering are mixed; and common grace, which immediately after the disobedience of the first man began to operate next to special grace, was made fast in a covenant and was extended to all creatures, also to nature and its ordinances. God pledged Himself thereby to uphold creation and to do it good in spite of its apostasy.

Grace and blessing were mixed with the punishment.

So also the world, man's expanding environment, is blessed by common grace. It is still an ornament and a work of art in which God's glory shines forth. The earth is still full of the goodness of God. The world, sharing in God's goodness, remains man's storehouse for his physical needs and supplies in part his religious, rational, and moral needs. Man and the world are still meant for each other. Man remains far above the animal as knower and artist with a religious and ethical bent.

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51 Ibid., p. 666.
53 B. en R. Ps., p. 183.
54 Ibid., p. 199.
55 Ibid., p. 200.
Whatever significance man, nature, and the world have is due to general and saving grace. The Reformed conception does greater justice to God, man, nature, and the world in relation than Anabaptism which turns from the world, and humanism which finds all it wants of the vertical in the horizontal.

Common grace, then, checks or restrains sin and evil and began doing so immediately after man's fall. Man remained human; the divine image was not completely lost. He remains in relation to God. Nature and the world also were not left to degenerate hopelessly but continued to be a graciously favored environment for fallen man. In it man under God found both challenge and responsibility with the promise of blessing mixed with suffering.

From all this the value of common grace for culture becomes evident. Culture does not spring from this grace. Its roots lie, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, in God and in creation. However, it is preserved, and its continuation is assured, through the general goodness of God. It is almost futile to speculate on a sinless world, on a world in which "death takes a holiday;" but it is understandable that culture would have existed and flourished in an environment into which sin had not entered. God and man know only too well that sin and evil have come. Therefore, God by means of His general goodness restrains them so that something of blessing remains.
God also endows man with rich gifts in a world richly endowed so that man by divine grace still has a measure of lordship over the earth. In man are found, in varying degree, intelligence, the promptings of faith, the ability to labor, and the desire for improvement of his lot. At his best he has, again through grace, an appreciation for the true, the good, and the beautiful. In the words of Sara Teasdale, for man

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Countless thoughts that star the night.

Man spins his thoughts, his ideas and ideals into a vast literature, creates things of beauty that are a joy forever, whether by word, or music, or painting, or sculpture, or architecture. He raises churches and cathedrals with steeples that are fingers pointing to what is higher and better. He unchains forces of nature for good or ill. He is concerned about justice and peace. He marries, establishes a home, begets children, and knows both joy and sorrow. He works with his hands, often at grinding tasks, yet experiences intangibles that lift him up. The whole realm of culture reflects it.

Over all this the shadow falls daily; life's realism is always present. But the general goodness of God, recognized or unrecognized, is ever-present to make life more than comedy and less than tragedy.

The entire field of culture witnesses to this general
goodness or grace, revealing what God will do and is doing through and for man. In a certain sense culture itself is common grace.56

Bavinck, developing his thoughts on the principles of pedagogy, writes what is applicable to every field of man’s endeavour,

From two sides this general goodness of God works upon man, from without and from within. From outside God checks sin through benefits and blessings, through judgments and justice, through laws and customs, through labor and profession, through the arts and sciences, through societies and states. And from within God checks the unrighteousness of man by upholding understanding and reason within him, consciousness and conscience, natural love and love for truth, religious and moral conceptions, the feeling of shame and honor, fear for scandal and punishment. All these things are good and perfect gifts coming from the Father of lights; God upholds the human race, the living together of man, by means of them and through them carries out His counsel. That is why they are of such great value for pedagogics [and for every field of human endeavour]. He who disregards and despises these natural gifts becomes prey to a pessimism expressing itself in indolence, even as he who only sees the good and does not count sin goes to the extreme of superficial optimism. They are a fund given to man by divine grace, a fund which education [and every field] must keep and employ with care.57

But this is by no means the whole divine and human story.

The general goodness of God prophesies of much more. Common grace also serves as a preparation for special or saving grace. God’s purpose was that man should live. In spite of sin and evil man remained human and had to live a human life in all its relations and development. Even after the fall there was something left worth saving. What remained was not sufficient unto

56 S. J. Ridderbos, De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper, p. 127.
57 P. B., p. 91.
itself. In and by itself it could not reach any heights; it could only deteriorate. But God's general grace or goodness restrained the evil now inherent in creation and preserved man and the world for greater things.

The cosmos still has tremendous significance, and from the Christian point of view its importance increases. It is true that the world is spoiled by sin, but it still remains the work of the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth.58 God witnesses to all people and even fills the hearts of men with food and mirth.59 He gives rich gifts to men so that they can cultivate arts and sciences. He binds families, generations, and races together through natural love. By means of societies and states He grants peace and safety to citizens. And by means of His revelation in nature and history, in heart and conscience He binds them to the invisible, supersensuous world and fosters in their hearts the meaning of religion and morality.59

But why does God do all this? Is He wasting His gifts? Is there any purpose in His dealings? God does this because He rejoices in the works of His hands. They all form together, not as they are, but in their essence, the original ordering which God called into being at creation and which He still preserves in spite of sin.60 Because God does not despise this ordering, we may not either by separatism and asceticism.

60 Ibid., p. 27.
"Christ came to break the works of the devil, but He came also to restore the works of the Father and in that way to renew man after the image of Him who created him."\(^{60}\)

This does not at all mean a minimizing of sin. Through the goodness of God man and the world are still susceptible to purification and redemption. Therefore, common grace is not sufficient. It restrains and preserves so that saving grace, the fulness of divine grace, can restore what is under the curse.\(^{61}\) Man and the rest of creation are not to remain what they are because of sin and evil. God is concerned about the re-creation of both.

For the fulfillment of His purpose God uses general grace and the realm in which it operates. In his *De Gemeene Gratie*\(^{62}\) Kuyper speaks of the impinging of God's saving grace and purpose on the realm of His general goodness. The Ninevites, aroused by Jonah's message, repent though not necessarily unto salvation. The Queen of Sheba is impressed by the wisdom of Jehovah through the mouth of Solomon. Cyrus becomes an agent in God's hands, "my anointed," for the furtherance of the divine plan. In other words, the higher purpose of God is carried out in and through that realm where general grace and general revelation, a manifestation of that grace, operate.

There is a divine witness to all people, Acts 17:22 ff., Romans 1:19. The religious-moral consciousness found among them

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\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

all, in whatever degenerate state, paves the way for that greater grace which comes through Jesus Christ.

Even the Incarnation is made possible through common grace. Christ became, not first of all a Jew, but man, and He took upon Himself flesh, thus honoring what God had created. In His humiliation He appreciated the natural and did not despise it. As the Logos He took part in the fashioning of all that is, and all nature cannot be thought of apart from Him. As Christ He utilized what had been created, becoming man on earth. Better than Adam, Christ proved the solidarity of the human race. Greater than Adam, He came to save fallen man and to restore his ruined environment. In all this, that general goodness of God, which kept man and the earth, also provided for the Son of God and the Son of Man a natural form in a natural setting.

God is not content with man and nature as they are. His general goodness does not preserve them in order that they may remain what they are. He is more deeply concerned than that, and has a far more significant purpose in mind. That is why He calls man.

In his chapter on "Calling and Regeneration" Bavinck speaks of that general calling which is a manifestation of God's general goodness. There is first of all a vocatio realis, a calling

63 Handleiding, p. 109.
64 G. D., I, p. 422.
65 Ibid., III, p. 95.
66 Ibid., p. 510.
which comes to man not so much in clear words as in things (res),
through nature, history, environment, leadings, and experiences,
which has as means, not the Gospel, but the law, and which by
means of this law calls man to obedience and binds him to the
doing of the good in family, society, and state, in religion
and morals, in heart and conscience.67 This calling is not
sufficient to salvation,
but it still is evidence of a rich concern of God with His
creature, a witness of the Logos, a working of the Spirit
of God which is of great importance for humanity. To this
we owe it that humanity has been able to exist in spite
of sin, that it has organized itself in families, societies,
and states, that there has remained in it a conception of
religion and morality, and that it has not sunk into
bestiality. All things exist together in Christ who bears
all according to His might, Col. 1:16, Hebrews 1:3.
Definitely it serves also to pave the way in the life of
peoples and particular persons for the higher and better
calling through the Gospel. Christ as Logos prepares by
various means and ways His own work of grace.68

2. Special Grace

In one of his devotional books Bavinck has this meaningful
sentence: "Grace is a stream, which beginning after the fall,
digs itself a bed in the history of man and empties finally into
eternity."69

God establishes His covenant of grace with man. After
the fall He seeks man and leads him back into the divine fellow¬
ship.70 For a long time both saving and general grace, apply¬
ing to all mankind, flow in the same channel.71 They are implied

67 Ibid., IV, p. 2.
68 Ibid., IV, p. 3.
69 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 16.
70 Handleiding, p. 111.
71 C. D., III, p. 224.
in the covenant with Noah. However, when God establishes
and extends His covenant with Abraham, a distinction is evi-
dent. The covenant of grace is made with Abraham and his seed,
called to be the bearers of God's special revelation and the
witnesses to His special grace. In their calling and in their
history this peculiar people will benefit the whole of humanity,
for in Abraham and his seed all the nations of the earth will
be blessed. The Old Testament foreshadows the New; the old
Israel prophesies of the new Israel in Christ. Christ is the
Head of the covenant of grace in its fulness.

We shall not go into a study of this covenant.\textsuperscript{72} Our
purpose is only to understand saving grace and its importance
for culture.

It is in the solidity of the covenant of grace that the
glory of the Christian religion and confession lies.\textsuperscript{73} Bavinck
maintains that the doctrine of the covenant is most richly de-
vveloped in the Reformed theology.\textsuperscript{74}

The saving grace implied in this covenant is essential to
God's increasing purpose and to man's highest good.

Whatever value general grace has, it is not the highest
and richest grace. For it checks evil but does not root
it out; it curbs, but it does not re-create; it checks,
but it does not renew; it binds, but it does not change.
And therefore God added to general grace a particular
grace, the grace of regeneration and conversion which is
received only in the fellowship of Christ. Among His other
gifts God distributes also these most glorious and most

\textsuperscript{72} For a full study of the covenant of grace see G. D., III,
chapter VII.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 216.
costly ones according to His good will. But according to that good will He desires to distribute them in the way of the covenant, and thus to give them, not only to adults, but also to children, not only to believing parents, but also to their seed. And infant baptism is the seal and pledge of it.\(^{75}\)

Spiritual blessings are of the first and greatest importance. Christ "appeared not as a reformer of society, not as a political leader of the people, not as an artist or a wise one of the world; but Redeemer was His name and His office."\(^{76}\)

Because common or general grace has no saving significance, particular or special grace complements it for the carrying out of God's eternal purpose and the accomplishment of man's supreme good. By nature everything in and outside of man is in conflict, but God has come between both, first with His general grace to check the power of sin and death, then with His special grace to break it and conquer it. Bodily death is not only postponed, and by means of all kinds of measures a human existence and development are not only made possible; but Christ through His cross triumphs principally over sin and death and brings life and immortality to light, Rom. 5:12 ff, I Cor. 15:45, Hebrews 2:14, II Tim. 1:10, Rev. 1:18, 20:14.\(^{77}\)

To the end that man might participate in the triumph of Christ, God has provided, not only a *vocatio realis*, as we have seen above, but also a *vocatio verbalis*. The latter, which comes through law and Gospel, is of greater value than the former.

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75 P. B., pp. 91 ff.
76 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 11.
77 G. D., IV, pp. 675, 676.
This calling does not destroy the one through nature and history but takes it up into itself and establishes it; only it goes far beyond it. Indeed it is a calling that proceeds, not from the Logos, but definitely from Christ. It avails itself not so much of the law as of the Gospel as the proper means. It invites, not to obedience to God's law, but to faith in God's grace, and it always pairs itself with a certain working and witness of that Spirit whom Christ has poured out on the Church as His Spirit, John 16:8-11, Matthew 12:31, Acts 5:3; 7:51, Hebrews 6:4.78

The divine intention with man and the world are clearly evident from this gracious calling. God's grace will not rest and be satisfied with anything less than full restoration. God never lets man go and never surrenders His claims upon him, upon his service, upon his complete consecration with understanding, will, and all powers. "That is why He calls him through nature and history, through heart and conscience, through blessings and judgments, through law and Gospel. Calling in the largest sense is the preaching of God's claim upon His fallen creature."79

The grace of God, expressed in this gracious calling, applies to the whole of man in all his relations and development.

Religion, morality, justice, art, science, the family, society, state - they all have their roots and foundation in that calling which proceeds from God to all people. Take that away and a war of all against all will begin, and each man will become a wolf to the other. The calling through law and Gospel resists sin, lessens guilt, and stops the destruction and misery of man; it is a gratia reprimens. It is proof that God is God, and that He is not indifferent to anything; that the jenseits, as well as the diesseits, has value for Him.79

78 Ibid., p. 3.
79 Ibid., p. 3.
Man must, of course, respond to this calling. When he does not respond, it remains external. When by the effective promptings of God he does respond, the great internal change takes place, that change which brings temporal and eternal blessings.

This saving grace, expressed in the divine calling and responded to by man, also honors creation, that is, all nature including man. We have seen that general grace does not despise the natural, that, on the contrary, it aids in its preservation. Special grace does not only preserve the natural but brings it to its greatest fulfilment.

Earthly and temporal blessings are always bound up with spiritual and eternal ones. Heaven and earth, spirit and matter, soul and body are too closely related to make possible an absolute separation. The favors of earth were also promised to Israel. The New Testament constantly relates bodily and spiritual blessings.

The relationship of believing and knowing, of theology and philosophy, of authority and reason, of head and heart, of Christianity and humanity, of religion and culture, of the heavenly and the earthly calling, of religion and morality, of the contemplative and the active life, of sabbath and work days, of church and state is determined by that relationship which exists between creation and re-creation, between the work of the Father and that of the Son.

Grace is different from and higher than, nature, but it allies itself with nature, renewing it rather than destroying it.

80 De Offerande des Lofs, pp. 12, 13.
81 "De Algemeene Genade," pp. 21, 22.
Re-creation is related to creation, the work of the Son to that of the Father. Redemption is built on the foundations laid down in creation. 82

Bavinck places the doctrine of the Trinity squarely in the center of the rich life of nature. The same God who creates and preserves us also re-creates us after His image. The divine grace raises itself above nature, but it is not hostile to it. Restoring what is spoiled by sin in the natural realm, it enlightens and perfects what still remains of God's revelation in it. 83 All natural ordinances remain; they are not overthrown in a revolutionary manner but are re-created through the new spirit. 84

Nature and grace are, of course, differentiated and may not be confused and mixed, but God establishes a relationship between them. We ascribe creation, redemption, and sanctification to Father, Son, and Spirit economically, but these three are the one and true God, and together they bring into existence the whole work of redemption. 85

Grace is concerned with every detail of man's religious and cultural life. The important details are themselves manifestations of grace. We must consider conception and birth, family and race, people and country, education, development of understanding and heart, preservation from terrible sins, above all, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, disasters and judgments.

82 M. D., p. 315.
83 G. D., II, p. 343.
84 De Offerte des Lofs, p. 75.
85 G. D., IV, p. 10.
blessings and benefits, preaching of law and Gospel, dejection and fear of judgment, awakening of conscience and sense of need for deliverance "a gratia praeparans towards regeneration through the Holy Spirit and for the place which the believer will take in the congregation."  

In these there is implied also a preparing for the place man must take in the world. For Christians have a calling. They remain members of families, citizens in society, subjects under authority, practitioners in various fields, men or women, parents or children, masters or servants. For them Christ is still prophet, priest, and king, and He works, by means of His Word and Spirit, upon and in the whole world. Through Him there goes forth, in each believer, a renewing, sanctifying influence upon every sphere of life. The spiritual life is intended to make the natural and moral life, in their full depth and reach, answer to the law of God. Christian truth and life are to be carried organically into all circles of the natural life. In that way the family is restored to honor, woman is considered the equal of man, science and art are christened, the level of the moral life is raised, society and state are reformed, and laws and institutions, morals and customs are stamped as Christian.  

This divine grace also looks beyond this present world and will have its triumph in the fulfilment that is to come. There

86 Ibid., pp. 478, 479.
will be no return to what once was, not even to the original creation. But in the process, progress, and culmination under God's guidance there lies this truth, that the original ordering of creation will be maintained. All differentiation between nature and grace will fall away.87

It is not the task of the Christian religion to create a new, supernatural order of affairs. Its purpose is not to establish an entirely new, heavenly kingdom as Rome understands it in the Church, and as the Anabaptists undertook it at Munster. "The Christian religion does not bring a single, substantial, strange element into creation. It makes no new cosmos, but it makes the cosmos new."88

From our study of the two kinds of grace in Bavinck's teaching we conclude that man has a glorious and challenging vocation in this world. Every person has a calling to which he must answer sincerely and wholeheartedly, no matter where he finds himself. There is to be no flight from the world, nor must there be a hierarchy of holier and less holy callings. There is always the danger of trying to be a Christian at the expense of being human.89 It is not necessary to give up a secular calling for a so-called more spiritual one. All Christian activities are work in the Kingdom. In I Cor. 7: 17-23 Paul reminds his hearers that they should remain in the calling in which they were called. This does not mean that a man may not improve his lot, or that he

88 Ibid., p. 28.
89 Ibid., p. 29.
may not change from mechanic to minister. What it does mean is that whatever honorable work we are doing must be done with an eye to the glory of God and the advancement of His cause. The whole of natural life is sanctified by the divine grace.

It is a fact that in many a life, in many a field of labor, there is a preponderant drabness. But for the Christian the glory of God, evident from all His revelation and manifested in all His grace, breaks through and gives more than the contours of His one increasing purpose.

From all this it is evident that the realm of culture is also invaded and permeated by divine grace. Both general and saving grace make for its preservation and its cultivation.

Because the two kinds of grace are of the utmost importance to culture, it may be well to sum up Bavinck's main ideas in regard to each. They are as follows:

1. Common grace has its origin in the counsel of God.
2. While it benefits man and the world, it is first of all to the glory of God.
3. It checks sin and its results.
4. It accounts for the development of man and nature in the light of the divine purpose.
5. It does not extend to salvation.
6. All people benefit from its working though in varying degree.
7. It prepares the way for special grace.

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1. Special grace has its origin in the counsel of God.
2. It is also to the glory of God.
3. Together with common grace it wants no dualism between nature and grace.
4. Through Christ it brings salvation, restoring man and nature.
5. It inspires culture with the dynamic of the Christian faith and life.
CHAPTER VI

AREAS OF CULTURE

1. Scientific and Practical Concern

Bavinck's mind and heart, his reason and faith embrace wide areas of culture. As a believing scholar his interest extends to many spheres of activity in and through which Christianity realizes itself. He is aware that all culture is not specifically the fruit of Christianity, but he is convinced that Christianity has made its significant contribution. Moreover, it is his conviction that the Christian interpretation in the light of the divine revelation casts the best and most satisfying illumination over all cultural problems.

His life was devoted to the development and the understanding of a Christian science, first in its most general sense, and then in its particular phases.

In this chapter we shall try to show Bavinck's passionate concern for science as knowledge at its best, his interest in study, his ideas on theology and the philosophy of revelation, his appreciation and criticism of philosophy and the philosophy of religion, of psychology and the psychology of religion, and of the natural sciences, his views on evolution, and his interpretation of history.

Because Bavinck did not live in an ivory tower but saw the relation of knowledge to life, and of faith to practice, he made
many valuable contributions to those practical realms which we might call the social spheres. He has much to say about the position of women, the Christian family, Christianity and politics, Christianity and war, and education. All of these we shall touch on in this chapter.

His rich thoughts on art and aesthetic principles will also be considered.

Of Bavinck's scholarship we have already said something when we studied him as a man, and when we tried to analyse the framework of his thinking. Before taking up his ideas on a Christian science we refer to the writings of two men who pay tribute to his status as a scientific thinker.

Recently S. P. Van der Walt, a South African, has written a thesis on the philosophy of Bavinck. He maintains that Bavinck was exceptionally fitted for the task of pointing out the scope and method of a Christian science because of his natural qualifications, his universal humanity, his steadfastness as to principle without letting himself be tyrannized over by any particular principles, and his continually keeping a fresh outlook upon life.

W. B. Christensen, writing about the scientific labors of Herman Bavinck, presents his reflections in The Yearbook of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Amsterdam, 1921-1922. Bavinck was

1 Die Wijsbegeerte van Dr. Herman Bavinck, Potchefstroom, 1953.
2 Ibid., pp. 153, 154.
first of all the man of science, but he kept in touch with the practical sides of church and society. Throughout his life he was quite consistent in his thinking. He stood in the center of the spiritual streams of his time and never lost touch.

He was a follower of Augustine and Calvin and not of Kant and Schleiermacher. He used the method of the philosophy he opposed in contending against it. Bavinck maintained that in the final analysis, knowledge and science rest on faith. Truth is above science and proceeds not from us, but from God. The doctrine of creation through the Word of God is the explanation of all knowing and understanding. Man's thoughts must conform to God's revelation in nature and in grace. New knowledge must be taken up and fitted in constantly. Faith bridges the gap between thinking and being. By means of it the norms of goodness and beauty also have objective reality. Their validity rests in God.

Christensen goes on to say that for Bavinck the wisdom of philosophy is the reflection of the wisdom in the world, the divine wisdom which binds the world together as an organic whole. There is rich diversity in unity. "The organic unity of things is God's omnipresent and eternal power and wisdom which lead everything towards one goal." Divine revelation underlies all

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3 "Over den Wetenschappelijken Arbeid van Herman Bavinck" in Jaarboek Der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen Te Amsterdam, 1921-1922, p. 1.
4 Ibid., p. 3.
5 Ibid., p. 4.
6 Ibid., p. 5.
7 Ibid., p. 6.
8 Ibid., p. 7.
9 Ibid., p. 9.
our knowledge. Theology, having Scripture as its primary source book, is very essential, for it throws light on problems in other spheres.

In scientific investigation the personal factor is very important. We cannot split the I. Man and scientist are not to be separated.

Thus Christensen gives us, in brief, an insight into Bavinck's thought processes.

We turn now to the consideration of Bavinck's reflections on scientific study.

In *Geleerdheid en Wetenschap*, an address given at the convocation of the Free University on September 20, 1905, Bavinck says that study is indeed struggle. A wide, unknown territory which must be conquered stretches before us. In the field of study there are enemies such as dullness, indifference, pedantry, pride, and error. Happily there are also industry, love of truth, and persistent prayer requiring daily exercise.

Bavinck is not satisfied with resting on the achievements of the past. He warns that we must not be content with the heritage of the Reformation. Antiquarian learning cannot take

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 11. Cf. "the thoughts which God has laid down in His revelation [in Scripture] stimulate to research and reflection; they leave us no rest until we understand them and until we have inserted them into the whole of our knowledge." The Church's calling is "to plant the banner of the Cross on the field of science." *Het Doctorenambt*, pp. 18, 19.
the place of the exercise of science. Book learning must not take precedence over inquiry and reflection.14

In this address he goes on to say that knowledge was originally related to religion. "As Plutarch says, man cannot receive anything greater and cannot give God anything higher than truth; seeking after knowledge is striving for divinity."15 A treasure of revelation comes to us from the past. Founders of religion and philosophers bring forth new things out of old treasures.16

How is it possible for man to acquire knowledge?

In his rectoral address at the Theological School at Kampen on December 6, 1899, Het Doctorenambt, Bavinck answers this question. Because God knows Himself, He can make Himself known in and through His creatures in whom head and heart, understanding and will, knowledge and life are not separated.17 He continues, "Man may be as weak as a reed, yet through his thinking he surpasses all other creatures in power and depth of life."18

In his Princeton lectures Bavinck says that we do not create the truth, and we do not spin it out of our brain; but, in order to find it, we must go back to the facts, to reality, to the sources. For this purpose God has deposited the truth in nature and in Scripture that we might have it, and by knowing

14 Ibid., p. 6.
15 Ibid., p. 8.
16 Ibid., p. 9.
18 Ibid., p. 6.
it might rule by means of it. 19

Because Bavinck is first of all a theologian, we turn now to a study of his ideas on our knowledge of God.

2. Theology.

It is tempting to begin with a quotation from T. S. Eliot whose thoughts may not entirely agree with Bavinck's, but whose advice to our times cannot be overlooked. Eliot writes:

And here is the perpetual message of the Church: to affirm, to teach and to apply, true theology. We cannot be satisfied to be Christians at our devotions and merely secular reformers all the rest of the week, for there is one question that we need to ask ourselves every day and about whatever business. The Church has perpetually to answer this question: to what purpose were we born? What is the end of man? 20

This timely, practical suggestion is in the spirit of Bavinck.

For Bavinck theology is an independent and genuine science. 21 It brings its own method. "Each science must borrow its form from the object it investigates, for method is determined by the object... The plan of salvation in the Christian religion determines the method of Christian theology."22

We owe the term to the Greeks who meant by it the doctrine of the gods as in Homer and Hesiod. Christianity appropriated it, for the Christian Church possessed a knowledge of God on the basis of His self-revelation in His Word and by His Spirit. 23

There is no systematic theology in Scripture, but with the coming

19 W. der O., p. 68.
21 W. der O., p. 188.
22 Ibid., p. 192.
23 "Godgeleerdheid en Godsdienstwetenschap," in V. O., p. 35.
and revelation of Christ and with the work of the Holy Spirit Christians began to reflect on the truths of the Word, and theology was the result. What nature is for the investigator of nature, the Bible is for the theologian.  

Theology is essential to the Church. It is confession. It may not degenerate into scholasticism and false gnosis. On the contrary, theology is a speaking about God, for God, and to God. Both Church and school are subjected to the discipline of God's witness.

Theology teaches us that truth is an organism. As God gives us grain, and we make bread, so God reveals His truth to us, and we by reflection fashion a theological system. Gnosis, as well as faith, is a gift of the Spirit. Vital systematization is possible because the Bible is not a chaos but a divine work of art.

There is a living, practical side to theology, which keeps it from degenerating into dry-as-dust exposition and argumentation. Theology is a theoretical, but also a practical science. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not enough. Faith without love is impossible. The heart must be satisfied as well as the head. "Theology is truly religion, a serving of God, a labor in His Kingdom."

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27 Ibid., p. 38.
28 Ibid., p. 39.
29 Ibid., pp. 40, 43.
30 Ibid., p. 44.
As such it must not rest on its laurels. There are unchangeable truths that cannot be neglected without injuring ourselves and science, but there is progress, thought, method, plan in the history of theology.\(^{31}\) Theology is conservative, yet, it does not rest with Chalcedon and Dordrecht. Much remains to be discovered.\(^{32}\)

Christianity and the Christian Church are not the object of theology, but the subject. In a sense theology is the Church herself in her highest, most glorious, and richest manifestation. It acknowledges Christ as the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.\(^{33}\) It has as content Christianity, the Church, and faith, enriching itself with the divine revelation in nature and in grace.\(^{34}\) From this point of view its subject matter is not only Scripture, but also all revelation for which the truth of Scripture provides a unifying insight. Such knowledge becomes a matter of God's being served in knowing and being known in serving.\(^{34}\)

Theology, then, is a science, but it is a science for life. It "is a holy work, a priestly service in the house of God; it is religion, a serving God in His temple, a dedication of mind and heart to the honor of His name."\(^{35}\)

However, it also serves man in the world. By means of

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 46.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 47.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 29.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 30.
\(^{35}\) Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid, p. 62.
theology the religious life preserves its connection with the culture of a people, keeps up with the times, holds fast its relationship with the nation and its citizens, with science and art, with state and society, with all national and international movements.36

Christian theology has importance also over against the sects.

[It] has the glorious calling to keep both [congregation and world, church and school, religion and science] together; on the one hand to spare the Christian religion from all kinds of spiritual diseases of mysticism and separatism, and on the other hand to free scientific thought from error and falsehood through the truth in Christ. The right of theology is based on the essence of the Christian religion. Revelation directs itself to the whole man and has the entire world as its object. In every field it takes up the fight against error. It offers material for the deepest thinking, and in the scientific realm it plants the knowledge of God next to, and in organic relation with, that of man and the world.37

In all this it is the Christian faith that gives theology the materials for thought.38 Whereas the former is satisfied with the that, the latter asks the why and the how. But faith saves theology from secularization, and theology saves faith from separatism.39

When we considered the framework of Bavinck's thinking in Chapter II, we already said something about his conception of dogmatics. An exhaustive study is beyond the purpose of this thesis, but a few points should be stressed here in order to

36 Ibid., pp. 58, 59.
38 Ibid., p. 661.
39 Ibid., p. 663.
understand his views on dogmatic theology. In Bavinck the subject appears anything but arid.40

According to Bavinck a dogma rests not on the outcome of any historical-critical investigation, but on the witness of God, on the self-witnessing of Holy Scripture.41 Reformed theologians take this position: "Principium, in quod omnia dogmata theologica resolvuntur, est: Deus Dixit.42 A truth confessed by the church is a dogma not because the church avows it, but only because it rests on God's authority.43 There are two elements: divine authority and the confession of the church. The dogma is not identical with absolute, divine truth, but it is an approximation in the light of the Word.43 In dogmatics it is always the Christian believer who speaks.44 Faith is certain of itself, and witnesses, "I have the truth," and opposes, where it must, all science and philosophy with the cry, "Eureka."45

In dogmatics the Christian thinks the thoughts of Scripture within the framework of the whole Church. The dogmatician stands on the shoulders of past generations.46

Bavinck describes the aim of the science in vital terms.

Dogmatics shows us how God, the All-Sufficient One in Himself, nevertheless glorifies Himself in His creation which, even as it is broken up through sin, is yet gathered together by Christ, Eph. 1:10. It describes to us God, always God, from beginning to end, God in His

40 We remind ourselves of Dorothy Sayers' stimulating little book, Creed or Chaos?, particularly the chapter, "The Dogma is the Drama."
41 G. D., I, p. 467.
42 Ibid., p. 5.
43 Ibid., p. 7.
44 Ibid., p. 101.
46 Ibid., p. 72.
being, God in His creation, God over against sin, God
in Christ, God through the Holy Spirit breaking all opposi-
tion, and leading the whole creation to His determined
goal, the glory of His name. Dogmatics is, therefore, no
arid science. It is theodicy, a hymn of praise to all
God's virtues and perfections, a song of adoration and
thanksgiving, a doxa en hypistois theo. 47

The principia of dogmatics are three. The principium
essendi of our knowledge of God is God alone, who reveals Him-
self freely, self-consciously, and truly. 48 The principium
cognoscendi of theology is the self-revelation or self-imparta-
tion of God to His creatures. 49 It operates as verbum externum
and verbum internum. 49 "These three principles, differentiated
and yet one, rest in the trinitarian being of God. It is the
Father who through the Son as Logos imparts Himself in the
Spirit to His creatures." 50

While appreciating all the other sciences, Bavinck gives
the place of honor to this science. In its origin theology
is holy, different from all other sciences. It is supernatural,
not of this world; otherwise the world would have recognized it.
51 It reaches beyond the other sciences to God. It is prophetess
as well as queen. In the consummation there will be no indivi-
dual sciences, "only a holy, glorious science, which is Theology:
a knowing of all things in God and of God in all things." 52

Bavinck is far too good a scholar and far too broad in his
interests and sympathies to be narrowly dogmatic. Yet, he is

47 Ibid., p. 103.
48 Ibid., p. 211.
49 Ibid., pp. 211, 212.
50 Ibid., p. 213.
51 De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, p. 21.
52 Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
primarily concerned about the honor of God, and for that reason he gives dogmatic theology, based on Scripture, its high place. This science is closely related to all the sciences. That relationship must not be sought in the anthropological character of theology, but in the theological character of the other sciences.53 Theology must not dominate the sister sciences, but must rule by means of moral and spiritual weapons as Christ does. The more the sciences penetrate the depths of created life, the more they come face to face with God.54

For Bavinck, then, dogmatic theology, properly understood, can be a unifying influence for all the sciences. Differing from the other sciences in its approach, it holds that religion and theology must be based on revelation, on God's Word and on His authority. Christianity "says first, that God reveals Himself in nature, in history, and especially and centrally in Christ; it takes general revelation into itself and still presents a special revelation; it relates itself to the whole world and to all history and vindicates its place in them."55 Either there is no higher revelation in Christendom than that in nature and in history, or there is a higher and fuller revelation in Christianity. It follows that he who thinks so may not deny that greater light which is given him, and he must see all nature and history, and all the religions of non-Christian peoples by

53 Ibid., p. 34.
54 Ibid., p. 35.
55 G. D., I, p. 62.
that greater light.  

Bavinck does not want a separation of theology from the other sciences. That there has been an age-long struggle between and among them is true enough because of man's lack of knowledge and lack of faith. But ideally there should be no hostility because nature and grace, creation and re-creation, as deriving from one and the same God, do not and cannot conflict.

In order that God may see His image reflected in man's consciousness,

theology and dogmatics belong, not by the grace of positivistic science in an ecclesiastical seminary, but in the universitas scientiarum; and in the circle of the sciences the place of honor belongs to theology not because of the persons who propagate it, but because of the object with which it buses itself. It is and remains, properly understood, regina scientiarum.

Bavinck warns against the separation of theology from Scripture, for that would be its death sentence. It is the Christian's calling to maintain this science in its holy and independent character, because the Church of Christ has its own life and consciousness, its own language and science.

He is opposed to the tendency in modern times to change the faculty of theology into the faculty of the science of religion. He has no objection to the study of religions, but that science, empirically and historically understood, belongs in the literary

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55 Ibid., p. 38.
56 Ibid., p. 36. Cf. pp. 472-474 where Bavinck beautifully develops the thought that Scripture as knowledge of God has much to say to the other sciences and to art.
57 De Wetenschap der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, p. 7.
58 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 74.
faculty. Moreover, Christian theology is a science in its own right with Scripture as its primary subject matter. If God is knowable, a theology follows. It is the heart of religion.\footnote{Ibid., p. 77.}

The same argument holds against the supplanting of theology by the psychology or the philosophy of religion.

If theology is not to be excluded from the sciences and is not to be supplanted by them, it is not to be excluded from the universities either, for in Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. He is the King of truth and, therefore, also Lord in the kingdom of science.\footnote{Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid, p. 51.} "It is theology which in the circle of the sciences supports the meaning of spiritual things, the faith in another and better world than this material one, the love towards an imperishable truth and beauty shining above the actual, in a word, the healthy, powerful idealism."\footnote{Ibid., p. 52.} It cannot rest until it rests in God and until all the other sciences rest in Him also. Towards that end it not only seeks to bring order out of the various truths of Scripture, but it likewise uses logic, psychology, philosophy, and history.\footnote{Ibid., p. 55.}

We shall study Bavinck’s views on education later, but from what we have written it is evident that for him the ideal is a university in which theology not only ranks with the other sciences, but also serves as a unifying influence. He is not against
theological schools for the training of men towards the ministry. Even in them education should be scholarly as well as practical. But a university is the place for scientific research in theology as it is the place for such research in every worthy field.

Because universities have not upheld this ideal and have either replaced theology with courses in religion or placed it in a divinity school so that the mutual interdependence of all the sciences is scarcely evident, a Christian university like the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam is Bavinck's ideal. This is so because "science as the goddess of humanity, the school as temple, and reason as priestess" have not united knowledge and life. Yet, in God and His Christ, who is also the Mediator of creation, these are one.

Bavinck implies that for the Christian it is not such a far cry from all the knowledge of the universities to the relevance of this truth: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17:3.

3. Philosophy of Revelation

Bavinck's ideas on philosophy and on the philosophy of revelation are set forth in his Stone Lectures and find expression in several of his other works. S. P. Van der Walt has presented us with a thesis on the subject as recently as 1953

64 "Kennis en Leven" in K. en L., p. 205.
65 Ibid., p. 207.
Bavinck was greatly interested in philosophy as a cultural phenomenon. He constantly traces the development of thought from the Greeks to his day, shows his appreciation of much of it, but also offers his criticism.

The old view of the world was supernatural. Christianity came with a clearer revelation, a corrective as to the supernatural. During the Middle Ages the Christian was dominated by the thought that spirit must triumph over matter and heaven over earth. The Reformation strengthened this view, emphasizing the freedom of the spiritual man in Christ. In the eighteenth century a tremendous change took place. The rationalism of the Enlightenment and of Deism broke with the old supernaturalism. The principle of autonomy led to the French Revolution with its disappointing results. Revolution gave way to evolution, a concept that had already been evident in Aristotle. The road of thought led on to the monistic idealism of Hegel and the monistic materialism of Marx, to Kant's antinomies, and on to positivism and pragmatism.

In general Bavinck finds the pendulum swinging from idealism to materialism and back again. For man is not content with scientific explanations but desires the satisfying of his deepest needs. "Philosophy itself serves as a religion, and, because of its despising of theology, it becomes in the deepest sense a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{66}} W. der O., p. 2.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{67}} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 3.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{68}} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{69}} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 7.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{70}} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.\]
seeking after God. While Bavinck appreciates much that philosophy teaches us, he has a basic criticism. Though philosophy, like theology, is "Universalwissenschaft," the former is anthropocentric, whereas the latter is theocentric, seeing things from above in God's light. "A philosophy which, neglecting the real world, takes its start from reason, will necessarily do violence to the reality of life and resolve nature and history into a network of abstractions. This applies also to the philosophy of Christianity."

In the world of philosophy two fundamentally different approaches are made. The one is monistic; the other theistic. Monism expresses itself either as pantheism, materialism, or humanism. Monism is more satisfying intellectually than pluralism, but when one's basic prejudice begins with it, it begins with what must still be proved. The demand that all differentiation is but appearance of one substance is unfounded and is borrowed from an a priori system of thought.

Materialism conflicts with itself because it uses terms taken from the idealistic world to explain its own system. Absolute (pantheistic) idealism confuses function and object, the psychological and logical nature of apprehension, thought and being.

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71 Ibid., pp. 26, 27.
72 De Wetenschap der Heilige Godegeleerdheid, p. 35.
73 W. der O., p. 21.
74 Ibid., p. 28.
75 Ibid., p. 34.
76 Ibid., pp. 47, 57.
Positivism, building entirely on empirical, scientific data, cannot evade its own metaphysics and therefore goes beyond itself.77 Of positivists Bavinck says, "They are caught in the dogma of the unprejudiced system of science and consider this absolute, although they explain everything relatively.78

Pragmatism freed many from the grip of monism and its abstractions,79 but it has lost all hope of a knowledge that bears an absolute character, not only of God, but of all ideas and norms; it is born out of scepticism and clings only to what it considers the latest, incontrovertible facts.80 It considers that system most true which is most useful.81

Over against all these systems of thought Bavinck posits his theistic philosophy of revelation. It is inevitable that his theology plays an all-important part in his philosophy. He does not and cannot begin and continue with speculative reason. As the dogmatician does not proceed from the river to the source, but from the source to the river,82 so the Christian theologian-philosopher begins from the source, the revelation of God in His Word and in His world.

The philosophy of revelation, just like that of history, art, etc., must take its start from its object, from revelation.83 Such a philosophy, like any philosophy of religion, art, or morals, can never exhaust its subject. Faith is always necessary

77 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 39.
78 Ibid., p. 25.
79 W. der Q., p. 44.
80 Ibid., p. 45.
81 Ibid., p. 43. For a full criticism see chapters II and III.
82 G. D., I, p. 81.
83 W. der Q., p. 21.
with the conviction that at the basis of things there is spirit, thought, wisdom. The wisdom of special revelation must be brought into relation with the divine revelation in the world, for the foundations of creation and re-creation are one.

Under the guidance of divine revelation man, as Augustine also felt, comes to understand self-consciousness which presents not only the phenomenon, but also the noumenon, not only the self, but also God on whom the self depends. Going back to the soul's essence, man finds the totality of Divine Being. It is in self-consciousness that God makes known to us man, the world, and Himself.

This is the gist of Bavinck's philosophy of revelation. It does not satisfy the bare intellect alone, but it satisfies the heart as well. The thinker is first of all man, sinful man, plagued by evil as well as by problems, and needing the redemption of his entire self and the assurance of a redeemed world. "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed good tidings not only for some people and in special circumstances, but for all people and for the whole man, for the learned as well as for the simple, and for the theologian not more than for the literary specialist, the historian, and the philosopher."

Though he may not answer all the promptings of reason,

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84 Ibid., p. 22.
85 Ibid., pp. 22, 23.
86 Ibid., pp. 53 ff.
87 "Godgeleerdheid en Godsdienstwetenschap" in V. O., p. 53.
and very likely will not convince the sceptics, Bavinck does justice to our humanity which cannot find rest except in God.

Bavinck cannot get away from the "basic prejudice" of the Christian who accepts the revelation of God in His Word and most clearly in His Son, Jesus Christ. That revelation touches and changes the entire man in his thinking, emotions, and will. Faith, which is not irrational, goes beyond reason. It sees man and the whole of life under the aspect of eternity.

In doing so it does not despise the general revelation of God in nature and in history, in the whole realm of culture. On the contrary, it brings that into the greater light of God's special revelation and reads meaning and purpose into all that is. In other words, it accepts all the divinely given data and attempts to weave out of them the true pattern for the days of our years and for what lies above and beyond these.

4. Psychology of Religion

Bavinck was greatly interested in psychology and the psychology of religion, especially as these touched on education. At times he expressed the wish to give up teaching in order to devote himself to study with emphasis on this particular science. *Beginseelen der Psychologie* appeared in 1897. His desire to prepare a revised edition was never fulfilled. However, *Verzamelde Opstellen* contains four essays on the subject, and his articles on biblical and religious psychology appeared in book form
in 1920. Moreover, he refers to the psychology of religion on many pages of the Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, and in the Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring he devotes one lecture to revelation and religious experience.

We shall deal briefly with the subject here, present Bavinck's appreciation and criticism, and give his constructive ideas on what he considered another aspect of culture.

With characteristic thoroughness Bavinck traces the history of what he calls the rather young science which originated in America. The revivals in that country, dating from 1740, drew the attention of scientific minds. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, G. Stanley Hall, E. D. Starbuck, William James, and others applied themselves to the study of religious experiences.88

James' Gifford Lectures, The Varieties of Religious Experience, delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902, stimulated European thinking on the subject. In France Th. Ribot had paved the way with his studies in empirical, experimental, and comparative psychology. In Geneva, Theod. Flournoy presented a series of twelve lectures on religious psychology in 1901-1902. Bavinck is abreast of the most recent developments in the field.

According to Bavinck it was the insufficiency of the historical method and the despair of metaphysics which led to the interest in the psychology of religion.89 He appreciates

88 "Psychologie der Religie" in V. Q., pp. 55-77.
89 Ibid., pp. 56, 57.
the exploration of the soul's activities and the light cast on the subconscious, but as a Christian scholar he sifts the evidence and especially the conclusions.

He maintains that the aim of the psychology of religion is not to judge the truth or untruth of religious phenomena, but to study the latter as they occur. It separates "What are the religious propensities?" from "What is their philosophical significance?" There may be supernatural factors, but this science is concerned with the investigation of the conditions and the laws under which the religious phenomena present themselves.  

The method of this science is empirical and scientifically inductive. It studies individuals and their religious experiences, their writings, meetings, and the questionnaires they fill in.

Bavinck expresses his joy and gratitude that this science devotes itself to the study of subjective phenomena. But he also offers his criticism as one who looks upon this phase of cultural activity as incomplete without the light of Scripture.

He is not impressed by the deductions drawn from the study of questionnaires by Stanley Hall, Starbuck, and Coe. Such study deals only with some people. Moreover, it is rather perilous to draw conclusions from what folk write about the condition of their souls and about their experiences.  

90 Ibid., p. 60.
91 Ibid., p. 72.
92 Ibid., p. 73.
He doubts also that this science, as developed by James and others, can suggest the right, the truth, and the value of religion. It cannot take the place of dogmatics, philosophy, and metaphysics. The scientific study of religion must, after all, be concerned with truth. James himself seems to recognize this when he speaks of a "More" and of "overbeliefs" which are "absolutely indispensable;" but according to him, religion needs only a higher power, and religious experience can spurn the offer of "a metaphysical monster to our worship." It is understandable that Bavinck quotes Troeltsch, who, though appreciating much that the psychology of religion offers, maintained that this science lacked an Erkenntnisteorie.

The limitations of the psychology of religion are evident from the fact that it is a descriptive rather than a normative science. It does not evaluate religions as to better and best in the light of truth. Metaphysics is necessary to answer the question: What lies behind the empirical evidence?

What Bavinck says of "sceptical psychologism" applies also to the empirical method of the psychology of religion: "However important psychology may be and whatever valuable contributions it can make, it is limited and can never take the place of logic and ethics, of religion and aesthetics; even pedagogy, thankful for psychology's contribution, keeps the independence it deserves according to its own nature."

93 Ibid., p. 74.
94 Ibid., pp. 76, 77.
95 W. der O., p. 178.
96 Ibid., p. 182.
97 "Richtingen in de Psychologie" in V. O., p. 182. See also pp. 180, 181.
The psychological method attempts to understand religion without considering the existence of God. "But it is indeed a poor science that may not consider God, and that attempts to explain all things outside of and without Him." Religion and the proper study of religion demand the acknowledgement of divine revelation.

On the constructive side Bavinck holds that Scripture gives us a psychology of religion with which no scientific research and no study of questionnaires can compare. It speaks the rich language of life, and does not deal in abstractions. It teaches us to know man as he is, man in his origin, being, and purpose. With its emphasis on sin and grace it penetrates the life of the soul as no other book does. It reveals the full reality of the life of persons.

"When Scripture deals with man in the language of her day, she speaks about that same man who lives to-day and who under all the changes of culture remains the same. Though his knowledge, art, and civilization may increase, it is the same heart that now, as for centuries, beats in his bosom." Human nature, no matter how rich in gifts and powers, is one. Man is an organic unity.

Scripture maintains that men are souls, but they also have created spirits. Spirit is the principle of the natural life and also of the higher life. Spirit is the principle and

100 B. en R. Ps., pp. 13, 14.
101 Ibid., p. 11.
102 Ibid., pp. 17, 18.
103 Ibid., pp. 44, 48, 49. Consult pages for Scripture references.
power, whereas soul is the seat and the subject of life,
Both mean the inner man but seen from different sides. 104

Scripture makes much of the heart which is the source of
the understanding, the emotions, the desires, the will; it is
the fountain of the scientific, artistic, religious, and ethical
life. 105

In glowing words Bavinck speaks of man as soul and as
personality. "Through understanding and emotion, through
reason and will, man rises to the heights of free and indepen-
dent personality. He remains bound to the earth, and does not
lose his basic nature." 106 But like an oak, man lifts his head
to the stars. He reaches to the unseen world, the world of
ideas and norms, of the true, the good, and the beautiful. 106
"It is the soul that as personality conquers the sensational
and participates in the spiritual and eternal." 107

In his essay on the subconscious Bavinck maintains that the
explorations of the subconscious prove that the "psychology with-
out a soul" is untenable. 108 In the soul lies the root of
human personality; soul and consciousness are not the same;
the self is far richer than the I. 109 Scripture supports the
teaching about the subconscious in stating that the soul is far
richer and deeper than consciousness. 110

104 Ibid., pp. 58, 59. Consult pages for Scripture references.
105 Ibid., p. 61.
109 Ibid., p. 195.
110 Ibid., p. 207.
Study of the soul cannot evade the problem of sin. Scripture teaches that sin affects the whole man in his understanding, his will, and his emotions. And Scripture reveals the grace that alone can overcome sin and prevent tragedy. Psychology can ignore sin and grace only at the expense of truth.

Along with the revelation as to sin and grace the Bible gives the true meaning of conversion, which the psychology of religion cannot do. For "beneath the head lies the heart out of which are the issues of life."

Bavinck acknowledges that there is a conversion in a general or broader sense as e.g., Thomas Carlyle and J. S. Mill experienced it at some time in their lives. But he warns against identifying such a conversion with the Christian experience. The psychology of religion with its "Voraussetzunglosigkeit" lacks the standard necessary for differentiation and judgment. On the other hand Scripture gives a very definite and clear understanding of conversion. For it not only uses definite terms but also gives rich descriptions and examples.

From all these observations of Bavinck it is evident that he is fully appreciative of whatever new light the sciences dealing with the study of the soul can offer, but he also warns against any evading of the illumination that Scripture gives.

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112 W. der Q., pp. 178 and 200.
113 Ibid., p. 182.
114 G. D., IV, pp. 129, 130. See also III, pp. 642, 643, 646. Appreciating this emphasis, J. Waterink maintains, however, that Bavinck's books on psychology are outdated, and that they were not too successful in his time. See Centraal Weekblad, 2de Jaargang, no. 50, Dec. 11, 1954.
5. The Natural Sciences

We have already seen that Bavinck has much to say about nature, especially as it is related to the concept of revelation.\(^{115}\) By nature we may mean all that exists outside of man's efforts. Or we may imply the whole material world over against the spiritual.\(^{116}\) Or again "the concept nature takes in not only the material, but also soul and spirit, not only the physical, but also the psychical, the religious and ethical life as it proceeds from human disposition; not only the seen, but also the unseen, the supernatural."\(^{117}\)

But Bavinck also considers the realm of the natural sciences. He reveals a knowledge of the most recent developments and appreciates these greatly.\(^{118}\) However, he approaches this subject not as a natural scientist, but as a Christian scientist, a theologian-philosopher who sees the relatedness of all knowledge in the light of divine revelation.

In the preceding pages we have disclosed sufficient evidence to show that Bavinck is opposed to a dualism between the natural and the spiritual. Scripture does not teach such a dualism. The view of nature held by the psalmists, prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles produced unexcelled nature poetry and a significant philosophy of nature.\(^{119}\) In general, Christianity

\(^{115}\) Cf. G. D., I, Section 12; W. der O., chapter IV; "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V. O.

\(^{116}\) G. D., I, 370.

\(^{117}\) Ibid., p. 371.

\(^{118}\) Cf. the tenor of his thoughts in his devotional book: De Zekerheid des Geloofs and in his rectoral address: Modernisme en Orthodoxie.

\(^{119}\) "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V. O., p. 94.
has been a blessing for science, for research in nature and in history. Science does not owe everything to Christianity because it springs from creation rather than from re-creation. But Christianity, offering the comfort to live and to die happily, works upon the whole man, upon his entire life, upon all his thinking and acting, and in that way it influences the development of the natural sciences.

Although the Middle Ages never dreamt of the advances of the natural sciences as these manifest themselves today, their emphasis on scholarship paved the way.

When one simply considers these three things, that the Christianity of the Middle Ages brought about the Christianizing and civilizing of the new people; founded the most famous universities; and, applying tremendous power of thought to the deepest problems, led the mental sciences to exceptional heights never reached before, one loses the desire and the courage to look down on this important period of Christian cultural history.

The Reformers also showed a great appreciation of nature as a revelation of God's glory, and many scientific men were Christians. The Reformation freed the individual for the task of answering to his calling and making all natural life sacred as service to God.

It was in the eighteenth century that a change took place, and the attempt was made to explain life within the circle of

121 "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V. O., p. 93.
122 Ibid., pp. 98, 99.
123 Ibid., p. 97.
physics, chemistry, and mechanics, offering quantitative rather
then qualitative explanations.\textsuperscript{124} It was a far cry from Calvin's
ideas on nature and its relation to God.\textsuperscript{125}

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the natural
sciences have made great progress, but the separation of these
sciences from revelation and from religion has also gone on
apace.

Bavinck desires that these sciences have a certain indepen-
dence, that each must not be dictated to by any of the others,
nor by theology and philosophy. Only that way can we arrive
at facts and a measure of certainty. Each science should
stick to its own last and should not lay down the law to the
other sciences.\textsuperscript{126}

From this point of view Christianity is not opposed to
these sciences but rather welcomes whatever discoveries they
make. Empirical knowledge is of the highest importance; it
is a first step to scientific knowledge.\textsuperscript{127}

Christianity, however, is interested in the whole of truth;
it welcomes all the contributions of the natural and the spiritual
sciences, but it also comes forward with its conception of a
general science in its unifying significance. "Against facts
as rocks we do not contend; these we desire to know and to honor
as God in the way of His providence places them before us."\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 100.
\textsuperscript{125} See Instit., I, 17, 8, 9; also T. F. Torrance: Calvin's Doctrine
of Man, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{126} G. D., I, p. 388.
\textsuperscript{127} Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{128} "Christendom et Natuurwetenschap" in V. O., p. 85.
But for Christianity facts are not simply enclosed in the particular field of each science. Facts are related and demand explanations. Analysis leads to synthesis.129 "Therefore, what is needed in the cultivation of science is not only a glance, a clear understanding, an industrious application, a good method, and a painstaking investigation, but also a creative fancy, an ingenious intuition, a surprising divination."129 Newton saw more than a falling apple. He made deductions. Such deductions in the form of hypotheses are verified or proved false. In that way progress is made in the natural sciences.

Bavinck contends further that natural science cannot be separated from the investigator's view of the world and of life. In mathematics, chemistry, and anatomy a difference in the view of life may not mean much, but in biology, palaeontology, and anthropology faith or unbelief weigh heavily.130

No one, not even the exact scientist, can escape a philosophy of nature,131 which goes beyond facts, significant as they may be. All the varied phenomena point back not only to a visible world, but also to the world of ideas that come to realization in the rational and moral nature of man. We are not indiferent spectators, but we make distinctions and evaluations, and we set the knowledge of truth in science as our goal. Science

129 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 63.
130 Ibid., pp. 64, 65.
131 "Christendom en Natuurwetenschap" in V.O., p. 89.
must also deal with the unseen world of which we are rational and moral citizens. Its purpose should be not to prove or to deny, but to pierce and to know the essence and laws of that world.132

Man simply is not satisfied with empirical knowledge. He desires to know not only that something is, but also why. He wants to know the origin and purpose of phenomena. "As soon as man raises himself to this level and finds knowing a good in itself, as soon as he is not satisfied with actuality but learns to value truth as a treasure for the acquisition of which no effort is too great and no sacrifice too heavy, science in the real sense is born."133 Such scientific knowing has a unifying significance. It accepts empirical data but seeks the idea that determines them all, the law that rules them all.134

The scientist always remains man and has need of spiritual as well as material food. Natural scientists and natural science are always related to life and, therefore, to all the data of all science at its best. Science has the task to acknowledge this full, rich life, to proceed from it, and to understand it in its being and truth.135

Men are not animals but human beings; they are rational, moral, religious, aesthetic creatures.

132 Christelijke Wetenschap, pp. 55-57.
133 Ibid., p. 47.
134 Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
135 Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
On the basis of these conceptions of his humanity each person proceeds in life. Silently they lie at the roots of all his thinking and acting, his feelings and his will. On these conceptions the family, society, state, religion, morality, justice, the entire history and organization of humanity are built. And science must proceed from that fact also.... Our point of departure, or hypothesis, or foundation is in the last analysis the witness of our self-consciousness. Herein lies the indestructible idea of a world within us and outside us, of soul and body, of spirit and matter, of unseen and seen things. These do not stand dualistically next to each other. On the contrary, "by means of this relationship we discover thought in the world, law in nature, order in the whole, beauty in the landscape, love in the eye, loyalty in the heart." In his lecture on "Revelation and Nature" in Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring Bavinck maintains that the science of nature is not the only science and that it cannot stand alone. Sooner or later it belies itself or transcends itself as a purely descriptive science when it posits a formula for the explanation of man and the world. Comte did that with his three stages of theology, philosophy, and positivism. When science raises itself to a philosophy, it should extend that privilege also to religion, morality, and beauty. The natural sciences have no right to deny other evidences that also have scientific importance. Intellectual speculation or the expression of definite beliefs may not in itself be lamentable, provided that in the process it is recognized that boundaries have been crossed, and that there are other data which may not be ignored.

136 Ibid., pp. 53, 54.
137 Ibid., p. 55.
When natural scientists establish their own dogmas, they should be aware of the fact that they are leaving the field of exact science even as Haeckel did when, positing the eternity of matter, he stated a dogma that violated his own rule: "Wo der Glaube anfängt, hört die Wissenschaft auf."

The transgressing and the trespassing give evidence that man is not satisfied with the empirical approach and its results. Physics which thinks through its own concepts and delves into its own being ends in metaphysics and arrives at God.\(^{139}\)

Christianity gives the best answer to man's yearning to know not only the that, but also the why by revealing the who as to God. "What nature is for us depends on what we think of God and who He is for us."\(^{140}\) Man can attain the true, free relationship with nature only when he stands in the right relationship to God.\(^{141}\) He must have the assurance that the world was created by God, and that he has a substantial and distinctive place and purpose in it. That also give a satisfying answer to the question: "On what do comparison, metaphor, poetry, art, science, and all culture rest? They rest on the confession that one Word, one Spirit, one Divine reason are fundamental to all things and preserve them in their unity and relationship."\(^{142}\)

\(^{139}\) Ibid., p. 76.  
\(^{140}\) Ibid., p. 87.  
\(^{141}\) Ibid., p. 89.  
\(^{142}\) Ibid., p. 91.
The revelation of God in His Word places nature and man in the proper perspective. They cannot be understood, as they cannot be redeemed, without God.

For science, also for the natural sciences, the same three principles hold as in theology. God is the principium essendi. The world, as the embodiment of the thoughts of God, is a beautiful book; it is not a copy book but one to be read.

The created world is, therefore, the principium cognoscendi externum of all science. But that is not enough. An eye is necessary for seeing. War nicht das Auge sonnenhaft, wie könnten wir das Licht erblicken? There must be correspondence between object and subject. The same Logos that shines in the world must also let His light shine in our consciousness. That is the intellectus, the ratio which springs from the Logos, which discovers and recognizes the Logos in things. It is the principium cognoscendi internum.\(^{143}\)

Bavinck holds that theism is the most satisfactory explanation of man and the world because of its constant reference to the God of revelation.\(^{144}\) In reality science does not tell us what God and man are; it leaves us ignorant of the origin, the essence, and the purpose of things. And, therefore, it can never displace religion nor make good its loss.\(^{145}\) Christian theism, on the other hand, by disclosing in nature a work of God, prevents the meaninglessness of nature as taken merely by itself. Miracle and the supernatural are not in conflict with the material order. Religion and science at their best cannot be opposed to each other. Love to God and love for science need not clash. The former is the foundation, the principle.

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143 G. D., I, p. 237.
144 Ibid., p. 387.
145 Ibid., p. 265.
and the driving power of the latter. 146

Bavinck speaks from strong convictions but with great fairness. He honors all the facts of all the sciences, and he finds the unifying principles in Christian theism, which strives to see all of life in the light of God's revelation. His wise charitableness leads him to write, in connection with geology and palaeontology,

The world is also a book, all the pages of which are written by God's almighty hand. Conflict arises only from this, that the text of the book of Scripture as that of the book of nature is often read and understood so poorly. Theologians are not guiltless and have often condemned science not in the name of Scripture, but in the name of their own inexact interpretations. And the natural scientists have often explained the facts and phenomena which they discovered in a manner and in the service of a view of the world justified neither by Scripture nor by science. 147

Above and in and through Bavinck's scholarship shines his Christian faith. The heart-throb is always present in his reasonableness. "Truth is the harmony between thought and actuality.... Therefore, the seeking after truth is already beautiful and a priceless gift; but more beautiful and richer is the finding of it, the enjoyment of it, and the walking in its light." 148 And with no intent to minimize scientific knowledge he says that faith has millions of martyrs whereas science has but few. 149 Of this he is certain, that "the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives an ethical character to science and

146 Christelijke Wetenschap, pp. 105-107.
147 G. D., II, pp. 528, 529.
148 De Zekerheid des Geloofs, pp. 21, 22.
149 Ibid., p. 32.
dedicates its practice to a priestly work. According to the beautiful words of Bacon, it holds for the kingdom of science as for the kingdom of heaven that we shall not enter unless we become as little children."¹⁵⁰

6. Evolution

In connection with the natural sciences we must consider Bavinck's ideas on evolution. Here again he reveals a fairness and moderation with that firmness of conviction that marks all his thinking.

He counsels his readers to acknowledge, more than has been done, the element of truth that undoubtedly lies hidden in the doctrine of evolution.¹⁵¹ He speaks of evolution as an innocent thought and within proper limits an indisputable fact, although he warns against the exclusion of the supernatural factor.¹⁵²

Bavinck believes in the creation of the world and man by the Eternal God. He accepts the Genesis account of paradise and the first man and woman. Yet, he is impressed by the concept of development understood from the Christian point of view. He refers to Heraclitus' preoccupation with becoming¹⁵³ and considers Aristotle's conception of development or evolution as organic, teleological, and progressive, but finds in the Stagirite a dualism between spirit and matter.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 98.
¹⁵¹ "Evolutie" in V. O., p. 119.
¹⁵² W. der O., p. 11.
¹⁵³ "Evolutie" in V. O., pp. 105, 106.
He finds the idea of evolution also in Leibnitz, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, and Hegel, but separated from theistic foundations, it becomes too rationalistic, aprioristic, and romantic.\textsuperscript{155}

It was Darwin's experimentation, coupled with an agnostic naturalism, that brought about a tremendous change. The idea of development was privileged to receive a scientific foundation by means of "the earnest and careful, extensive and acute observations of Charles Darwin."\textsuperscript{156}

Bavinck, however, contends against the mechanistic, ateleological view of the world and man that resulted from Darwin's conclusions. In \textit{Schepping of Ontwikkeling} \textsuperscript{157}(Creation or Development) he places the views of creation and mechanistic evolution over against each other. "Man has undertaken the gigantic effort of interpreting the whole world and all that is in it, in their origin, essence, and end, according to what are called strictly scientific standards, that is, without God, without any invisible, supernatural, spiritual elements, and from the pure data of matter and force alone."\textsuperscript{158} This theory of development knows nothing of origins, posits the indestructibility of matter,\textsuperscript{159} acknowledges a restless becoming, and makes evolution the eternal law.\textsuperscript{160}

In general the mechanistic view of the world and man suffers from a too naive and superficial conception of the mystery of

\textsuperscript{155} W. der O., pp. 8, 9.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., pp. 9, 10; "Evolutie" in V. O., p. 109.
\textsuperscript{157} Translated in the Methodist Review, Nov., 1901. We use the original
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 17.
life. The doctrine of the descent of man rests on comparative anatomy, physiology, and psychology; but there are important differences between animals and man, differences upon which psychology, religion, and ethics also have a right to speak. There is no actual proof of the descent of man from the animal. The theory appears to be more a matter of wish and belief than of knowledge.

According to Bavinck this system of thought goes beyond facts. It is a product of the imagination, a philosophy, an opinion, a stepping across the boundaries of data. This interpretation gives no conclusive proof of man's descent and no satisfactory explanation of the difference between man, animals, and things. Moreover, by demanding faith in their system the defenders really acknowledge something of the objective significance of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, the beautiful and ugly. By honoring personality they show that man is more than animal or machine.

In this scheme of things the word development is really out of place; it is merely a form of motion that has meaning only when we supply such concepts as plan, law, purpose, or God. The upholders of this theory have no explanation as to the purpose

161"Evolutie" in V. O., pp. 110 ff.  
162 Ibid., pp. 112, 114.  
163 Ibid., p. 116.  
164 Ibid., pp. 117, 118.  
166 Ibid., p. 34.  
167 Ibid., p. 35.  
168 Ibid., p. 38.
of man and the world. Yet, they have hope for the future and dream of an earthly paradise. The end of this view of life and the world is moral and spiritual bankruptcy.

Bavinck is aware of the effect that the development in the natural sciences, and the dogma of evolution have had on philosophy and theology. He rejoices that there has been a reaction against the mechanistic conception of the world and speaks of a return to dynamism, idealism, and pantheism. But the new theology sought to identify revelation and development. That resulted in the stressing of the immanence of God at the expense of His transcendence.

In this emphasis Bavinck finds an egoistic trend, a desire to satisfy self rather than to know and to serve the living God. He maintains that an immanent God cannot fulfill the longings of the heart, and that religion requires the transcendent and the supernatural. He appeals to the revelation of Scripture which assumes and proclaims both the divine immanence and transcendence. To be scientific man must consider the evidence of the Word as well as that of the natural sciences. It will not do to build a view of the world and man on the latter alone, for that does injustice to Scripture and to science.

From all this we gather that Bavinck accepts the revelation of Scripture and the factual data of science, but he rejects those philosophical conclusions which do not take the Word of God

169 Ibid., p. 45.
170 Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
171 W. der ., pp. 11, 12.
172 Ibid., pp. 13, 14.
173 Ibid., pp. 14, 15.
174 Ibid., p. 16.
175 G. D., II, p. 529.
into consideration. It is undeniable that for him problems remain, as they do for us. But he desires to solve them in the light of the Word and of science. From a study of both, he is convinced that there is development. However, revelation really gives us the true insight.

What no science can teach, revelation does teach, and it is confirmed by the traditions of all peoples, that it pleased God, in the formation of the world, to proceed from the imperfect to the perfect, from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher. In the doctrine of evolution there lies a truth acknowledged also by Scripture. Genesis 1: 2 announces that clearly.  

The doctrine of creation and the idea of development are not necessarily contradictory. The creation of heaven and earth recorded in Genesis 1: 1, during a longer or shorter period, preceded the work of the six days related in Genesis 1: 3 ff. The six days of creation need not necessarily be considered as days of twenty-four hours. The first three days may have been unusual, cosmic days, and even the last three may have shared in this characteristic.

Bavinck, however, rejects the theory of the descent of man, of his development from the animal. Scripture teaches plainly that man, physically, and psychically, was created fullgrown, in virile aetate. He was made in the image of God, with consciousness and freedom to act.

Man was and is subject to development under God who created

176 Ibid., p. 517.
177 G. D., II, p. 529.
178 Ibid., p. 533.
179 Ibid., p. 573.
him man. By divine grace even the fall did not obliterate the last traces of God's image. And God has had and still has great things in store for him in the way of redemption.

For Bavinck the doctrine of creation, revealed in Scripture, harmonizes with the being of God as well as with that of the creature, interprets the origin of all that is, and gives meaning to life. "Everything is of divine descent, allied to the Son, animated by the breath of the Spirit; everything rests upon thought and will, upon understanding and counsel; and, therefore, everything mutually allied is one world, one cosmos, which receives its crown and glory, its lord and master in man who is of God's family."180

Though Bavinck's convictions will not silence all questions, neither his own nor those of others, he does us a great service by attempting to honor the claims of faith and reason, of religion and science. He advises that the relation between faith and science will improve when the latter surrenders the mechanistic view of the world and lays aside the hostility towards religion, especially the Christian religion, and when faith, more than it has done, recognizes the important element of truth that undoubtedly lies in the doctrine of evolution and descent. That there is evolution, not limited to mechanistic motion and chemical action, is proved by every organism that becomes and perishes, and by the history of humanity.181

180 Scheppe van Ontwikkeling, p. 27.
181 "Evolutie" in V.O., p. 119.
He does us a great service by letting the light of revelation shine on the concept of becoming, and, therefore, on the whole problem of Christianity and culture.

If the world is but a great machine, development is excluded. For he who speaks of development, also speaks of law, direction, and purpose; development stands between beginning and end and leads from the first to the last; it is not a mechanical, but an organic, teleological concept. That is why it can come to its own only on the basis of creation, which gives the world such existence as in germ and in principle is what it must become. Aristotle grasped it: becoming exists because of being, not vice versa. Becoming is possible only if and because there is being.182

Under God, as Creator and Redeemer, man has his challenging task in a world that is not static. This conviction puts meaning into history.

7. The Meaning of History

In giving us a Christian interpretation of history Bavinck would agree with Cailliet that this really implies seeing things as they are. Such seeing means the landscape of reality as a whole, the landscape that the One Church actually sees when she looks at the universe of nature and man - God created, God upheld at every moment, God bathed in its integrality.... Seeing the Christian landscape of reality means seeing God as the Supreme Ruler of history, including our own life history, either willing or permitting everything that comes to pass. To us Christians this created universe is a great signalling station. It is our task to make out its meaning and to proceed upon this same meaning at all time.183

Bavinck would respond warmly to these words also: "Our sovereign God, the Creator and Upholder of the universe, is at the roaring loom of events and reveals himself in his creation.

182 Ibid., p. 120. Cf. Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing, pp. 50-59.
183 The Christian Approach to Culture, p. 66.
in the very texture of history, and in the human soul.\textsuperscript{184}

There are many interpretations of history, some of them as far apart as Carlyle's theory of great men in \textit{Heroes and Hero Worship} and Tolstoy's emphasis on circumstances in \textit{War and Peace}, as far apart as Hegel's preoccupation with absolute idea and Buckle's stressing of climate, soil, and food. There is a vast difference between Charles and Mary Beard, who scarcely mention Christianity, and Arnold Toynbee whose concern with the Christian religion is somewhat of a revolution.

For Bavinck and for us the real difference lies between the Christian and the non-Christian interpretation.

In \textit{Wijsegeerte der Openbaring} Bavinck begins his lecture on "Openbaring en Geschiedenis" by saying that the meaning of revelation is essential to the proper understanding of history.\textsuperscript{185} Before developing this conviction he traces the new approach to the subject in the nineteenth century, and speaks of the desire to study history inductively, to free it from subjectivity and make it, as in the natural sciences, an exact and objective science.\textsuperscript{186} He maintains, however, that this empirical method came to be ruled by an ideology fully as much as Hegel's thinking was. The idea in this instance was that of evolution either of a mechanistic or dynamic cast.\textsuperscript{187}

Bavinck opposes this ideology with its monistic doctrine of causality, for in the study of history, more so even than in the

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 77.
\textsuperscript{185} W. der Q., p. 95.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., p. 97.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 98.
study of nature, we face "a complex of causes and activities which in their essence and relation are unknown and cannot be summed up in a single word." 188

He also criticizes the attempt to see history as a progressive series of periods, not because we have no right to speak of periods in history, but because there is again a complex of causes and activities. For example, the age of the Reformation was also that of the Renaissance; and the eighteenth century was marked not only by the Aufklärung, but also by Pietism. "With all these distinctions one forgets that the relationships and conditions, placed in succession, really existed next to each other through all ages among various peoples in the different layers of society." 189

Moreover, all these periods and peoples have not only horizontally a meaning for those that follow, but each period and each people have also vertically a meaning for God, who created and guided them. 190

When we consider history, which is more than a chronicle of events, we must think also of direction and purpose. "For if history is to be truly that, something must be becoming; the sense, the value, the meaning of history depends on this, that something is realized in and through it, something that makes history with all its misery and grief worthwhile." 191

188 Ibid., p. 103.
189 Ibid., p. 104.
190 Ibid., p. 105.
191 Ibid., p. 106.
For that reason the empirical approach to history is not sufficient. A philosophy is needed. The cause and purpose, essence and development of history are not to be understood without metaphysics.\textsuperscript{192}

Dilthey, Windelband, Rickert, Wundt, and Sigwart recognized this. They maintained that the approach to the study of history is different from the approach to the study of nature. Emphasis must be laid on the particular, the "Einmalige," rather than on the universal, for the science of history deals not with everything, but with what is significant and with what has a certain value. Windelband and Rickert looked upon history as Kulturwissenschaft, whereas Dilthey, Wundt, and Sigwart considered it as Geisteswissenschaft.\textsuperscript{193}

According to Bavinck we cannot stop at the consideration of history as Kultur- or Geisteswissenschaft, for without despising the significance of the particular, history also strives after the knowledge of the idea, of the meaning of events and persons.\textsuperscript{194}

Where, then, are we to find the standard by which to judge historical persons and events? Culture itself cannot serve, for it is only part of the story of man and the world, and its very meaning is not fixed for all.\textsuperscript{195} Nor do the facts of history in themselves give us value judgments. Even as there is no

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 107.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p. 108.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 110.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 112.
physics without metaphysics, there is no history without philosophy, without religion and ethics.\textsuperscript{195}

An abstract idea cannot serve us, for the ideas of freedom, truth, goodness, and beauty do not exist by themselves but are realized through personality.\textsuperscript{196} For the Christian an idea, like freedom, is more than just that, it is "an attribute and power of a personal God."\textsuperscript{197}

It is Bavinck's conviction that the special revelation in Scripture gives the standard by which to judge history, and, therefore, also makes possible the understanding of it. History is rooted in revelation, and the divine plan is confirmed by special revelation.\textsuperscript{197} It is the illumination given by a personal God that makes history meaningful.

Bavinck goes on to say that the confession of the unity of God is the foundation, not only of the right view of nature, but of history as well. True unity cannot be found in the multiplicity of reality but in divine personality. "A person alone can be the root of unity in diversity, of diversity in unity."\textsuperscript{198} Theism is the true monism.

Closely allied with this unity is the oneness of the human race. The theory of evolution usually posits this also, but the concept is really borrowed from revelation. The unity made known by special revelation is of a different kind and of a

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., p. 113.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., p. 114.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., p. 115.
\end{footnotes}
higher order than that professed by philosophical monism; it is the unity of harmony which includes riches, diversity, and distinctions. Within it justice is done to each individual and to individuals in their variations and diversities. By means of it each person can discover the connection between past, present, and future. He finds that "he belongs to history, yet, is raised above it. Though a child of time, he also participates in eternity. He becomes and he is; he passes and he remains." 

Special revelation, which presents the unity of God and of the human race, does more. It gives us history, its very kernel and content. It not only is history and one of its most important factors, but it also raises history far above nature and its processes. "It says and proves this through its own deed; Christ came to a crisis upon earth. The content of history consists of a mighty struggle." The mighty struggle between darkness and light, sin and grace, heaven and hell forms its very essence. The one great thread that runs through history is the divine plan to save the world.

It is, therefore, only by special revelation that the meaning of history can be understood. Christianity, living by this revelation, looks upon history as more than a concatenation of blind facts, considers it a progressive revealing of God's virtues, sees in it the leading of God's almighty hand, and

199 Ibid., p. 117.
200 Ibid., p. 118.
201 Ibid., p. 119.
202 Ibid., p. 170.
203 Address at the 25th Annual Meeting of De Unie "Een School Met Den Bijbel," p. 3.
204 G. D., II, p. 408.
205 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 106.
presents itself as a history of grace, a grace that is something other and more than a logical conclusion.\textsuperscript{206} 

In Christianity there appears a history of humanity, a development which proceeds from a definite point and moves towards a definite goal, a progress towards an absolute ideal, towards true being, and eternal life. History becomes a drama of awe which leads through suffering to glory, a \textit{divina comedia} that reveals the slow but certain realization of the Kingdom of God and casts over this somber earth the splendor of divine glory.\textsuperscript{207} 

Christianity is more than a doctrine; it is the restoration of fallen creation, and the renewing of sinful humanity according to the image of Christ; an historic reality woven into this world, maintained and guided to her goal by God Himself.\textsuperscript{208} 

By means of special revelation we know that history centers in the person of Christ.\textsuperscript{209} (We are reminded of Cullmann's \textit{Christ and Time}). Think Him and all He said and did away, and history falls apart; it loses its heart, kernel, center, and divisions; it becomes chaos.\textsuperscript{210} 

But revelation teaches that God is the Lord of time and that Christ is the turning point. By that means it brings unity and plan, progress and purpose into history. That purpose is not one or another particular idea, not the idea of freedom, or of humanity, or of material wellbeing alone, but it is the fullness of the Kingdom of God, the all-sided, of heaven and earth, angels and men, spirit and matter, cultus and culture, the particular as well as the universal, the all-comprehending dominion of God.\textsuperscript{210}
8. Of Beauty and Aesthetics

For Bavinck the appreciation of beauty and the scientific study of it form a significant part of man's cultural heritage and task. In "Van Schoonheid en Schoonheidsleer" he deals with beauty and aesthetics, and in some of his other works he offers observations that help towards a Christian understanding of the subject.

As is customary with him, in approaching the heart of the matter and before giving his own views, he surveys the thoughts of others from Plato to his own time. He finds, in the main, three schools of thought. First there is the idealistic of Plato, with whom metaphysical and normative aesthetics began, the influence of which is found, with variations, in some church fathers, in Roman Catholic and Protestant philosophers and theologians, and in the monistic systems of Schelling and Hegel. Then under the influence of empirical philosophy there is the reaction against dogmatism in aesthetics, a reaction represented by men like Shaftesbury, Hume, Burke, and Erasmus Darwin, and moderated by Kant who sought to mediate between dogmatism and empiricism. There is also the empirical and positivistic school represented by Fechner who preferred an aesthetics "von unten" to one of "von oben." 211

Bavinck finds merit in the empirical approach to the problem 211 "Van Schoonheid en Schoonheidsleer" in V. O., pp. 262-265.
of aesthetics. "As in each science, so also in the doctrine of the beautiful, observation and thinking, the inductive and the deductive method go together." Even men like Plato, Schelling, and Hegel did not ignore the empirical altogether, and the empiricists disclose their concern for thought as well as for observation and experimentation.

But Bavinck goes on to say that whatever conclusions a thinker draws in the realm of aesthetics, as in every other scientific field, depends on his view of the world. In accordance with that "the observer, in order to understand the sense of beauty in humanity, the creative urge of the artist, and the value of works of art, will take into consideration the psychological or physical, ethnological or culture-historical, biological or evolutionistic, climatological or social factors, etc." In this respect there are as many schools of thought as there are observers.

In spite of the importance he attaches to the empirical approach, Bavinck considers its conclusions insufficient. It cannot explain the beauty of nature by means of psychological, physical, and culture-historical research. It cannot fathom the origin and the purpose of the sense of beauty in man. It does not explain the mystery of genius. And finally, its study of works of art as to their inception, development, and

212 Ibid., p. 266.
213 Ibid., p. 268.
214 Ibid., p. 269.
215 Ibid., p. 270.
history; valuable as it may be; has not solved the problem of art in regard to its origin and essence.216

Though an empirical aesthetics is valuable in stressing the "von unten," it cannot stop there, for "aesthetics must rise above the empirical if it would understand what beauty is, why some things appeal to us as beautiful, and what the grounds are for our aesthetic appreciation."217 Aesthetics becomes a true, philosophical science only when it answers age-long questions that are concerned not only with the that, but also with the why.217

The aesthetic side of man cannot be understood apart from the intellectual and volitional. These three factors, though differing, do not function independently. There are differences between science and art on the one hand, and between art and technic on the other, but there is also a relationship.

The relationship and the difference, somewhat altered, can also be expressed in this way, that truth, goodness, and beauty are one but also three.218

The Greeks spoke of the good and the beautiful, but Christianity made the content and value of truth understandable and aroused in human hearts a love for it stronger than death. Augustine found the eternal, absolute truth in God alone, who is the sumnum bonum and sumnum pulchrum.219 Veering from the neoplatonic strain in Augustine's statement, Protestant theologians especially preferred to speak in more Scriptural terms of the divine majesty and glory which imply the true, the good, and the beautiful.219

216 Ibid., p. 271.
217 Ibid., p. 273.
218 Ibid., p. 274.
219 Ibid., p. 275.
In a significant paragraph Bavinck draws his own conclusions.

If truth, goodness, and beauty [glory] originally belong to God, they possess first of all, from the very nature of the case, an immaterial, a spiritual character and cannot inwardly be opposed to one another. Neither of the three can be equated with the empirical reality perceived by the senses; they raise themselves above it as norms above the laws of nature, as ideas above the reality of the senses. They cannot be observed by the sense organs, as animals also possess these, but only by the higher faculty of perception of man, by the spirit that dwells in him. Even as truth stands far above actuality, the good raises itself above the useful, and the beautiful above the pleasing. All three belong to the realm of intelligible things, even though objectively the things perceived by the senses and subjectively the senses of rational man offer essential services. 219

Though truth, goodness, and beauty may really be one, they also differ. Truth is the agreement between thinking and being, and answers to the law of logic; goodness is the agreement between Sollen and being, and answers to the moral law; and beauty is distinguished from both in that it has no content of its own and in this sense cannot be coordinated with the other two. 220 It borrows its content from truth and goodness and reveals these. "Beauty exists in the agreement between content and form, idea and appearance; in harmony, proportion, unity in differentiation, organization; in splendor, glory, radiant perfection, perfectio phaenomenon. 220

From this it must not be concluded that beauty always demands sensuous appearance and has no room for the spiritually beautiful, for the glory of God. For Bavinck beauty reflects the glory of God.

220 Ibid., p. 276. Cf. "The true satisfies our understanding; the good satisfies our desire and arouses our love; the beautiful gives us rest and enjoyment." B. der Ps., p. 114.
God is differentiated from the world and is the Blessed, the Glorious One in Himself; but when Scripture speaks of His glory, it always thinks of His revelation, either in His works (Psalm 8), or before the angels (Isaiah 6), or to and for Himself (John 17:5). Beauty is always a matter of purely spiritual or spiritual-sensuous beholding.

And while the true is that in which knowing rejoices; the good is that which, when possessed, satisfies; the beautiful is that of which only the beholding pleases. Pulchra sunt, quae visa (audita) placent.220

For Bavinck, then, beauty, like truth and goodness, is rooted in God; it is a reflection of the divine glory. The beauty of the creature, transitory and changeable, exists not of itself, but participates in a higher, absolute beauty.221 If the purpose of all creation is to declare the glory of God,222 the presence of beauty in the world and the appreciation and cultivation of it by man strengthen the evidence.

After stating his fundamental convictions that truth, goodness, and beauty are related though also different, and that beauty is a reflection of the divine glory, Bavinck admits that many problems remain, as they do in one's theory of knowledge. And he adds that the solution to these problems will depend on one's view of life and the world.223

Fully aware of the many questions that still remain unanswered and that very likely will not be answered for man here, Bavinck gives some observations that follow from his Christian view of what is revealed.

The sense of beauty that is universal among mankind, though

221 Ibid., pp. 457 ff.
222 "Van Schoonheid en Schoonheidsleer" in V.O., pp. 276, 277.
in varying degree, is rooted not just in sensuous perception
nor only in the higher faculty of understanding and reason,
but in the spirit of man.\textsuperscript{224} It is not equally strong in all
individuals; there are lower and higher tastes; and there is
great room for development. Even artists vary in their interests
and gifts. But feeling for the beautiful in some measure is
general; it is bedded in the human spirit.

Closely allied with awareness of beauty is the appreciation
of it. This appreciation again varies, depending on the force
of the impression and on the individual's sensitivity.\textsuperscript{225}

Beauty does something for us and to us. It "reveals us to
ourselves and gives us another, new insight into nature and man-
kind. It deepens, broadens, and enriches our inner life, raises
us momentarily above the horizontal, sinful, and sad actuality,
and in a purifying, liberating, and saving manner affects our
bowed and disconsolate hearts."\textsuperscript{225}

Bavinck considers words a poor medium for expressing the
significance of this rich and excellent gift of the Creator to
His creatures. God, the Giver, who is also the Lord of Glory,
"spreads His beauty with prodigal hand before us. His name is
glorious throughout the whole earth, and since He did not leave
Himself without witness, He fills our hearts with mirth by means
of our beholding that glory."\textsuperscript{225} In the works of nature and art
it is the divine splendor that meets man and sends its rays into
his heart.\textsuperscript{226}

\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., p. 278.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., p. 279.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., pp. 279, 280.
There is something prophetic about beauty which "is the harmony that shines through the chaotic in the world; is perceived, felt, and interpreted by artists with the divine grace; and is prophecy and pledge that this world is not meant for destruction, but for glory, the nostalgic longing for which dwells in every heart." 227

Because it is a rich, divine gift, it demands our love. Its claim upon us does not have the urgency that the demands of truth and goodness have because it has no content of its own. But nevertheless beauty has its own right and value. The cultivation of an "aesthetic culture" and its application in various spheres of life must have our deepest sympathy. Next to truth and goodness homage is due to beauty. 227

Bavinck also has something to say about art, its relation to Christianity, and its limitations.

The theory that art is a copying of nature expresses but a half truth. The originality of the artist plays as important a part as the object he perceives. 228 "Art, in the most general sense, makes nature the instrument of our will, causing it to serve a higher purpose, and reforming it so that it becomes a complete art-organism." 229 It is not a pure copy of reality but an interpretation of sensation, awakened in the soul of the artist by means of the rich, visible and invisible creation of God. 230

227 Ibid., p. 280.
228 Ibid., p. 268.
230 Hedendaagsche Moraal, p. 61.
It requires "feeling, imagination, and the courage of heroes set aflame by contemplation or by an occurrence."  

Imagination is of the greatest importance for art, as it is also for science, religion, and morality. "It is the mother of art; participates in the greatest discoveries of science; is the fountain of fable and saga, of myth and symbol; arouses feeling and sympathy; urges to great deeds; and in its entirety is proof that man has a higher nature than the animal and finds no satisfaction in the imperfect of this world."  

Even though art is not autonomous because under God it is related to truth and goodness, we may not deny its independence. Bavinck is on the side of the artists in defending the rights of art. It must not be looked upon as a mere servant of religion and morality. "Beauty is not the same as the true and the good; it has its own origin and nature, its own right and value, its own usefulness and purpose."  

In the Middle Ages there was encroachment because art was ecclesiastical. But the Reformation freed both art and science from the oppression of the church and gave them their own territory.  

Art cannot flourish under rationalism, which is the death of poetry, nor under bourgeois mediocrity. Against these it protests in the name of passion and enthusiasm, of beauty and truth. 

This does not mean, however, that the maxim, "Art for art's sake"
is justified. "Aristocratic subjectivism" conflicts with the hard fact that there are rules and ordinances which no one can violate with impunity. Beauty is always related to truth and goodness. Bavinck, the theologian, says, almost in the vein of Keats but with a positive Christian emphasis, "Genuine poetry is truth," and "Pure truth and divine poetry are one." Therefore, [Art] perishes when it does not believe in the reconciliation of the ideal and the real and does not present this reconciliation for our contemplation and enjoyment. It misunderstands its essence, it becomes untrue to its calling, it digs its own grave when, despising religion and morality, it serves unbelief and sin.... We need not allow ourselves to be pleased when the mean is presented as exceptional, the low as exalted, the ugly as beautiful, evil as good, the lie as truth, the animal as divine, antichrist as Christ, and Satan as God.

Artists are not above the laws of religion and morality. Religion is related to art, to poetry as it is to all worthy spheres of man's endeavor. The Christian poet, Bilderdijk, looks at all things sub specie aeternitatis and sees by the light of divine revelation. In his study of this poet Bavinck expresses his conviction that Christianity has enriched us aesthetically as well as religiously and ethically. "Old and New Testaments, church and worship, confession and life have given poetry the deepest and most glorious motives. And the poetic word of Bilderdijk affirms the witness of the ages that Christianity and art are not hostile, and confirms his own expression that poetry

236 Ibid., p. 64.
237 G. D., II, p. 86.
238 F. E., p. 144.
239 Hedendaagsche Moraal, p. 61.
240 Ibid., p. 63.
241 Bilderdijk Als Denker en Dichter, p. 44.
and the religion of Christianity, that truth, virtue, and the beautiful are one."242

These three must be highly treasured, but they receive their true value from the fear of the Lord, and when they are related to love and are used to the divine honor.243 In the Kingdom of God they are realized and become one, for nothing good is destroyed, but all is dedicated.244 Christ is the King of glory, and one day, through Him, all harmony will be restored.245

But even though art is a gift of God and a revelation of His glory, even though it comforts us by pointing to a higher reality and fills our hearts with hope and joy,246 it has its limitations. Whatever it may accomplish, it lets us enjoy the beautiful only in our imagination; it cannot fill up the chasm between the ideal and the real; it never makes the 'there' a 'here'; it lets us see the glory of Canaan from a distance, but it does not bring us there and does not make us citizens. It is much, but it is not everything; it is not... the most holy, the noblest, the only religion and salvation for man. It does not forgive our guilt, purify us from corruption; it is not able in our sorrows to dry our tears.247

Because it idealizes, art reaches towards the future, seeks katharsis, and, at least momentarily, lifts us above life's conflicts.248 But it cannot replace religion in fulfilling the heart's desire.

In spite of its limitations, however, "art is one of the many triumphs of the soul which together are prophecy and surety

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242 Ibid., p. 220.
243 Handleiding, p. 2.
245 B. der Ps., p. 115.
246 M. D., p. 11.
248 De Overwinning der Ziel, p. 33.
of a future in which the good will triumph over evil, and grace over all unrighteousness." Bavinck quotes Kierkegaard as saying that the aesthetic person lives from moment to moment. If he could maintain himself in the moment, he would be like a god. His danger lies between two moments. In the perception, the appreciation, and the creation of beauty we do well to see the good and heed the warning.

9. Principles Governing Society

Bavinck devoted much thought to the significance of Christianity for society and its problems. Before we consider particular spheres of society, we do well to study his convictions regarding those basic Christian principles which underlie and must regulate social relations.

Because Bavinck expressed himself often on the problem of inequality and differentiation, we shall also give the gist of his thinking on this matter.

He is convinced that most of the problems of his time and of our time, such as the emancipation of women, marriage, the authority of government, politics and war, are moral problems and involve moral principles.

But what is the good, and where do we look for its source?

Bavinck contends that it rests in and springs from the will of God. But especially since the eighteenth century man has lost

249 Ibid., p. 34.
250 Ibid., p. 33.
251 Hedendaagsche Moraal, p. 9.
that conviction. Freeing himself from theology and a Christian metaphysics, man made God dependent on the good, rather than the good dependent on God.\textsuperscript{252} Even Kant's categorical imperative, valuable as it was, stressed man's good will.\textsuperscript{253} Under the spell of the theory of evolution nineteenth century thinking attempted to explain the individual in the light of society and considered the moral law relative.\textsuperscript{254} The emphasis was on the divinity in man. Perhaps Willem Kloos, a modern Dutch poet, expressed the conviction frankly in these words: "Ik ben een god in 't diepst van mijn gedachten."\textsuperscript{255} (I am a god in the depths of my thoughts).

Over against any "aristocratic subjectivism," conflicting with the fact that there are rules and ordinances which no one can violate with impunity, Bavinck sets the divine moral law. As is evident from the first chapter of Romans, reason demands that the moral law be \textit{one} and have objective validity. According to its essence the good is of a supersensuous nature and is, therefore, above changing human notions.\textsuperscript{256} "He who disobeys the moral law destroys the image of God in himself."\textsuperscript{257} Behind any categorical imperative stands the will of God. Without Him right and duty have no meaning. Even those who attempt to live morally are living on borrowed capital. "A strong foundation

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{252} Ibid., p. 27.
\item \textsuperscript{253} Ibid., p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{254} Ibid., p. 36.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Ibid., p. 46.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Ibid., p. 65.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Ibid., p. 66.
\end{itemize}
comes to lie under state and society, justice and morals, science and art when they all rest in the ordinances of God."258 Christianity recognizes and honors these ordinances and understands them in the light of divine grace, which is the enemy of moral autonomy.259

In "Christian Principles and Social Relations" Bavinck approaches the problem from another angle. He speaks of two interpretations of Jesus' attitude towards society. The one maintains that Jesus wanted to go back to nature, and that He was the first socialist and anarchist.260 The other holds that Jesus and Christianity have nothing to do with society and state, and have nothing to say to modern culture.261

Over against these views it is best to let Scripture speak, for special revelation throws much light on social relations. It reveals the beginning and the goal of man. "The origin of man determines his purpose: coming from God, he must return to Him; God is the highest good for man and humanity."262 Scripture presents the history of man as a mighty struggle between divine grace and human guilt.263

With Israel the meaning of the family as foundation of society becomes clearer than with any other people.264 Slavery was present on a small scale, but there were no slave uprisings. In Israel's law the duty to show mercy towards slaves and the

258 Ibid., p. 75.
259 Ibid., pp. 29, 75.
260 "Christelijke Beginselen en Maatschappelijke Verhoudingen" in V. O., pp. 121, 122.
261 Ibid., pp. 122, 123.
262 Ibid., p. 124.
263 Ibid., p. 125.
264 Ibid., pp. 125, 126.
oppressed was evident. Righteousness was seasoned with it. Prophets, psalmists, and writers of proverbs spare no one. They accuse the people, but especially the rich and mighty, kings, judges, priests, and false prophets. They do not look for the causes of social miseries in the institutions and laws, in the bad arrangements of state and society, in the inequality of rich and poor, because God made them both, but always in the heart of the people, in their apostasy and breaking of the covenant, in idolatry and serving of the world, in the neglect of God and His Word. Therefore, they expect restoration not from any political upheaval, but from an upright return to God.

"Prophetic expectations were fulfilled, not at once fully, but increasingly and in principle in the person and work of Christ, and they go on realizing themselves through the whole New Testament dispensation to the end of time."  

Jesus was not an ascetic. He lived with the people and showed His love for them. But He was neither a politician nor an economist, neither a social reformer nor a class contender. "All political and social conditions and relations He leaves as they are. Neither in word nor deed does He force Himself into this area." However, He comes into the world with the newness of His person and work, and to all stations and classes He preaches the same Gospel of the Kingdom.
The content of the Gospel, with its fundamental importance for society also, was preached by the Apostles and is confessed by the Church.269

The basic principles laid down by Christ and perpetuated by Christianity must rule all human relations.270 Christianity is a pearl of great price, but it is also a yeast, as Zwingli saw so clearly. In spite of the disloyalty of Christian confessors, it has borne precious fruit for society and social problems in stressing both righteousness and mercy.271

Christianity recognizes no ranks and no classes, but only sinners. The Gospel preaches the eternal worth of each individual and offers the divine grace to all. Instead of revolution it offers reformation. In a reforming and renewing manner it affects all human relationships.272 It honors development in each sphere of life and has brought about far-reaching results for the good of the individual, the family, and social and political life.273

"While conservatism shuts its eyes to changes in society, and radicalism lacks a firm standpoint in the stream of appearances, a reformation, which proceeds from Christian principle, unites both in itself: being and becoming, the absolute and the relative, the unity of the divine will and the wonderful leadings of God's providence."274

269 Ibid., pp. 139-145.
270 Ibid., p. 146.
272 Ibid., p. 149; G. D., IV, pp. 430, 431.
273 Ibid., pp. 149, 150.
274 Ibid., p. 150.
In the social sphere one of the pressing problems we face is that of inequality. Bavinck devotes an essay to the subject and refers to it often in other works.

He begins his essay by stating that the problem of the one and the many is always with us and asks if there is a possibility of returning from the multiformity and diversity to a unity in which our spirit can find rest. For him it is more than a metaphysical problem to which monism, pluralism, and theism have answers. He is especially concerned because the matter has taken a practical, social turn in positing the question of inequality. This leads him into a comparison of the convictions of Rousseau and Calvin.

Rousseau turned from the degenerate culture of his time to the simplicity and truth of nature. He attempts to return to the originally given, and identifies that with freedom and justice, with religion and virtue. Salvation is to be found in a return from culture to nature, from the complicated degenerate society to the original, innocent state of nature, from the sophisms of understanding and reason to the pure suggestions of the emotions.

He did not intend to usher in such a state of nature, nor did he think that it had existed, but he used the idea as a means to bring about a society for and by means of the people.

275 "Over de Ongelijkheid" in V. O., p. 151.
276 Ibid., p. 152.
277 Ibid., p. 156.
278 Ibid., p. 158.
279 Ibid., p. 160.
Rousseau, the man with a heart, influenced Kant, Fichte, Jacobi, Herder, Schiller, Goethe, and Schleiermacher. Literature dealing with the Noble Savage owes much to him.

Bavinck goes on to say that the idea of the injustice of social inequality has rooted itself deeply in the human heart and has spread far and wide. On the one hand the injustice is contended against by pantheistically or materialistically tinted evolutionistic thought, "which consciously or unconsciously rules scientific research and thinking, and which strives to destroy all differences in principle, first between God and the world, but also between man and animal, soul and body, truth and the lie, good and evil, Christianity and heathendom, etc." On the other hand it is opposed, from below, "by all those modern movements which seek to blot out the difference between man and woman, parents and children, government and those governed, employers and employees, rich and poor, etc."

At this point Bavinck makes a touching comparison between Rousseau and Calvin, which he sums up as follows: "Calvin, in a word, cast man and all creatures deep into the dust before the overwhelming majesty of God, Rousseau raised man to a throne, himself in the first place, at the expense of God's justice and holiness."

Calvin also thought about inequality, but he approached it

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279 Literature dealing with the Noble Savage owes much to him.

280 Ibid., p. 161.

281 Ibid., p. 162.
not from the political and social, but from the religious point of view. "Divine predestination is the final, deepest cause of all differentiation among creatures, in kind, in generation, in gifts, in all being as it presents itself."282 It is the will of God, not man's free will, nor merit, nor culture, nor nature, that is the cause of all variety in unity. The divine will precedes these. Even nature exists only by means of the word of God's might.282

But even though, according to Calvin's confession, the divine will is absolutely sovereign, it is the will of a merciful Father who reveals His love and grace. Rousseau did not grasp the comfort implied, but Calvin did, and he developed the understanding and enjoyment of it for others.283 It is much easier to incite people to rebel against inequalities than to make them aware of the divine comfort.

Whereas Rousseau withdrew himself from any reformatory activity, Calvin drew from the will of God, which, in Christ, he had learned to understand as a will of grace, a motive for powerful, progressive, and widespread labors. For him "Thy will be done" implied a power on which to rest, but also an impulse towards energetic action.284

Rousseau proceeded from the consciousness of emotion; Calvin from that of faith. Both returned to what they considered the original, but Calvin to the Gospel of Christ.285

282 Ibid., p. 163.
283 Ibid., p. 164.
284 Ibid., p. 165.
285 Ibid., p. 166.
In a letter to Montaigne, Rousseau pays Calvin a rich compliment, and in his *Discours sur l'inégalité*, addressed to the Souverains Seigneurs of Geneva he pays his respects to that city. From this Bavinck concludes that the example of Geneva proves that Calvin's religious view of the world also has promise for this life. And he adds, "If we believe in a higher order of affairs, in the holy and gracious will of God, which comes to us not only in the facts of history, but also in the witness of His Word, then we have a norm with which to test what is, and according to which we can change what needs changing."²²⁷

Bavinck warns us that we must keep ourselves not only from cursing society as Rousseau and his followers have done, but also from accepting the status quo. We must try to understand the signs of the times and the new situations and relationships that appear.²²⁷ As the years progress, and social problems remain, it is clear that especially those who have spiritual and material riches must practise greater self-denial and consecration, remembering their duty to all members of society.²²⁸

It is a matter of unchanging principles and their application to changing situations. Deep and earnest study is required. Perhaps the solution will come to us in the course of history like the Kingdom's coming as presented in the parable of the seed which a man sowed and which grew mysteriously while he slept.²²⁹

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 166-168.
²²⁷ Ibid., p. 169.
²²⁸ Ibid., p. 170.
²²⁹ Ibid., p. 171.
Bavinck’s careful words do not weaken certain convictions to which he holds in this essay and, as we shall see, in other works.

Multiformity, differentiation, inequality have their origin in God.\(^\text{290}\)

Every creature and every calling has its own peculiar nature: Church and state, the family and society, agriculture and commerce, art and science are all institutions and gifts of God, but each in itself is a special revelation of the divine will and, therefore, possesses its own nature. The unity and diversity in the whole world point back to the one sovereign, omnipotent, gracious, and merciful will of God.\(^\text{291}\)

All being and all multiformity must be explained on the basis of the divine good pleasure.\(^\text{292}\)

According to God’s will and purpose the whole world is an organism in which the wealth of multiformity unfolds the highest unity. “Heaven and earth, man and animal, soul and body, truth and life, art and science, religion and morality, state and church, family and society, etc. are distinguished, but they are not separated.”\(^\text{293}\) As Paul compares the congregation to a body and a building and Peter refers to believers as living stones, so the world is a history and a work of art. In that world God reveals His virtues and perfections increasingly and will reveal them completely at the end of time.\(^\text{294}\) Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin expressed this idea well.\(^\text{295}\)

Diversity in unity existed even before sin appeared. In

\(^\text{290}\) Modernisme en Orthodoxie, p. 38.
\(^\text{291}\) “Calvin and Common Grace” in C. and R., p. 129.
\(^\text{293}\) Ibid., pp. 460, 638, 659.
\(^\text{294}\) Ibid., p. 461.
\(^\text{295}\) Ibid., p. 462.
spite of the degeneration that set in because of sin, multi-
formity and differentiation are good in themselves and have
value also for the Church of Christ. 296

The differentiation will not be destroyed in eternity.
Purified from sin, it will enrich fellowship with God and with
one another in the various degrees of glory. 297 God loves
diversity in unity. Grace never destroys it, neither in time
nor in eternity. 298

Bavinck considers inequality in the light of his convictions
regarding the problem of diversity in unity. He admits that
there is no equality in any sphere. There are many differences
as to birth, talents, position, and possession. 299

But before God all men are equal. 300 All are sinners, and
all stand in need of salvation. The Gospel elevates all who
believe, and announces the birth of a new humanity and the beginn-
ing of a new society. 301

Bavinck considers this the basic truth from which we must
proceed. He does not justify inequality as distorted by sin.
He is not opposed to improvement of one's lot. But first things
should come first. A slave or a laborer must try to excel as a
Christian even though his lot is not improved. If freedom or
better circumstances do come, these should be used to show more
fully than ever that the person involved is a servant of Christ. 301

296 Ibid., IV, pp. 346, 814, 815.
297 Ibid., p. 812.
298 De Offerande des Lofs, pp. 60, 61; G. D., IV, p. 346.
300 "Christelijke Beginselen en Maatschappelijke Verhoudingen" in
V. C., p. 147.
301 Ibid., p. 144.
Liberty must never degenerate into license.302 Revolution springing from unbelief is not in keeping with the Gospel which always works in a reformatory manner.303 The yeast of the Kingdom, the principles of Christianity have been proved most effective in bringing about reform and improvement.

Though the process is slow, and inequalities remain because of sin, both the Christian faith and the Christian effort must meet the challenge. Those who have the faith and make the effort know that the ills of society will not be fully removed here, but they also have some understanding of the divine plan that weaves out of the diversity in unity, out of life's inequalities, the rich pattern of an eternal, unfailing purpose.

10. The Family

Bavinck introduces his book on the Christian family with these words: "The history of the human race begins with a wedding."304

To carry out his calling as image-bearer of God, to fill, subdue, and rule the earth, man needed a helper, a woman, who stood by his side, not above nor below him.305

The family is, therefore, a creation of God, made to serve the divine purpose and to benefit the human race. Father (authority), mother (love), and children (obedience) are the pillars of all human co-existence.306

It is true that the fall disturbed the unity, peace, and

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302 Ibid., p. 139. Cf. what Bavinck says on the rights of personality and the striving for improvement in Het Christelijke Huisgezin, pp. 173-175.
303 Ibid., p. 149.
305 Ibid., p. 7.
306 Ibid., p. 10.
happiness of the family and brought about great changes. But the divine blessing was still present. The calling to fill, subdue, and rule the earth remained. And the promise of deliver¬ance was given. "Of Adam, and Eve with their posterity Joseph, Mary, and the little child form the complement."307

Bavinck does not favor the evolutionistic conception of the development of the family. He says that many authorities consider the patriarchate the oldest form of family life. In general marriage, monogamy, and the family are honored in all ages. "It is a wonder of God's grace and of the guidance of His providence."308 God has planted and preserved natural love in the hearts of man and woman, parents and children, and by that means has opened a fountain of pure happiness and inestimable blessing for this earthly life.309

In the family among Israel there were defects because of sin, yet, the high ideal was present. Transgression did not invalidate monogamy. Faithfulness of husband and wife symbolized the marriage of God to His people, and unfaithfulness the apostasy of those He had called.

The New Testament conception is more ideal still. The Holy Family is the example for the family.310 As a child Jesus was exemplary. During His ministry He honored women and had many followers among them. He loved children, graced a wedding with

307 Ibid., pp. 15-18.
308 Ibid., p. 31.
309 Ibid., p. 36.
310 Ibid., p. 51.
His presence, and declared adultery as the only breaking of the marriage tie. Although it is true that the Roman woman had a place of respect in the home, by the time of Christ degeneration had set in. The teachings and practice of Jesus have raised the position of women and blessed the home.

The whole New Testament regards marriage as a divine institution. "Christianity sanctified marriage, freed it from all kinds of unrighteousness, and established it on the foundation of the divine commandment." 311

Bavinck mentions several dangers that threaten the family. There is the ascetic movement springing from religious motives, which really keeps women on a lower level; the prevalence of immorality and prostitution; the desire to let the state supervise eugenics; the experimenting with free love and trial marriage; the struggle for the emancipation of women; and the tendency to blame society, especially capitalism, for the plight of many marriages.

The remedies offered from the secular point of view Bavinck considers worse than the disease. The real remedy lies in personal, spiritual, and moral reform. Free love, and trial marriage, the emancipation of women, the socialization of marriage by the state suffer from the misconception that human nature can be changed by rejecting old laws and introducing new ones. 312

311 Ibid., p. 65.
312 Ibid., p. 82.
The Bible understands human nature and contends against sin. It desires reformation of the natural life, not by denying the natural, but by demanding that it be freed from unrighteousness. It maintains that man and woman are different, not in humanity, not as image-bearers of God, but in various powers. They complement each other and must guard against the sins peculiar to each.

Bavinck speaks in poetic language about the awakening of love as a preparation for marriage.

Marriage crowns all these experiences, the purpose of long years of striving, the triumph after a long battle, the goal of a long preparation. When the bridegroom leads his bride to their new home, love celebrates her most beautiful triumph, and heaven and earth raise their song of blessing.

While romantic literature ends there, and realistic literature begins at that point and onesidedly castigates marriage, Christianity looks upon whatever mars the relationship as the fault of man or woman, for marriage is holy and of divine origin, and "it is a gift, but also a task, a privilege, but also a calling." It can and should bring about the fullest maturing of a man's and a woman's personality.

The Bible treats marriage with simplicity and dignity, but not with prudishness and hypocrisy, considering it with a healthy realism. But it is opposed to the glorification of sex and the emancipation of the flesh whether expressed in life or in literature.

313 Ibid., p. 83.
314 Ibid., p. 96.
315 Ibid., p. 98.
316 Ibid., p. 102.
317 Ibid., p. 110.
318 Ibid., pp. 114, 115.
In the family there is a formative and educative power. The family is a school for the children, but in the first place it is that for the parents. The mutual influence is inestimable. "No school, no barracks, no orphanage, no governmental institutions of training can displace it nor compensate for it." In it the foundation is laid for the future man and woman, father and mother, member of society, and subject of the Kingdom of God.

This unit is the divinely ordained basis for society which, in the widest sense, is the co-existence of human beings, willed by God, grounded in nature, and developed in history. It implies the dividing and enjoying of various material and spiritual goods.

Because sin disturbed the harmony and the normal development both in the family and in society, the institution of church and state became necessary. The former, already promised to Eve (Genesis 3:15), owes its existence to special grace; the latter, beginning with the right to use capital punishment (Genesis 9:6), arises from general grace.

The welfare of society depends especially on the spiritual, moral, and material welfare of the family. The attitudes cultivated in the home will carry over into the larger sphere. Worship, work, respect for authority, consideration for others, practised under the parental roof, can be a blessing in the wider social

319 Ibid., p. 122.
320 Ibid., p. 139.
321 Ibid., p. 141.
322 Ibid., p. 148, 150.
323 Ibid., pp. 149, 150.
He who has learned to honor his father will honor the authority of those by whom God has seen fit to govern him. He who has loved his mother truly cannot violate the honor of women. He who considers his servants as members of the family cannot be a tyrant over his employees. The family is the foster ing place of love and grafts love into social relations. If there is to be a reforming of society, we need that love.... Christianity is not the architect, but the soul of society. He who destroys the family undermines the moral foundations upon which society as an institution rests. But he who extols the family and gives love lordship over selfishness does a work well-pleasing to God. For God is love, and love is the law of the kingdom.324

In the face of the evils that threaten, Christianity must stress the significance of the family and of society as divinely instituted. It must emphasize the demands of God's law.325 It should endeavor also to apply Christian principles to improvement and development, seeking the welfare of husband and wife, bettering economic circumstances, providing the best education for children, showing concern for the rights of the unmarried, opening the way to opportunity and prosperity unmarred by selfish interests.326

But Bavinck stresses the point that society as a whole also lives first of all by divine grace, not by works.327 He calls us back to Scripture which reveals God's purpose in regard to humanity. Without that purpose "the origin, being, reason for existence, and destination of the human race remain unknown."328

324 Ibid., p. 177.
325 Ibid., p. 184.
326 Ibid., pp. 204-209.
327 Ibid., p. 212.
328 Ibid., p. 213.
Both the family and society have a higher reference. In them God is realizing His purpose.

Humanity and the world exist for the Church, the Church exists for Christ's sake, and Christ is God's. In the City of God creation reaches its goal. There all the treasures, acquired by humanity throughout the ages in fearful conflict, are brought together; all the glory of the nations is gathered there; and in the spiritual reunion of Christ and His Church marriage also reaches its goal.... The history of humanity began with a wedding; it also ends with a wedding, that of Christ and His Church, of the Lord from heaven and the Bride of earth.329

11. The Position of Women

Bavinck gives his reflections on the position of women, particularly of married women, in modern society. One of his writings deals with the professional work of the married woman, and the other with woman's place in modern society.

In De Beroepsarbeid der Gehuwde Vrouw he reminds us of "the conscious, designed, and appropriate activity of man by which he subjects nature to himself and gives existence to culture."330

By virtue of creation work forms an integral part of human existence; it was not the bitter fruit of the curse brought on by the fall. God is a working God.331 And man, meant to be lord of the earth, is to find happiness in his labors by means of which he can develop his body, soul, and entire personality. The transgression brought trouble and sorrow, but, as the third chapter of Genesis relates, the duties of the man and the woman

329 Ibid., p. 214.
331 Cf. Milton's strong emphasis of this point in Paradise Lost.
are re-emphasized. Labor, though coupled with perspiration and anguish, would continue to be a large part of man's calling. It implied challenge and the divine blessing and purpose.

Woman, the partner and helper of man, the mother of children, was to exemplify the dignity of work. The picture of the virtuous wife, presented in Proverbs 31:10-31, gives us an excellent insight into her response to her calling. The Old Testament reveals her devotion as wife, mother, and worker. The New Testament re-emphasizes her place in the family and counsels subjection, chastity, and simplicity, Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, Titus 2: 4-5, I Pet. 3: 1-6. In contrast with the degeneration in pagan society "Christianity restored women to the place of honor, hallowed marriage, renewed the family, and laid upon parents the religious and moral training of children."332

Throughout history women have worked in the home, in the fields, in shops, in trade, and in business. It is not surprising that the problem of the rights of women arose, and that it became more complicated as time went on. The drive for emancipation appeared sporadically in Hellenistic and Renaissance times, but, influenced by eighteenth century rationalism and the ideas of the French Revolution, it gained ground.333 "In the light of history it must not come as a surprise that women in and outside of the marriage state become conscious of their personality and

332 De Beroepsarbeid der Gehuwde Vrouw. p. 4
333 Ibid., pp. 5, 6.
plead for their rights. The soul of woman has awakened, and no earthly power can reverse its drift."334

The industrial revolution, the rise of big business, and war production have increased the demand for women's services. Labor saving devices in the home have given women more time to spend away from the family. Moreover, the temptation to increase the family income is always present. As a result women are faced with a choice between motherhood and a career outside the home or a possibly bad combination of both.

The evils attending this situation have been met, in part, by legislation. Shorter hours and better working conditions have been beneficial, but governmental action is not enough. The problem is first of all a religious and ethical one.335

According to Scripture man and woman were created to complement each other. Differing physically and psychologically, they were meant for the unity implied in marriage and the family. The differences by virtue of creation should be honored. "While (with exceptions) man is superior to woman in intellect, science, and technics, woman is superior in consecration, self-denial, and patience."336

Although it is true that some women, married or unmarried, have outstanding gifts and abilities as is evident from their success as missionaries, teachers, scientists, philosophers,

334 De Vrouw in de Hedendaagsche Maatschappij, p. 78.
335 Ibid., p. 69.
336 De Beroepsarbeid der Gehuwde Vrouw., pp. 13, 18, 19.
doctors, nurses, etc., they are the exception. "The rule is
that man and woman bind themselves in marriage to help each
other and stand by each other, and to rear their children in
the fear of the Lord and to His honor."337 A married woman's
work in and for the family is of first importance, for, in
general, it affords the best opportunity to develop special
gifts and to make the family an invaluable blessing to society,
church, and state.338 This does not necessarily rule out
labors performed during spare time to the benefit of others.339

Along with these basic considerations Bavinck suggests nine
regulations for the protection of girls and women working out¬
side the home. These regulations have become law in most
advanced countries.340

Bavinck, dealing primarily with the position of married
women, acknowledges the significant role that unmarried women
play in society. But all in all he would have woman remain
herself. The assertion of her rights should be made in the
light of Christian principles, not in the spirit of rebellion or
from the desire to be equal with man or above him. "When the
religious sense wears out, and the moral sense weakens,... when
woman wants to free herself from and raise herself above man,
the outlook for society is not bright. Then we approach the
dissolution of the family and the overturning of social relations."341

338 Ibid., p. 15. Cf. Bavinck's eulogy on the mother, W. der O.,
pp. 238, 239.
340 De Beroepsarbeid der Gehuwde Vrouw, p. 20.
341 Ibid., p. 21.
In *De Beroepsarbeid der Gehuwde Vrouw* Bavinck carefully summarizes his views. As a rule a woman’s task in the family and work outside the home are not to be recommended. But even so, from the point of view of right and fairness, a definite prohibition of the latter is not to be made. While from the religious, moral, and social point of view a married woman’s place is first of all in the home, it is the duty of government to protect her from wasting her strength in other vocations. In giving this protection government should use as little force as possible, keeping step with the economic and social development which society undergoes.

Bavinck has hopes that the evils in the situation will be overcome.

In this wonderful world order the good providence of God is revealed, who over against the evil forces of darkness accomplishes His wise and holy counsel and knows how to direct evil towards good. It may be that the chaotic situations in which we live, religiously and morally, politically, socially, and economically, are preparing a better order of things even though, finally, we await the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.\(^342\)

In regard to women’s suffrage Bavinck is ahead of his times. He holds that the teaching of Scripture and the church does not forbid it. If we open up the whole of society for women, it is impossible to deny them the sphere of politics.\(^343\) When the right to vote is given to men of every description, it is unfair to forbid it to women who have entered more and more into society in


\(^{343}\) *De Vrouw in de Hedendaagsche Maatschappij*, p. 122.
various vocations. Moreover, the state by its regulations is impinging increasingly upon society, and women should have something to say about its laws.  

Women are not necessarily behind men in political judgment. Besides, they are interested in problems that may not concern some men. And they certainly add a wholesome moral tone to the privileges of the ballot and whatever interests are involved.

Women have done and are doing a great work in the Church and the Kingdom. In principle little can be said against their right to vote in the churches. They are members, as well as men are, and they are equally interested in the life and work of the congregation. The book of Acts does not throw light on whether or not they voted in the assemblies, but very likely they were present. Women were not chosen to be ministers or elders, but that they rendered noble service is evident enough.

In some Reformed communions women still do not have the right to vote, but there are signs of an awakening in this matter.

12. **Education**

Bavinck wrote extensively on education, a subject that had the love of his heart. In setting forth his views he did pioneer work, emphasizing Christian principles.

He writes that "the ideals of education change with the times;"
they are related to the whole of culture; they are governed by religious and philosophical views of the world." In Israel, education was thoroughly religious and theocratic, aimed at responsible membership among the people of God. It contained universal implications that were to appear in Christianity. Among the Greeks education meant the development and completion of personality for those of the higher classes in and for the state, though later there was more emphasis on humanitas. Christianity stressed the re-born personality, not towards a stark individualism, but in the saved society.

Before taking up Bavinck's conception of education from the Christian point of view, we must follow him as he traces various schools of thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries against which the Christian must react. Under the influence of Rousseau and Tolstoy, who condemned modern culture, a general reaction against the intellectual had set in. Instruction and education were severely criticised, and there was a demand for a radical reformation.

Bavinck mentions three groups whose views on education came to the fore during this period.

First there are those influenced by idealistically-tinted philosophy (moralism, pragmatism, creative evolution), who hold in common that evolution must serve teleology. The aim of education

350 Ibid., p. 27.
351 Ibid., pp. 25, 26.
352 Ibid., p. 28.
353 "Richtingen in de Paedagogiek" in V. O., p. 216; P. B., Preface.
is to improve man in body and soul, to form his character, strengthen his will, enrich his emotions, and develop his personality. To serve that end, instruction, gymnastics, art, religion, and morality are all necessary.®

Then there are those who would free education from all metaphysics and build it on the data of modern science and the conception of modern society. Among these, some emphasize the rights, freedom, and autonomy of the child, while others stress the significance of the child for society. In spite of important differences social pedagogics is characterized by the thought that the state must regulate education for the purpose of preserving and perfecting itself.

The third group are those who would make modern science the basis of education, and who have great expectations from empirical psychology (especially child psychology) and experimental pedagogy.

Bavinck's criticism of these schools of thought is principally this, that they do not recognize sufficiently the significance of Christianity for education, and its claim upon the whole of life. "Indeed, church, state, and society, religion, morality, and justice, marriage, the family, and the school, customs and laws, and all culture, in spite of various strange elements that have crept in, are built on Christian foundations and are permeated with the Christian spirit."®

355 Ibid., p. 218; De Nieuwe Opvoeding, pp. 21-23; 32-54.
In education, as in other spheres, a comprehensive view of life and the world is indispensable. If the Christian approach is ruled out, another takes its place. Educators may give no consideration to Christianity at all, or place it on a level with other religions, or allow it a hazy existence under the domination of the empirical sciences. But in doing so they are limiting their view of life and the world, excluding much that is essential, and depriving education of that full content and purpose given it by the Christian revelation. All that Bavinck has said against rationalism, naturalistic humanism, and positivism with its glorification of the empirical approach applies in the sphere of education as well.

Bavinck maintains that these various schools of thought have no absolute ideal of education. There is a general ideal concerned with the development of the mind, the ennobling of the emotions, the strengthening of the will, and the forming of personality. But because it is general, it tends towards a hopeless disunity and confusion, for each educator has his own ideal, seldom constant but changing as the spirit of the age changes.

Over against these shifting thoughts Bavinck places the Christian concept of education, based on a view of life and the world that accepts God's special and general revelation and all that is implied in divine particular and common grace.

357 De Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband, pp. 18, 19; P. E., p. 62.


359 Ibid., pp. 18-23.
Above and behind all education stands God, the real Educator of the human race. He has set man in families. It is there that education begins for the child. The parents are the first teachers. In the home "education becomes increasingly an art, a personal, conscious, purposeful, moral activity." But education continues in the school. "Education in school and family blooms from one root, forms a unity, and relates teachers and parents." In the school the intellectual is stressed, but the whole development of the child must be kept in mind.

Bavinck considers knowledge of inestimable value. It requires instruction (onderwijs), but instruction should aim at education (opvoeding). In that way knowledge satisfies and feeds understanding. It is life especially as its content becomes richer. It has educative value for all, whether they be Christians or not.

Christianity, however, both evaluates and enriches knowledge in the educational process. From its Gospel in the Word of God education receives "an unshakable foundation, an unchangeable norm, an all-governing principle, and a high and holy ideal." It offers the truth in Christ against the subjectivism which makes man the measure of all things. In the light of this truth man finds his standards and purpose.

Though Christianity did not produce all the truth, it did

361 Ibid., p. 15.
362 De Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband, p. 20.
363 P. B., pp. 16, 17.
364 Ibid., p. 21; De Offerande des Loffs, p. 32.
365 Ibid., p. 29.
366 Ibid., p. 108.
announce the central, unifying truth which helped towards concentration in all instruction and education. In time it applied this organizing power to all spheres of culture. It relates itself to all realms of knowing and endeavor. "It is not hostile to creation, nature, and culture, but seeks everywhere the true, good, and beautiful and appropriates and assimilates these." Christianity also presents a better view of nature and the natural life, neither deifying nor despising these. It frees science from the authority of the church but also from its preoccupation with the empirical alone. It gives a true view of man as a rational, moral creature bound to a high, ideal, and spiritual world, announcing his divine origin and destiny. It stresses the value of personality and considers the soul, as Jesus expressed it, the most priceless treasure. It also emphasizes the solidarity of the human race and the rich variability of individuals by virtue of creation, not the fall. The more we study man, the more he appears as the Bible pictures him.

Added to all this there is the offer of grace, implying the restoration of man and nature, and the reconciliation of conflicting thoughts and actions by means of the Cross of Calvary.

Christianity always considers man in relation to God and His revelation. There is no knowledge of God except through knowledge of ourselves, and no knowledge of ourselves except in the

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367 Ibid., p. 30.
368 Ibid., pp. 46, 47.
369 B. en R. Ps., p. 73.
370 Ibid., p. 76; De Nieuwe Opvoeding, p. 106.
371 Ibid., p. 77.
372 F. E., p. 49.
373 Ibid., p. 85.
light of the knowledge of God. 374

From all this the aim of Christian education becomes clear. "The right kind of pedagogy consists not in the instruction of the understanding or in the education of the will, etc., but it has man as object. It must try to penetrate behind understanding and will, behind soul and body, and attempt to form personality itself into a man of God, equipped for all good work."375 Development of the understanding and the formation of character, in proper balance, must always go together. 376 Education is far more than the acquisition of knowledge. "The best education is that which arouses the soul to contend against itself, and which provides the powers to do so."377

To carry out this high aim careful evaluation of subject matter, teacher, child, and adolescent are necessary. Bavinck, the protagonista of Christian education, devotes much thought to these.

As to subject matter we can gather from what has been written thus far that Bavinck is interested in a well-grounded and well-rounded education. He sums up his thoughts convincingly in a long and carefully prepared essay on "Klassieke Opleiding."

Christianity had to decide what attitude to take towards the rich culture of the Greek-Roman world. Though there were opposing reactions, the Christian church took a middle way, making free

374 B. en R. Ps., p. 79.
375 Ibid., p. 80.
376 "Primaat van Verstand of Wil" in V. O., p. 214; De Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband, pp. 21-22.
377 De Overwinnning der Ziel, pp. 32, 33.
use of the treasures of the ancients. Scholasticism, knowing no original Greek and gathering its knowledge of nature and history from books, did not use all the treasures. Renaissance humanism, in reaction, discovered a new world of beauty in literature and art, and stressed the value of the classics. It influenced the Reformation, richly developed the spiritual sciences, and emphasized the importance of a classical education. The nineteenth century saw the advance of the natural sciences, a correcting and broadening appreciation of classical studies, but also a weakening of motives for classical education.

Bavinck appreciates the awakening to nature, the progressive interest in the natural sciences, and the application of a stricter scientific method. But he opposes the trend that emphasizes the natural sciences at the expense of classical studies. Our present day culture is rooted both in classical antiquity and in Christianity. The conflict of convictions reminds us of the debate between Arnold and Huxley.

Bavinck is convinced that the study of the ancients is of great value not only from the practical point of view for the development of the mind, but also from the ideal vantage point, for in the midst of gloomy reality the ancients kept the faith in a world of ideas and norms. Such idealism is essential also for our time.

379 Ibid., pp. 229, 230.
380 Ibid., p. 244.
381 Ibid., pp. 245-249.
382 Ibid., p. 244.
383 Ibid., p. 260; P. B., p. 113.
Christians should band together in appreciating their religious and cultural inheritance. This is especially true because the Bible, which forms a common basis for the understanding of religion and culture, is being more and more neglected.\textsuperscript{384}

That leads us to a consideration of Bavinck's views on the teaching of religion. He certainly would judge the adage, that religion is caught, not taught, the expression of a half-truth. "Religion is teachable only if man is basically religious,"\textsuperscript{385} and he is that.

Religious education is a duty which is laid upon parents by God already in His general revelation. It is not a matter of choice but a right and a commandment.\textsuperscript{386} Children are receptive to religious impressions at a very early age.\textsuperscript{387}

For Christian education the Bible is indispensable. It presents good materials that guard against the abstractly doctrinaire and the excesses of phantasy, and it appeals to the whole person in mind, heart, soul, and strength.\textsuperscript{388} Using the glasses of the Word, Christian pedagogy presents a more just conception of parents and children, family and society, nature and history, and of the point of departure, method and purpose of education.\textsuperscript{389} Biblical instruction, rightly given, not rationalistically nor pietistically, is the soul of all instruction, the organizing power of all education.\textsuperscript{390} We cannot begin too soon to train children in the Word of God, and we do not have to wait with the teaching

\textsuperscript{384} Ibid., p. 261.
\textsuperscript{385} B. en R. Ps., p. 204.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., p. 211.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., p. 214.
\textsuperscript{389} P. B., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{390} Ibid., p. 171.
of religious words until children understand them, for through words one learns to understand matters even as one learns to understand words through matters. 391 "When in the home, the school, and catechism classes instruction in the truth and education by means of the truth cooperate, the spiritual life can flower under the blessing of God and lead to confession with mouth and heart." 392 But such instruction and education must be careful and exact, presenting clear ideas and just judgments. 393

But Christian pedagogy must do justice to all other subject matter as well. All knowledge is a gift of God, a revelation, an evidence of His grace to all men. There should be an avoidance not only of intellectualism, but also of mysticism, moralism, and pietism. 394 Pietistic and anabaptistic tendencies, resulting in withdrawal from the world or mere toleration of culture, not understanding the rights of the natural, have influenced education one-sidedly. 395 In opposition to this attitude the Reformed faith stands for an education that forms a people of God to serve Him in the world. 396 For all education there is a warning in Darwin's self-imposed impoverishment in regard to literature and music, 397 and in J. S. Mill's neglect also. Christian education, enriched by special and

391 De Offrander des LoFs, p. 32.
392 Ibid., pp. 34, 35.
393 Ibid., p. 33.
394 P. B. p. 91.
395 Ibid., pp. 31, 32, 50.
396 Ibid., p. 51; Dogm. IV, pp. 116, 117.
397 Ibid., pp. 111, 112.
general revelation, should do ample justice to the best curriculum.

Christianity, with its emphasis on the significance of work, is certainly concerned with the training for a vocation or profession. It is interested in both theory and practice. But the training of the learner's mental, emotional, and volitional powers aids him in becoming active in practical spheres. Schools should provide for manual, as well as for, spiritual and mental training, but the relationship between heart, head, and hand should be stressed.

Within the framework of what has already been said the qualifications of the Christian teacher can be easily summed up. Because Christianity makes man, by regeneration, a citizen in the Kingdom of Heaven, it has had a profound influence also on the teaching profession. In the Christian environment the teacher recognizes the Word as "the atmosphere we breathe from our birth." He knows that God alone "grants the disposition and the desire, the fervor and the power, the opportunity and the time, and who chooses, calls, and fits one to become a teacher," that Christ equips him. He is motivated by "a fear of God organically bound up with subject matter, wisdom, and the scientific spirit." He understands, or should understand, that Christian pedagogy does not say something different on all points.

398 De Nieuwe Opvoeding, p. 99.
399 Ibid., p. 101.
400 "Richtingen in de Paedagogiek" in V. O., p. 215.
402 Het Doctorenambt, p. 45.
403 F. E., p. 52.
of instruction and education, and does not always give another interpretation than other philosophical or scientific systems, for Christianity, science, and philosophy need not always be at strife. He grants that Christian pedagogy can learn from other sources, but he is also convinced that no education is possible without knowing what man is, and what his origin, purpose, and destiny are. In other words, he is positive that Christianity alone gives a satisfying answer to head and heart.404

Along with subject matter and teacher Bavinck considers the child. Parents are concerned about the physical and mental progress of children; they should be concerned about their religious development as well. Such development is the right of the child and the duty of parents.405

Because the child is immature, impressionable, and susceptible to religious influences, it is unwise and unfair to allow him to choose for or against religion, or for or against a certain kind. Direction must be given him, even as it is in regard to morality and subject matter.405 The child is dependent on father and mother, and on the teacher.406

But we must also try to understand children. Under the influence of ascetism and pietism the theory was that children are bad. The rights of natural life were not honored.407 Later there came a more humanitarian outlook, paying more attention to

404 De Opleiding van den Onderwijzer, pp. 55, 56.
405 B. en R. Ps., pp. 208, 209.
406 P. B., p. 9.
407 B. en R. Ps., pp. 147, 148.
the child's peculiarities, rights, privileges, virtues, and faults. A more balanced evaluation resulted from a better understanding of the law of heredity and from the progress made in psychological pathology. It became clear that the physical, the psychological (including the intellectual), the religious, and the ethical life are most closely related.

As a result we have come to know the child better as to his person, heredity, and environment. Moreover, our scientific understanding is buttressed by what Scripture reveals with its emphasis on religion, morality, and the value of the child's personality. In judging the virtues and faults of children, and the differentiation among them, we benefit from what the psychological method discloses, but also from the religious and moral ideals presented by Scripture.

Bavinck opposes the theory that children are by nature good, that they are like a white sheet of paper upon which education can write what it wills. He holds to original sin, and maintains that the nineteenth century emphasis on inherited characteristics showed a greater respect for it. However, he sees a difference between original sin and inherited characteristics in that the former is a matter, not first of all of heredity, but of implication. The child is, therefore, also a sinner, and that explains his faults. But he is likewise a creature of God, who

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408 Ibid., pp. 148-150.
409 Ibid., pp. 151, 152.
410 Ibid., p. 153.
411 Ibid., pp. 155-157, 172.
412 Ibid., p. 157.
413 Ibid., pp. 136-140.
can be motivated by the fear of the Lord and molded by the best education under God.

The child is not to be the measure of education. Making him central, pampering him, and leaving him more and more to the schools is a disservice. The home, the church, and the school must play their part, train his body, mind, and soul, and help to develop a proper respect for authority and discipline.

It is understandable that Bavinck is a protagonist of the Christian school. The history of its origin and wide development in the Netherlands and in the United States is worthy of study. We shall deal briefly with the reason for its existence.

Bavinck is aware of the objections raised against having two kinds of schools, and of the charge of separatism made against Christian primary and secondary education, but he is also convinced that diversity and variability enter here, and that the children of Christian parents are entitled to the best religious education possible in keeping with their convictions. Moreover, although public schools are indispensable because of circumstances, there are especially two criticisms to be made of them, that is, in the Netherlands and in the United States. The one is the inevitability of neutrality in regard to religion. The other is the surrender of education to the state.

414 P. B., p. 44.
416 P. B., pp. 170, 171.
It is the conviction of Bavinck and all contenders for the Christian school that education does not belong to the neutral zone. The teacher either has some basic view of life and the world, or he has a vague one.\textsuperscript{417} Even though in the Netherlands the law requires that in the primary school the teacher keep silent about his religious convictions,\textsuperscript{418} his preferences may not always remain silent. They may reveal caution, indifference, or hostility to Christianity, or positive Christian convictions. But in practice neutrality is impossible.\textsuperscript{419} The undesirability and impossibility of neutral education is evident in every country and is proved by the history of the last fifty years in the Netherlands within Bavinck's lifetime.\textsuperscript{420} "A neutral education, if it were possible, would be one against religion."\textsuperscript{421}

Because of the requirements of neutrality, religious education in the public schools in the Netherlands and the United States is "a homoeopathic thinning down deprived of all power and satisfying no particular desire."\textsuperscript{422} If religious instruction be given, differences of opinion arise,\textsuperscript{423} or apathy paves the way for secularism.

The other criticism is that education has become increasingly the concern of the state.\textsuperscript{424} Bavinck holds that it is primarily

\begin{footnotes}
\item[417] Ibid., p. 18.
\item[418] "Godegeleerdheid en Godsdienstwetenschap" in \textit{V. O.}, p. 53.
\item[419] Ibid., p. 54.
\item[420] De \textit{Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband}, p. 6.
\item[421] \textit{B.enR.Ps.}, p. 211.
\item[422] De \textit{Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband}, p. 5.
\item[423] Ibid., p. 8.
\item[424] De \textit{Nieuwe Opvoeding}, pp. 80 ff.
\end{footnotes}
the duty of parents. According to the Reformed view Christian schools are parent-controlled, though, of course, they must answer to the educational requirements of the state. They are not parochial or church schools.

Moreover, the strong conception of the Covenant of Grace motivates parents to have their children trained religiously, in keeping with their baptism, and to give them an education in which the intellectual and practical are grounded in the Christian faith.425

Bavinck appreciates the idea of one school for all. The ideal of a school serving all has a powerful appeal. "One can say that this has been the original, the oldest, and most universal ideal. One people and one kingdom, one language and one religion, one kind of instruction and education for all children - this was the thought that was self-evident and that guided the government in its laws regarding teaching."426 But it does not work out in practice. Therefore, by the side of the public school, and keeping abreast of its highest educational standards, the Christian school has become a necessity for those who desire a distinctive Christian education for their children. In a democratic state it is permissible, and because of circumstances, inevitable.

Bavinck extends his convictions on Christian education to

426 De Taak van het Gereformeerde Schoolverband, p. 4.
the idea of a Christian University. For such an institution
the underlying principles are the same as for schools on the
primary and secondary level. Here certainly positive views
on the relation between Christianity and culture apply.

Bavinck speaks of a universitas litterarum. Science is a
gift of God, not limited to a school or university or an aggrega-
tion of them. It is a product of the human spirit to which God
gives the disposition and desire for research and reflection in
any sphere of knowledge. To a universitas litterarum belong
all who, in any field of learning, whether in or outside of the
schools, have understood something of the thoughts of God and
thereby banned error and established truth as co-workers on the
great temple of science, raised throughout the ages according to
the plan of Him who is the God of science and the King of the
ages. 427

But even though the cultivation of science does not depend
only on the schools, the scientific method and appreciation are
engendered in the universities. 428 "A university exists when a
group of able men, having the same basic principles, practise
science according to scientific methods and teach this to a
circle of disciples." 429

Bavinck's ideal is a Christian university. In spite of his
respect for all scholarship, he maintains that universities under

427 Het Doctorenambt, p. 74; Het Recht der Kerken en de Vrijheid
der Wetenschap, p. 25; Geleerdheid en Wetenschap, p. 28.
428 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 113.
429 Het Recht der Kerken en de Vrijheid der Wetenschap, p. 25.
state control practice and reflect a neutrality in regard to the Christian faith and even at times a prejudice against those who have positive Christian convictions. They usually ignore theology as a science or substitute a school of religion for a divinity school.

Principles basic to a right relation between Christianity and science contain the urge to embody themselves in a Christian university. Such an institution has this advantage over a neutral one, that it restores the relation of learning to life. It remembers the simple folk who live by faith, and considers itself a fruit of that faith. It wants no cleavage between learning and the confession of the church, between scholarship and the very life of humanity. Those who oppose such a cleavage are not narrow but motivated by a high and holy desire. Such a university, "resting on the foundation of the Gospel, and associating itself with the confession of the church, does not conflict with science but only with some of its practitioners." It accepts that position in order to protest against error and to incite to an earnest seeking and finding of truth.

In this connection Bavinck expresses himself on intellectual freedom. Absolute freedom of expression is not fully achieved in any university. A certain loyalty is expected. But it must be a loyalty to truth. Those who seem to think more of

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431 Ibid., p. 108.
432 Ibid., pp. 117-120.
433 Ibid., p. 120.
434 Ibid., p. 111.
freedom than of truth forget that the former is only a means
to come to the latter.\textsuperscript{435} For science freedom exists first in
the recognition of the right to seek truth and, when it has found
it, to declare and defend it. But because science has no infall-
ible organ that can decide what truth is, its freedom lies, in
the second place, in this, that the various schools of thought
must not be hindered by state or church in seeking for truth
where they are convinced it can be found.\textsuperscript{436} Christians must
also be given the freedom of their convictions that the truth
can be found only in Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the
life, and that no one can come to the Father, who is also the
origin and purpose of all things, than through Him.\textsuperscript{436} Such a
confession is not opposed to science. Science in itself is
neither Christian nor non-Christian; it has its standard in
the truth of God's revelation.\textsuperscript{436}

Bavinck holds that it is essential to be scientific, and
that the inductive method is profitable. But it is untrue to
say that to be scientific one must be an unbeliever. Pasteur
and Agassiz disprove that. The separation of Christianity and
science results in havoc. "Anarchy in thought and action is
the final and logical consequence."\textsuperscript{437} If truth is not at all
objective, science is doomed. Thought is free only when it binds
itself to rules which God has established. Laws of thought, axioms,

\textsuperscript{435} Ibid., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., pp. 120, 121.
\textsuperscript{437} Geleerdheid en Wetenschat, pp. 16-18.
ordinances of nature, rules of life, ideas and norms are objective and need not be thought out anew by each generation.\textsuperscript{438}

The tension between religion and science in his day Bavinck characterizes as follows: "From left and right comes the cry that Christianity and culture, the confession of the church and modern life, faith and science cannot be united."\textsuperscript{439} On the right there is a separation from the world which is considered lost. On the left there is the attitude that robs knowledge of faith in Scripture, the supernatural, immortality of the soul, and the existence of a personal God.\textsuperscript{439}

This accounts for the establishing of the Free University at Amsterdam, a Christian institution which reflects the faith and thought of the Reformed people. This school has taken a position neither to the right nor to the left.

Even as our thinking and acting have bound us by logical and ethical conceptions which lie in our nature, so Christian truth and our Reformed confession have exerted an influence over us from which we cannot, may not, and will not free ourselves. We feel ourselves freer, more independent, richer insofar as we live from that faith and allow ourselves to be determined by it in all our thinking and acting. For us free thinking is such as is freed not from law, but from caprice, not from truth but from error. And we thank God for it that, in these radical and revolutionary times, the Free University wants to be conservative in the good sense of the word, a conservatory of truth which is according to godliness.\textsuperscript{440}

The task is never complete. It requires men, not fostered in the halls of doubt, but in the schools of faith, men who must

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., pp. 21, 22.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 22.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 24.}
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have an open eye to perceive phenomena without bias, to bring truth to light, and to increase the treasure of knowledge and wisdom with unwearied trust, disinterested consecration, and dogged perseverance.

The Free University must be not only a conservatory, but also an observatory and laboratory. Sweet rest is out of the question; but careful research, unbiased observation, and rigid study are necessary. "The truth received must arouse our love in order that we may spare no effort to seek it where it is to be found, and to increase its treasure with what is found."442

Problems arise, and they may not be ignored. The Christian must react with faith, patience, and the desire to know, never succumbing to unbelief, which proffers more problems still. Believers

await the decision between truth and error not at the hands of a scientific temper in this or in any other age, but only from the lips of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. And until the great day they comfort themselves with the thought that the Christian wisdom has lasted through the ages while the wisdom of the world, expressed in each age, is again and again rejected as foolishness by her sons of the following age.443

It is Bavinck's fervent hope that the Free University may become increasingly a center of scientific life and work for men and women. To that end it must search all things and keep the good, remembering what Augustine says in his Confessions: Beata vita est gaudium de veritate.444

441 Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
443 Ibid., p. 27.
444 Ibid., p. 29. The university's task is to find truth and to teach it. Compare Newman's idea that it is a place of teaching universal knowledge, "whereas the natural home for experiment and speculation is retirement." See Preface to The Idea of a University. A comparative study of Bavinck and Newman on education would make an excellent subject for a doctor's thesis.
What the Free University really desires to maintain "is nothing other than the age-old confession that the fear of the Lord is not a hindrance to, but an advancement of, science, and the principle of wisdom."\textsuperscript{445} Love towards God and one's neighbor does not exclude love for knowledge at its best. The Gospel of Christ is the preservation of the world and of science.\textsuperscript{446}

13. Politics

Bavinck maintains that in principle government was instituted when God commanded the death penalty for murder, Genesis 9: 6, and that after the building of the tower of Babel the authority of the state became evident among all people.\textsuperscript{447}

In Israel church and state were not one. A distinction was made between them and between priests and kings. Both offices were subject to the divine will in the theocracy.\textsuperscript{448}

With the coming of Christianity the distinction is more evident. Jesus recognized the authority of government, paid taxes, recommended giving unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and forbade His disciples the use of the sword. The Gospel of Christ does not strive against nature; it came not to condemn the world, but to preserve it, John 3:16, 17. It teaches respect for the state, Romans 13: 1, I Tim. 2: 2, I Peter 2:13, and opposed to revolution, it preaches reformation along moral and spiritual lines.\textsuperscript{449} God has given the state sovereignty.\textsuperscript{450}

\textsuperscript{443} Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., p. 97.
\textsuperscript{445} G. D., IV, p. 425.
\textsuperscript{446} Ibid., pp. 293, 403, 426.
\textsuperscript{447} Ibid., pp. 430, 431.
\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., p. 448.
Church and state have their own authority, and there must be no infringement. A Christian government must promote the honor of God, protect the Church, and refrain from trespassing on the rights of the individual, the family, society, art, and science. The state is not the highest good, but it must guarantee the fullest development of personality, of the family, Church, and culture. Its sphere is justice.

In 1915 Bavinck delivered an address, "Ethiek en Politiek," before the Literary Division of the Royal Academy of Sciences. In it he stresses the relationship between ethics and politics. Whatever the origin and foundation of morality may be, it is an indestructible element in human nature. There is an underlying moral law, and there are common moral convictions.

Politics is a high, noble, and almost holy matter, a science, an art, a praxis. Because its chief concern is justice, it is definitely related to ethics. Plato and Aristotle explained the state on the basis of an ethical necessity.

The relation between ethics and politics is evident in the doctrine of the law of nature or natural law. Bavinck finds it among the ancients, and says that Christians adopted the term or terms and related them to texts such as Matthew 7:21, Romans 2:14, 15; 13: 1, and identified the content with the decalogue. He maintains that Grotius is not the father of natural law, and

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451 Ibid., pp. 481, 482. See the entire chapter on "The Authority of the Church," pp. 425-482.
454 Ibid., p. 284.
criticises the latter for making it hypothetical and independent of God, and changing it into a *jus rationale*. 455

Bavinck studies the meaning of law and righteousness which are intimately related. They imply timeless norms that are indispensable. But law is always incomplete and defective and never covers the richness of life, never answers fully the demands of justice. 456 The idea of justice has teleological significance and is grounded in the moral order which is founded on objective reality. *Werturteil* must be based on *Seinsurteil*. Justice is based on the moral order which is related to the cosmic, divine order that rules over all. 456

All justice must answer to the ideas of righteousness that exist in people and are rooted in conscience. The state may not violate these. It has authority and must preserve justice, but it may not use force to override man's obedience to God. Justice must be clothed in the garb of service. The state has a thoroughly moral calling, maintaining righteousness, which together with love, is a superlative virtue. "Love without righteousness falls into anarchy; right without love degenerates into despotism." 457

It is true that the state is not the organ of love and mercy, but of righteousness, yet, it must acknowledge the dependence of politics on ethics. 458

All these considerations are essential also to a proper


understanding of international law. In a pithy sentence Bavinck says, "The Christian thought of the unity of the human race, in origin and essence, along with the idea of the catholicity of the Kingdom of God are the two pillars on which international law rests silently or expressedly, and also must rest."458

With such an understanding of international law Bavinck has hope for the future. If its ethical significance is increasingly grasped by rulers and people, progress is possible. Science alone cannot assure us; faith and hope are essential.459

It is understandable that in a country like the Netherlands, where Calvinism is active also politically, positive Christian convictions, in keeping with Reformed principles, have done much to shape ideas in regard to the state.

Bavinck delivered a significant address before a gathering of the Anti-revolutionary Party, the chairmanship of which Kuyper had resigned when he was appointed to head the Cabinet. The address, Christelijke en Neutrale Staatkunde, presents his convictions on a Christian government.

Reviewing the political history of his country, he criticizes the neutrality of the Liberals as expressed in their politics. Though Christian traditions still operate in a general way in the modern view of life, the struggle between faith and unbelief is the theme of world history. The whole of culture is threatened

459 Ibid., p. 301.
by anti-Christian forces, and for that reason the neutrality of the state is dangerous.\textsuperscript{460} The demands of the present can be met only by a government that desires to build on Christian foundations and takes seriously and uprightly all social reformation.\textsuperscript{461} The desire is not that the government force the Christian confession on the nation, but it must not directly or indirectly compel a colorless neutrality. Christians are not panegyrists of the past and do not idly lament the miseries of the present, but they desire reform according to their ideals. A holy task rests on the government. It may not take a neutral position between truth and falsehood because it is the servant of God, owes its origin, and is responsible, to Him.\textsuperscript{462} As far as its task allows, government must be concerned that the people stand for the highest in education, science and art, farming and industry, trade, and in all branches of culture. That is not only a national, but also a thoroughly Christian duty. Both the national and international situation, with less emphasis on isolationism, demand this. The fear of the Lord is the highest principle and the greatest power; and happy is that land whose government honors that piety uprightly.\textsuperscript{463}

Against the cry of the Liberals concerning the mixing of politics with religion Bavinck holds "that politics is the high, glorious art of ruling a people according to the will of God in

\textsuperscript{460} Op. cit., pp. 31, 32.
\textsuperscript{461} Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{462} Ibid., pp. 29-31.
\textsuperscript{463} Ibid., pp. 36, 37.
agreement with the character, history, and calling which He
gave them."464

Bavinck stresses the important achievements of the Christian
Ministry led by Kuyper. This government improved education in
the public schools, and also recognized Christian education in
the Christian schools, meeting the needs of many citizens, with¬
out injuring public school education. It also provided social
legislation to improve the lot of the people. In doing this
it did not expect a millenium, nor was it motivated by a shallow
optimism.

At the conclusion of this speech Bavinck suggests this
address to the Queen: "Your Majesty, may it please you to main¬
tain this Ministry, for it is the wish of your people that, in
conjunction with its past and in agreement with the traditions
of your own house, it be governed according to the rule of the
Lord's Word so that it may be great in all those matters in
which a little people can be great."465

Governments come and go, and the Anti-revolutionary Party
has not remained in power. But the Christian convictions of a
large segment of the Dutch people continue to act like a yeast.
Though a Christian government is their ideal, there is always
the recognition that government is by divine grace, and that the
Christian citizen investigates all things and keeps the good.

464 Ibid., p. 40.
465 Ibid., p. 47.
14. War

Bavinck was very much disturbed by the outbreak of the First World War. He presents his reflections on the whole problem of war in two treatises: Het Probleem Van Den Oorlog, 1915, and Christendom, Oorlog, En Volkenbond, 1920.

The Christian is perplexed by the horrible conflict and does not know where to place it in his rational, moral, and Christian view of the world. Is there justification for it, or must such strife always be condemned?466

Wars in Israel occurred under circumstances different from those prevalent in the New Testament era. They were fought towards a higher end and must be appraised in the light of divine purposes implying God's kingdom and final peace. Isaiah 2: 1-4; 9: 2-7; 11: 6-9, Micah 5: 5, Zechariah 6: 13 speak of a coming peace and of the Messiah who shall reign in peace.467

The New Testament begins with the promise of that high ideal. Jesus brings peace and a kingdom of peace with spiritual and ethical implications that must govern us in our attitude towards war. His coming has not ended wars among the nations, but it does assure the ultimate triumph of the reign of peace extending beyond time.

The antinomy between loving your enemies and warring against them has always been felt in the Christian church.468 However, the problem is not solved by an appeal to the Sermon on the Mount

466 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, pp. 7, 10.
468 Ibid., p. 13.
or isolated texts, but within the compass of Christianity's attitude towards the natural life, and towards the whole sinful world and all its contents. 469

Jesus did not condemn military service and war in themselves. He was neither patriot nor zealot; nor was he a pacifist. 470 He did teach obedience, patience, and the forgiving spirit. His teachings also imply that there are greater spiritual values than prosperity and peace, as we ordinarily understand them, and that at times the less worthy must be surrendered to the higher good. Peace at any price may be sinful on certain occasions. 471

In the light of New Testament teaching the Christian Church has not condemned military service and wars in general. It respects the authority of government. 472 It considers wars mostly bad and sees much evil in all of them, but it also holds that a war can be good and just if it satisfies the higher principle of righteousness and has an eye to spiritual and moral values which would otherwise be lost. Moreover, any war, even one in self-defense, must not be entered into except as a last resort. 473

Drawing on Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin, Bavinck stresses their emphasis on righteousness in regard to war. The right of the sword belongs only to government; and only a lawful

469 Ibid., pp. 15, 16.
470 Christendom, Oorlog, en Volkenbond, p. 9.
471 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, pp. 17-20.
472 Ibid., p. 22.
government may wage a righteous war in a righteous cause towards a just end. There must even be a just manner of fighting, for man should remain man.474

Bavinck, however, does not simply justify the First World War. He speaks of the many dark spots, of the uncertainty as to its causes, of the many vague answers, of much self-justification, of the lack of humility and confession of guilt, and of the spiritual and moral loss.475

He urges Christians to contend against war as against disease and death, intruders into God's creation. All efforts should be made to end the war. To that end it is the churches' calling to unite in protestation with the press and public opinion. And in this connection he says it is wrong to caricature peace conferences and the Peace Palace at the Hague. Arbitration and the study of international law are most significant.476 He considers it especially the Christian's calling to use all worthy means and to employ all powers to prevent the repetition of such a calamity.477 He also warns that an unjust peace will pave the way for another war, and even foresees the threat of Russia and Japan.478

In Bavinck's opinion pacifism is not the answer to the problem, for it disregards the clear biblical truth of divine intervention, presents a fantastic ideal, and does not figure with reality.

474 Christendom, Oorlog, en Volkenbond, pp. 12, 13.
475 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, pp. 23-30.
476 Ibid., pp. 36-39.
477 Christendom, Oorlog, en Volkenbond, p. 35.
It is contradicted by facts and forgets that the law of love, in spite of its unconditional validity, is violated again and again in private and public life, and gives way to the power of human desires, of economic, social, and political demands. This is sad enough, to be sure, but it is hard, undeniable reality.\footnote{479}

A realistic approach, guided by Christian idealism, recognizes that wars do not stand by themselves, for the human heart is at strife. The problem of war is related to that of sin and suffering in general.\footnote{480} Happily the Christian's belief in the divine purpose is undying. His faith and hope make all things bearable. He believes that in the struggle something of imperishable worth comes into being, and that the world is regulated by a wise, holy, and almighty will which through conflict pursues peace and through wrath reveals divine love.\footnote{481}

For that reason it is foolish to say that Christianity and culture are bankrupt because of the war. By the divine grace Christianity, science, and all culture remain regenerating forces which can free us from the miseries of life.\footnote{482}

Though the problem was not fully solved for Bavinck, as it is not fully solved for us, he sees hope in an aroused public opinion and in the great moral power of the world's judgment against war.

\footnote{479} Ibid., p. 48.
\footnote{480} Het Probleem van den Oorlog, p. 33.
\footnote{481} Ibid., p. 34.
\footnote{482} Ibid., pp. 35, 36. Though Bavinck believed in the parousia and looked upon the war as a sign of the times, he cautioned against positive statements in regard to the Second Coming. He held that there were still many powers in nature and the world that needed to be revealed. See Christendom, Oorlog, en Volkenbond, p. 48, and Hepp: Dr. Herman Bavinck, p. 330.
He looks upon the growth of internationalism as important because of the greater feeling of dependence resulting in a culture-communion. All social and political efforts towards a league of nations are worthy of Christian support. Perhaps a better league than the one proposed by the peace treaty will develop.483

Because Bavinck died eighteen years before the outbreak of the Second World War, it is only speculation to say whether his convictions would have altered. But it is safe to state that his faith in the ultimate purposes of God would have remained unchanged. That faith is a regenerating power over against the degenerating forces in the world. It is "the root of all civilization and culture, and in its universality and continuity it points to the almighty will that is one with wisdom and goodness, and that itself wrestles with this fallen world for its preservation."484

483 Christendom, Oorlog, en Volkenbond, p. 70.
484 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, p. 35.
CHAPTER VII

THE FUTURE OF CULTURE

1. In Time

A Christian scholar, devoting himself to the study of Christianity and culture, is faced with the problem of the future. Though he lives by faith, he is at times perplexed, at times assured about the prospect of the years. Will the temporal process end in a dirge or in a doxology? To such reflections Bavinck is no stranger. A man of his temperament with his fine sensitivity and concern for honesty was bound to experience periods of gloom and of elation. The religious and moral conditions of his time and the outbreak of the First World War shook his basic Christian idealism but happily did not shorten the outreach of his faith.

He speaks of the increasing evils, of the love of money, of civilization in the service of brutal force, of satiation with culture on the one hand and unspeakable misery on the other,¹ of immorality and deceit, of the loss of guiding principles among the leaders of the people, of indifference to the Church.² And he wonders if our entire modern culture is not heading towards destruction like the civilizations of Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome.³ He expresses the gloom brought on by the war and

¹ De Offerande des Lofs, p. 113.
² Hedendaagsche Moraal, pp. 49 ff.
³ W. der O., p. 263; Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 97.
considers one of the most bitter results the undermining of the Christian faith in the providence and love of God.4

Shortly before his death he planned to write a brochure in which he desired to warn the Reformed people of the Netherlands about the seriousness of the times, and to arouse them to unity and faithfulness.5

However, he does not give way to pessimism. Spengler's prophecies and Bertrand Russell's "slow, sure doom," however poetically expressed, find no response in the teachings of Bavinck. In Modernisme en Orthodoxye (1911) he holds that we are standing not at the end, but at the beginning of a development which we await with great expectations.6 Even after war has come, he gives expression to the faith that the world, in spite of its irrationality, has purpose and approaches the light.7 Christianity, science, culture are regenerating powers, the gift of God, to free us from misery.8 And in De Overwinning der Ziel (1916) he speaks of the triumph of the soul over materialism and naturalism. That he did not consider the war as a sign of the end of the world we have noted in the preceding chapter.

In Het Christendom (1912) Bavinck says that the hope of a synthesis of Christianity and culture is not ungrounded in spite of their opposition to each other,9 for God in Christ rules all.

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4 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, p. 28.
5 V. O., Preface by his brother, C. B. Bavinck.
7 Het Probleem van den Oorlog, p. 34.
8 Ibid., pp. 35, 36.
Hepp is of the opinion that he did not arrive at a positive working out of such a synthesis in his own thinking. Nevertheless, a study of all his writings reveals that Bavinck arrived at approximations. Perhaps no Protestant Christian thinker, unsatisfied with the medieval answer, has done more than that. The full clarification is as elusive as the satisfactory solution to the underlying problem of faith and reason.

In his approximations Bavinck has some positive thoughts on the future of culture in time.

For him culture is the lordship of spirit over matter. As such it progresses by means of many degenerations and regenerations. But a thoroughly healthy culture is impossible; it never existed and never will exist. The perfection of the individual and of the fellowship belongs to another dispensation. Moreover, culture and civilization must have an end because man and humanity are temporal.

But for the Christian, pondering the relation of Christianity and culture, the temporal does not set impassable boundaries. By divine revelation he knows that the jenseits illumines the diesseits. Culture, like time, must have a stop, but eternal meanings have laid hold on both. There is a culture- and a time-transcendent. Christianity has made all the difference. "The rational, moral, religious consciousness of man points to a psychical existence that

10 Dr. Herman Bavinck, p. 235.
11 De Overwinning der Ziel, p. 27; Cf. Brunner, Christianity and Civilization, II, p. 128.
12 "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven " in K.en L., p.139.
13 G. D., IV, p. 715.
transcends the visible world; that which according to his nature seeks the eternal must be destined for eternity." Even art prophesies of such a future when it presents the ideal in visible form.  

The Christian revelation, culminating in Jesus Christ, gives the best meaning to the human drama, unfolding the divine plan and purpose above and in man's generation, degeneration, and regeneration.

This revelation presents man as coming from God, as falling away because of his own sin, and as given the assurance of redemption and re-creation with the promise of complete restoration beginning in time and fulfilling itself in eternity.

Great possibilities lay before Adam, boundless progress and development. His failure, which is ours also, was overcome by divine intervention. Man was not asked to begin again. A goal was made known to him. Christ places us not at the beginning, but at the end of the way. The vestigia Dei and the imago Dei are revealed at their highest in the last Adam. It is in Christ that the divine purpose is most clearly expressed and most fully carried out.

Divine grace has changed what would otherwise have been unrelieved tragedy into assured victory. The universe and all it contains, and man, God's noblest creation, remain. There is the

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14 Ibid., pp. 654, 655.
15 Ibid., II, p. 616.
16 Ibid., p. 635.
grace that restrains evil and degenerating forces, making possible
the long history of man. There is the grace that gives the second
birth and the restoration of the divine image in Christ with the
promise of completion in eternity.

The revelation which comes from God keeps nature and grace in
the right relationship. Creation is not to be despised but to
be accepted as gift and challenge. It will not be destroyed but
restored. Man also as head of creation by grace is not meant
for destruction but for restoration. It is his privilege and
responsibility as religious and cultural being to believe, trust,
and labor in obedience to the divine will, recognizing the signi-
ficance of time because of the greater significance of eternity.

The conception of nature and grace in proper balance offers
man the challenge to serve God and his fellowmen in whatever
calling he finds himself. It also stimulates him to appreciate
and put to use the best that God has deposited in His creation.
The true, the good, and the beautiful are not only at his disposal;
they are his to cherish and to cultivate as manifestations of
divine grace.

The Christian religion is not only the religion of grace,
but also of truth. It is the one because it is the other. Be-
cause God is pure truth, light without darkness, truth is also
all that proceeds from Him, His words and works, His paths and ways.

17 "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven" in K.en L.,
p. 141.
His rights and laws. Christian believers are in the truth, and the truth is in them. They speak and do the truth and are willing to give their lives for the confession of it. A great power went forth from the Gospel into the pagan world. Christians had convictions about faith, life, freedom, and blessedness, and Christians were the genuine philosophers who knew the true reality in God, and, armed with that knowledge, they had a better insight into the essence of the world, of nature, and of history. With the preaching of an objective truth Christianity, in spite of the imperfections of its confessors, has also planted faith in and love for truth in the hearts of men. It stimulates the seeking for truth, which is not a sin, for truth is no lesser good than holiness and glory. But it also offers the Christ who reveals His glory as the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And Christ is the answer to "the silent hypothesis of all science." In Him time takes on the meaning of eternity and reveals God's purpose with man and the world. The eschatological is rooted in Christology. In Bavinck's day the phrase "realized eschatology" was not as popular as it is to-day. His doctrine of the last things is the final locus of his Dogmatiek. But he speaks of the continual coming of Christ; and eternal life as a present reality, and the practice of the presence of God are major themes in his teaching.

18 Christelijke Wetenschap, pp. 10-12.  
19 Ibid., p. 97.  
20 Ibid., p. 57.  
21 Ibid., p. 96.  
22 G. D., IV, p. 763.  
The realization of the Kingdom is taking place in time although fulfillment must await the consummation. But the consummation makes the realization in time so much the more significant. Culture plays its part but becomes most meaningful in relation to the religion of grace.

Christ is the Lord of time and the King of the ages. By the promptings of His truth and under the leading of His grace the Kingdom comes. We have discussed this realm and its relation to culture in Chapter III from the point of view of the divine mandate. Here we are concerned about the mandate and the future of culture.

From this point of view how is the Kingdom and its coming related to culture? "It is the highest and most complete fellowship because it guarantees to the personality of each individual the most all-sided and the richest unfolding." Because of the Incarnation nothing human is foreign to it. It desires neither asceticism nor materialism, it recognizes both the value of culture and restraint. It is opposed, on the one hand, to the deifying of nature, and on the other to its despising. All man's earthly and spiritual possessions, used according to God's will, are for the good of the Kingdom.

Divine grace establishes this realm and gives us entrance into it. However, it is not only for ourselves as we respond

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24 Z., D., p. 636.
in faith. It is also an overflowing blessing for the whole of man, for humanity, the world, state and society, science and art. The regeneration of man completes itself in the regeneration of creation. For the divine plan will not be frustrated, and God will not destroy what He has made.

By means of the Kingdom, which implies the loyalty and personal witness of its citizens, Christianity is the yeast in society, the salt and light of the world. It invades all areas of culture, beginning with the self as religious and moral center, and aiming at the restoration of creation. "The promises of God include not only spiritual, but also corporeal blessings; image of God and paradise, children of God and inheritance of the world, cultus and culture, virtue and happiness, holiness and glory belong together. The Kingdom is certainly first of all spiritual, but it must appear also outwardly and visibly on earth." Because of its presence civilization is not entirely pagan.

The loyalty and personal witness of the citizen in this spiritual realm is the concern of the Church, which is the agent of the Kingdom. By means of the lively preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and proper use of discipline the Church impresses on its members that they are not of the world but in it for the high task of responding to God's mandate. Bavinck is sad about the divisions in the Church, but he also reminds us

26 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 95.
of the unity. Looking at the separations, we must not overlook what binds Christians together. "There is no Christianity above the divisions of faith but in them." The real unity will appear at the end of history in the fulfillment of Christ's body. We must not despair because of the present divisions but see the rich diversity in unity, remembering that even heaven has its many mansions.

The Christian Church has its great missionary task. "Missions are the powerful proof of the vitality of Christianity and one of the most valid weapons in the struggle that Christianity must wage in league with its culture inwardly and outwardly." Fulfilling the will of God implies both cross and crown. The hope of the world lies in the Church's proclamation and the Kingdom's realization.

Bavinck asks the question if it is still possible for the member of Christ's Church and citizen of His Kingdom to follow Christ in the cultural life of our time. He answers that the biblical meaning of following Christ means doing the will of the heavenly Father. The Christian must assert himself as Christian in every sphere. That also implies self-denial, a recognition of Jesus' words, "But I say unto you." In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus, addressing His disciples, did not give them first of all a cultural task, but He did announce the spiritual bases from

28 De Offerande des Lofs, pp. 63, 64.
30 Het Christendom, p. 60.
31 W., der C., pp. 270, 271.
which to invade the world for God's sake.\textsuperscript{32} The mission is to save souls, but also to build them up for serving God and humanity, and in that way to bring about the restoration of all that is fallen. Each Christian must aim at the perfection of self, which includes self-assertion and self-denial under discipline, and the proper attitude towards culture in the light of religion and morality.\textsuperscript{33} But motivated by love he must also be concerned about the perfection of others, for he is always in responsible relation to them.

As an illustration of following Christ we mention Bavinck's reference to the history of Calvinism in the Netherlands, and the impression it made on the individual, family, society, and state. The Netherlands Republic, according to him, was born out of the confession of the Church. Calvinists, although at times a small group, have been a tremendous influence. "The Calvinist is not a stranger or sojourner in the Netherlands, but the genuine son, and, therefore, also the inheritor of the future."\textsuperscript{34} Such words apply to all Christians and to Christianity wherever these witness in the world.

Above and in man's religious-cultural task appear the glory and majesty of God.\textsuperscript{35} Calvin referred to the world as "the theatre of God's glory."\textsuperscript{36} In man's mission and in the world there is displayed the splendor of Him who is the Creator, Redeemer, and

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\textsuperscript{32} "De Navolging van Christus en Het Moderne Leven" in K. en L., pp. 124-126.
\textsuperscript{33} Bavinck devotes part of his lecture on "Revelation and Culture" to a treatment of moral culture. Cf. the thoughts of Hugh Black in his book, Culture and Restraint.
\textsuperscript{34} "Het Calvinisme in Nederland en Zijne Toekomst," in Tijdschrift Voor Gereformeerde Theologie, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{35} G. D., II, pp. 256-259.
\textsuperscript{36} Cf. Barth's emphasis in Dogmatics in Outline, p. 58.
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Restorer of all that exists. The world and culture in themselves do not know of this God of grace; but the Christian revelation tells of Him. That gives culture its real meaning and declares its highest purpose.

Life, therefore, has significance. The world is not a wasteland. There is meaning in it from outside of history. For Keats the world is "a vale of soul-making," and the Christian can read more content into the phrase than the young prophet of beauty. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." Because of this divine concern, expressed concretely, the world is a place for Christian faith and life, for discipline through suffering, for challenge, for growing communion with God and our fellowmen. And revelation points to much more that is to come. The will of God operates in time and extends beyond it.37

From all this it is evident that Bavinck’s teachings in regard to the future are inspired by the Christian hope. Recent Christian thinkers, who have seen more of the world's crisis since his death, express thoughts that in the main agree with Bavinck's ideas.

Christopher Dawson says that the great movement of western man to transform the world has gone astray because western culture has lost faith in its own spiritual values and has detached itself from the sources of its spiritual vitality. He sees hope only in

37 W. der C., pp. 264 ff.
a comprehensive Christian education. Arnold Toynbee, looking for no significant change in unredeemed humanity while life on earth goes on, and ruling out a purely this-worldly and solely other-worldly view of life, speaks of progress in terms of "a cumulative increase in the means of grace at the disposal of each soul" in coming to know and to love God better and being a greater influence for good. T. S. Eliot warns that "we need to know how to see the world as the Christian Fathers saw it" and to "recover the sense of religious fear so that it may be overcome by religious hope." J. Huizinga, the friend of Sir H. J. C. Grierson, viewing the contemporary scene with sober and kindly understanding, speaks of katharsis and a new askese (asceticism), and calls those happy who can find the driving principle in Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Oscar Cullman brings both hope and fulfillment together in the Christian confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, and speaks of the decisive battle already having been fought, presaging Victory Day. Principal John Baillie says that what we may legitimately hope for "is not the appearance of a better race of men, but a wider and fuller understanding of the tasks to which Christian men must devote themselves." He reminds us also that "the historical permeation of our society by Christian ideas and ideals is a development for which we must be profoundly thankful to the Lord of all history, and for the furtherance of which it is our duty to pray fervently, to work diligently,

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38 Understanding Europe, pp. 3, 241.
39 Civilization on Trial, pp. 262, 263.
41 In De Schaduwen van Morgen, pp. 221, 222.
42 Christ and Time, p. 84.
43 The Belief in Progress, p. 228.
and to hope as bravely as we can." But he cautions us that our civilization will prove more durable only if it is not led astray by its own proud illusions but lays hold on the eternal, for "here we have no continuing city." And J. H. Bavinck, citing the fall of Babylon in Revelation as divine judgment upon the godless, powerful, and seemingly successful human culture, maintains that without God man's efforts are doomed to failure, and goes on to say that the Word for the world is our only hope.

For these representative Christian thinkers, as for Bavinck, culture lacks meaning and has no future except in the light of eternity from above and from the end. Time and history have an end not only as finis, but also as telos.

2. Fulfillment in Eternity

The full realization of God's purpose, the consummation of the Kingdom lie beyond history. If culture must have an end because man and this world are temporal, the Christian faith, on the basis of divine revelation, holds that eternity as viewed from the end will bring to full fruition what God has begun. Even eternity considered from above the temporal process implies that. The end means not only finis, but also telos. If for our rational understanding alone finis seems to defeat telos, our Christian faith makes the sense of defeat give way to the assurance of triumph.

God is the Creator, Redeemer, Restorer, and Renewer of all

44 What is Christian Civilization?, p. 59.
45 Het Woord Voor De Wereld, pp. 72-74.
that is. And Christ, who is Christianity itself in His preparation, fulfillment, and accomplishment, created, redeems, and renews all things. In Him the divine, purposive, and gracious will becomes effective. And in the light of that will, the revelation in nature and the revelation in Scripture form a unity which satisfies the demands of reason and the needs of the heart.

Bavinck believes that the fulfillment of the Kingdom will be a supernatural act by means of a cataclysm. The struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world will go on to the end of time with increasing intensity. The power of antichrist, symbolized by the beast coming up out of the sea, and of false prophecy, represented by the beast rising out of the earth, Revelation 13, and personalized as the lawless one in II Thessalonians 2, presents false culture, posing as religion and arraigning itself against Christ. But the triumph belongs to Christ and to Christianity.

Bavinck is aware of the symbolism of apocalyptic. He is not a literalist in the premillenarian sense, although he sees in Chiliasm a true suggestion, that Christianity will reveal its full blessing, the riches of its life in the spiritual, moral, and natural realm when the reign of righteousness and peace arrives. However, he opposes the literalistic interpretations of the Chiliasts.

But for Bavinck the Second Coming, the bodily resurrection,

48 Ibid., pp. 268, 272.
the last judgment, and the new heaven and earth are more than symbols. They are realities. In all his thinking Bavinck cannot be accused of the fallacy of omniscience, but he is in line with traditional Christian thought in regard to these four details of eschatology. Even if they are symbols, as some hold, there must be reality behind them, for the symbol without the reality is meaningless.

The Second Coming of Christ is demanded by the First Advent. There is not only a logical connection, but a real one. The Old Testament represents God as continually coming to His people, and the New Testament makes that coming concrete in Jesus Christ. He is the One continually coming and the One who is to come. His final coming complements the first.50 God, the Maker and Builder, triumphs through Jesus Christ.51

The resurrection means the triumph of body and soul, the restoration of the natural and the spiritual. It is implied in the Incarnation which together with the resurrection honors creation as the pale doctrine of immortality never can.

The last judgment is the triumph of good over evil, of righteousness over unrighteousness, not impersonally, but personally understood. It is not the conclusion to a drama of force against force, but the victory of a personal God, shared by His people through Jesus Christ, who is eternal and historical.

In the new heaven and the new earth the Kingdom is finally

50 G. D., IV, p. 763.
51 "Het Rijk Gods Het Hoogste Goed" in K. en L., p. 56.
realized. By divine grace the regeneration of man completes itself in the regeneration of creation. The description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation is certainly not to be taken literally, but it is more than the product of poetic imagination. As revelation it is the this-worldly description of other-worldly realities. There is the implication that all that is true, noble, righteous, pure, lovely, and worthy of praise in the whole creation, heaven and earth, are brought together in the City of God, but renewed, re-created, and led to their highest glory. The substance of this creation is taken over into the new creation. There is an analogy between the life of the blessed in the renewed realm and the life of believers on this earth. The re-created life will be a genuinely natural one but revealed in its highest glory and richest beauty. The materia remains, but the forma differs. Fellowship with God will be central but richer, deeper, and more blessed than on earth. Fellowship with the saints will be correspondingly unfolded.

Bavinck is aware that Christian theology has said little about activity in regard to the hereafter, limiting itself mostly to the representation of heavenly blessedness as the knowing and enjoying of God. "Undoubtedly that is the kernel and middle point, the source and power of eternal life." Moreover, Scripture gives little light on the subject. But eternal rest certainly does not imply

52 G. D., IV, p. 802.
53 Ibid., pp. 805 ff.
doing nothing. God is a God of work, John 5:17. His children remain His servants, serving Him day and night, Revelation 22: 3. They are prophets, priests, and kings, ruling upon earth forever, Revelation 1: 6; 5:10; 22: 5. They are rewarded according to their faithfulness, Matthew 24:47; 25:21, 23. Each retains his personality and also receives a new name, Isaiah 62: 2; 65:15; Revelation 21:17; 3:12; 21:12, 14. Their works follow them. Peoples and nations bring their possessions to enrich the New Jerusalem, Revelation 5: 9; 7: 9; 21:24, 26. Differentiation is not destroyed but made serviceable. Whatever degrees of glory there will be are the reward of grace. 54

In the light of the divine revelation in the Word we receive some conception of the last things. On the basis of what is revealed it may not be entirely futile to speculate, but speculation is neither satisfying nor conclusive. Certainly when we consider the future of culture from the perspective of eschatology, there are things beyond logical comprehension. Faith must illumine the content of what is revealed to our imperfect understanding. Of this we are convinced, as Bavinck and many other Christians are, that the final consummation fulfills, rather than annuls, the essential meaning of man in the universe. Biblical apocalyptic, marked by the high seriousness of great poetry, is prophetic expression of the Christian faith and hope that the divine plan and purpose will be fully realized.

54 Ibid., pp. 811, 812.
There remain problems which will not be solved until faith becomes clearer sight. If civilization and culture have their end as finis, will there not be a significant residual for the life to come? Revelation seems to imply this. Bavinck speaks of the regeneration of creation, of the substance remaining while the form is changed. Are there not, therefore, prospects for a renewed culture to which our categories of time and space are but faint approximations? Is this not also understood in the concept of end as telos?

And what will be the final issue of all the true, good, and beautiful expressed in varied ways and by diverse means in the lives of Christians and pagans of any age? There is, of course, the final judgment upon persons and their works. Bavinck and the Reformed tradition for which he stands do not find grounds for a universalism in Scripture. But will such truth, goodness, and beauty as is expressed in the lives of non-Christians be wholly lost? If God's general grace has made these possible and has sustained them in time, is it not likely that these will find a place in the renewal, though the persons are not receivers of redeeming grace? And is it not possible that these values will become the inheritance of the children of God who in Christ have learned that love is the greatest of these, greater than faith and hope, more comprehensive than truth, goodness, and beauty?

In Revelation 21:24, 26 we read that the glory and honor of the nations shall be brought into the New Jerusalem. That

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may be somewhat of an answer to our questions. Not the unredeemed in whom the image of God has not been restored, but the redeemed shall walk there. But whatever in creation did reveal the divine image, no matter how faintly, will be restored. For the glory of God, reflected imperfectly in the temporal creation, requires that nothing of value will be lost but purged from imperfection and stain.

Bavinck's teachings seem to imply this. But as to the destiny of persons he accepts the clear teaching of Scripture that each is responsible to God and must live in decision, trusting not in his works but in divine grace most fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Though there is much that lies beyond the reach of our thinking, there is more that lies within the grasp of our faith. Latourette sums it up as well as any in the last paragraph of his massive work, expressing beautifully the convictions of Christian thinkers of all ages, when he says, speaking of the consummation and the heavenly city, "This eternal life and this ideal community are, in the last analysis, not the fruit of man's striving, but the gift of a love which man does not deserve, and are from the quite unmerited grace of God."\textsuperscript{56}

CHAPTER VIII

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE WORLD AND OF LIFE

1. In Principle

For the German word Weltanschauung there is no English equivalent. Barth advises Christians against using it and combining the Church's business with it because Weltanschauung implies a stepping up from the depths to a conception of God. But Dutch Calvinists speak of a "Christian View of the World and of Life," and the phrase "World- and Life-View," modified by "Christian" or "Calvinistic," is commonly used in the Netherlands and in some Reformed circles in America. It is found in the English translations of Kuyper and Bavinck. Because this phrase is not acceptable in the wider English-speaking world, it is best to speak of a comprehensive Christian view of the world and of life.

In using the term, Bavinck and his followers do not mean simply a philosophico-metaphysical conception of man and the universe, but a view of the world and of life that does justice to God, man, and the universe in relation. It recognizes special and general revelation, and the divine grace that reveals itself redemptively to those who believe, and generally, though not redemptively, to all mankind. For the Christian, God, Christ, man, the world, nature, culture, all things in heaven and earth receive another meaning and value in regard to their origin, essence, and destiny.

1 Dogmatics in Outline, pp. 59-61.
For him, Christianity, with Christ as center, becomes a new, beautiful, and glorified view of life and all that exists because the Mediator between God and man assures him of the extension and completion of the everlasting Kingdom of God. The Christian does not appear as a stranger in the world, but as one finding support for his faith in nature and history, in science and art, in society and state, and in the heart and conscience of every man. In trying to see life steadily and whole from the vantage point of revelation, he sees, as Calvin did, in Christianity not only the principle of a new spiritual life, but also the most important element of culture, the Gospel as good tidings for all creatures in all their relations and activities. The deepest principle of his life and the driving power of all his actions is to serve God in every realm.

Bavinck gives credit to the Jews, Greeks, and Romans who were our spiritual forebears. Out of the Jews comes our redemption, but Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem (representing Christianity) are the three cities from which the light and radiance went forth over Europe. By means of these three peoples the providence of God laid the foundations on which even to-day the building of our entire civilization rests. To them we owe the elements from which our einheitliche view of the world and of life is formed.

It is to Christianity, however, that we owe the conception

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3 G. D., I, p. 546.
4 Evangelisatie, p. 30.
5 Het Vierde Eener Eeuw, p. 43.
6 Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid, p. 41.
of the one comprehensive science, i.e., a grasp of the fundamental meaning of life. It demands that understanding and heart, knowledge and faith must be able to live in peace.7 Bavinck maintains that every Weltanschauung moves between the three poles of God, the world, and man, and seeks to determine their reciprocal relations. From this it follows that in principle only three types are distinguishable: the theistic (religious-theological); the naturalistic (either in its pantheistic or materialistic form); and the humanistic.8 Only theism, with its conception of divine revelation in nature and in Scripture, can give the most satisfying answer to the problem of existence. "It is the Christian religion that brings a peculiar, altogether new view of heaven and earth, of world and humanity, nature and history, science and art, life and destiny, sin and death, eternity and judgment.9 Such a view is through and through supernatural. It acknowledges in God a power elevated far above nature and all our knowing and ability, and which makes all things serviceable to the coming of His Kingdom and the glory of His name.10 Because God is God, He is sovereign always and everywhere, in nature and history, in science and art, in religion and morality. His will is effective in every sphere.11

With its theistic view the Christian confession does not make a cleavage between religion and culture. That confession may not

7 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 80.
8 W. der O., p. 28.
11 Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid, p. 15.
be just something, but everything in our lives. In our living and thinking there is to be no division between God and the world, the religious and the cultural, for we cannot serve two masters. What God has joined together neither faith nor reason can separate. Behind our understanding and will lie our deepest convictions, which we acquire and keep not by scientific proof, but by the response of the whole self. "The system of our thinking is usually nothing other than the history of our heart."

In Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing Bavinck presents a more philosophical approach to the consideration of such a system of thinking. He holds that it is determined by three relations in each of which there lies a question: the relation of thinking and being - What am I?; the relation of being and becoming - What is the world?; and the relation of becoming and acting - What is my place and task?

(1) Christianity reveals to us a wisdom and reconciles man with God, but also with himself, with life, and the world. It manifests this wisdom by making truth known and by maintaining that this truth is objective reality, independent of our consciousness but revealed by God in His works of nature and grace. Our faith responds to this reality because subject and object, knowing and being are related. Its confession that God, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth is the foundation and

13 De Zekerheid des Geloofs, p. 25.
corner stone of all knowledge and science. Scripture first of all points man to God's revelation in all His works. There is wisdom in our reason if we accept this. The doctrine of the creation of all things through the Word of God is the explanation of all understanding and knowing, the hypothesis of the correspondence between subject and object. The objective world becomes our spiritual property because by divine grace it is spiritual and logical. In all the divine works in nature and history, in creation and re-creation truth is spread out before us. All truth is understood in the divine Wisdom, in the Word that was in the beginning with God and was God. To grasp this one must be of the truth as the Christian is.

The Christian conviction is that the world is founded by wisdom and also reveals it, Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19. And wisdom, personalized in Christ, I Corinthians 1:21, binds the world organically and plants in us the urge towards an einheitliche view of the world and of life. Being and knowing have their ratio in the Word through whom God created all that is.  

(2) The world is composed of many elements which all proceed from God's wisdom and will. These elements, organic and inorganic, spiritual and material, are differentiated by their own nature and name, yet in their differentiation form the unity of creation. The unity and diversity are explained best organically, not mechanistically. Because there is wisdom in the divine will that controls

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the one and the many, there is direction and purpose in the world. The God-idea actualizes itself in time and reveals the purpose and destiny of all creation.15

(3) Man, the crown of creation, has personality and enjoys freedom. He recognizes laws and norms that tell him to rise above nature. These norms are not a matter of must but of ought. They remind him to love God above all, and his neighbor as himself, and to love truth, goodness, and beauty with all his soul. These take over the whole man and do not release him from their service. The objective reality of the logical, ethical, and aesthetic norms suggests an order in the world which can have its origin and consistency only in God Almighty. In the unity of these norms, which differ in their application, there lies the revelation of God's thoughts, an exposition of His wisdom, and a mirroring of His glory. As a result the world is a decent place in which to live, neither a heaven nor a hell.

There is, of course, sin, resulting in a cleavage between what is and what ought to be. But the Christian religion reconciles the antinomy. The same divine wisdom that created the world also redeems it. In the plan of creation lies the plan of redemption. Christ honored creation by becoming flesh for the purpose of its restoration.

The Christian religion is history, not just a doctrine or a philosophical system. It is the central content of history,

15 Ibid., pp. 28-59.
giving real meaning to development and progress, revealing the whole course of history as a work of God, a becoming of the Kingdom of Heaven. This organic view does justice to human personality and the sovereign and free influence of God upon His creation and His creatures. Though there are various realms and diversified laws for each, above them all stands the God of love who works in all. He makes Himself known most fully in special revelation which does not conflict with the revelation in nature and in history.

From revelation we know that the divine energy subordinates all the forces of creation and leads them to a determined end, the fulfillment in Christ, and the new heaven and earth.

Christianity, therefore, places theonomy over against autonomy, and in doing so sets man in God's presence as a responsible being who in his place and task must answer to the divine will. To conform to God's thoughts in mind and heart, in thinking and acting is to conform to the image of His Son. That is the ideal and purpose for man. The realization is made possible only by divine grace.16

Always a man of deep and simple piety, Bavinck does not lose himself in theological and philosophical abstractions, as might appear from the preceding paragraphs. He is concerned about the practical application of divine truth according to which we must order our lives. As the wisdom of God became flesh in

16 Ibid., pp. 60-91.
Christ, so truth must become part of us, our own personal and spiritual property in the way of freedom. By means of a living faith it must become an element of our thinking and acting and be spread until the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord. That was the desire of the Reformation. According to Bavinck the Reformed confession expresses it clearly, and because it does so, it is the purest of all views of the world and of life, answering man's highest aspirations and needs.17

Such a view reconciles mind and heart and offers peace. It considers the knowledge of truth as more than an apprehending or even a comprehending. It acknowledges the mystery and arrives at adoration and worship. In the final analysis man finds rest alone in Him who is the truth.18

Such a view also inspires the practice of godliness. The believer confesses not only on Sunday, but also throughout the week in the family, the school, the church, at his work, in society and state, in science and art, among kindred spirits and opponents, before angels and men. He confesses not only by word of mouth but in deed, in supporting public worship, establishing schools, caring for the poor, visiting those in prison, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing, admonishing the disloyal, and answering those who contradict the faith. In all this he gives an account of the hope that is in him, and strives to keep himself unspotted from the world.19

17 Ibid., p. 94.
18 Christelijke Wetenschap, p. 58.
19 De Offerande des Lofs, p. 48.
2. In Practice

This Christian Weltanschauung, the principles of which we traced above, has found expression in various fields of activity. A system of thought, based on divine revelation and beginning with the conviction that God is Sovereign in every sphere of life, lives on in its practical application.

In the Netherlands the evidences of a Christian or Calvinistic view of the world and of life are perhaps strongest among the people of the Gereformeerde Kerken. The impressive labors of Kuyper and Bavinck have not spent themselves, although developments in theological thought belie a slavish following of these two leaders.

The Gereformeerde Kerken constitute a virile denomination marked by doctrinal preaching, exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, catechetical instruction of children and young people, a strict discipline, and a strong loyalty to the churches, manifesting itself in faithful attendance at the Sunday services and in generous offerings.

In each congregation there are also organizations for young and old devoted to study of the Bible and topics of general interest, resulting in an informed and remarkably literate membership.

There is an effective missionary program, both domestic and foreign. Fruitful cooperation is also present. De Nederlandsche Zendingsraad is an ecumenical body in which Gereformeerden, Hervormden,
and Lutherans work together with respect to common problems, especially in regard to Indonesia. The Council publishes a monthly paper, *De Heerbaan*.

The denomination is increasingly active in evangelization, and conferences are held with the Hervormden and even the Roman Catholics. The Nationale Christelijke Radio Vereeniging, in which Gereformeerden and Hervormden cooperate, is one of the largest radio organizations in the Netherlands. There is cooperation also with other Protestant Christians in the support of Christian hospitals.

The Gereformeerden likewise form an effective element in a comprehensive Christian Labor Union called Christelijk Vak Verbond, made up mostly of evangelicals. Socialists and Roman Catholics have their own organizations.

In the Netherlands, Christian journalism expresses itself in the publishing of many periodicals concerned with religion, theology, and the news. A daily newspaper such as *Trouw*, which is supported by Protestant Christians, strongly reveals the Reformed influence.

A great many religious books, both scholarly and popular, appear annually. Many of them are written by authors of the Reformed faith who find their reading public avid and above average.

Politically the Gereformeerden are organized as the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij. The founder of this party was Groen Van Prinsterer, who was succeeded by Abraham Kuyper. Significant leaders in recent years were Hendrikus Colijn, who was premier during most of the 1930's, and Professor Peter S. Gerbrandy, who served as Minister of the Dutch government in exile during the Second World War. The party headquarters, known as De Kuyper
Stichting, is located in The Hague in what was formerly the home of Abraham Kuyper. It also contains a magnificent library.\textsuperscript{17}

The Gereformeerd have established many primary and secondary schools which are supported financially by the state. Their Theological School at Kampen prepares students for the ministry. The Free University at Amsterdam is supported by a society, the members of which are Calvinists inspired by the vision of a thoroughly Christian higher education aimed at preparing young men and women for various fields. The University receives a large state subsidy for the expansion of scientific laboratories.

Although the Gereformeerde Kerken have not joined the World Council of Churches, there is an impressive movement afoot to alter the stand taken up to this time. This movement is still in the informal stage, but it may attain official dimensions.

A brief survey of the American scene discloses the effective transplanting of Dutch Calvinism in both its old and new form. Dutch Calvinism came to America with the settlers of New Amsterdam, later known as New York. The Dutch Reformed Church, now known as the Reformed Church in America, dates from that time. In 1847 a group of Dutch immigrants, under the leadership of Albertus C. Van Raalte, who had left the Hervormde Kerk in the Netherlands because of doctrinal differences and political oppression, and who were also influenced by economic circumstances, established themselves at Holland, Michigan. Not long after, upon invitation,\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} I was privileged there to peruse a book written by Winston Churchill and inscribed to Prime Minister Colijn.
they united with the Dutch Reformed Church. But in 1857 some of them seceded and eventually became the Christian Reformed Church.

The two denominations, existing separately but representing Dutch Calvinism in the United States and Canada, can be compared, in general, with the Hervormden and the Gereformeerden in the Netherlands.

The older Calvinism still undergirds the Reformed Church in America, although the Neo-Calvinism of Kuyper, Bavinck, and their followers has influenced and still influences a section of this church where the Dutch theologians are read and valued. But the Reformed Church in America with its longer history in the new world has experienced Americanization more fully and expresses a more moderate Calvinism.

This church has a very active missionary program which in the foreign field has given the world such names as Scudder, Harrison, and Zweemer. Because of heavy immigration to Canada from the Netherlands many new churches have been established in recent years under supervision of the Board of Domestic Missions. In the United States effective witnessing in new housing areas and among different racial groups is bearing fruit.

The work of evangelization is directed by a Department of Evangelism and its Minister. Many of the churches also support

Concern for the propagation of Reformed principles is evident from the formation of a "Society for Reformed Publications" comprised of ministers and laymen. This non-profit-making organization aims to publish books and pamphlets for instruction and edification. Among other works it has provided an edition of the Heidelberg Catechism, the translation from the German.
an evangelistic radio program known as Temple Time. Recordings are broadcast overseas.

There are also Departments of Children’s, Youth, and Adult Work, and of Publication. An official church paper appears weekly; and an unofficial missionary periodical is published monthly in collaboration with writers of the Christian Reformed Church.

The church maintains two divinity schools, New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey, and Western Seminary in Holland, Michigan. There are also two liberal arts colleges, Hope at Holland, Michigan, and Central at Pella, Iowa, and a third institution, Northwestern Junior College and Academy at Orange City, Iowa. The Board of Domestic Missions directs Annville Institute in Kentucky, and Southern Normal School at Brewton, Alabama. The latter institution provides Christian education for Negro children.

As a member of the National Council of Churches and of the World Council, the Reformed Church in America reveals its interest in ecumenicity.

Though the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church have much in common, it is especially in the latter denomination that the influence of Kuyper and Bavinck lives on. Immigration during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth has strengthened this church,
and recent immigrations to Canada and the United States are continuing to do so. Many of these immigrants have brought and are bringing their Neo-Calvinistic convictions with them from the Netherlands, bolstering the raison d'être of the denomination.

The Christian Reformed Church, small in comparison with the major denominations, has become a strong body promulgating that Calvinistic view of the world and of life held by Kuyper, Bavinck, and their successors in the Netherlands. Its principles are evident in doctrinal preaching, exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism once each Sunday, catechetical instruction, strict discipline, and a marked loyalty of its members.

The practice of its principles is expressed in domestic and foreign missions, in the maintenance of Christian hospitals, homes for the aged, and institutions for mentally retarded children. (These institutions are supported also by some of the Reformed Churches).

In the congregations there are societies for young men, young women, and older ones, engaged in Bible study and the discussion of vital topics. These societies are also banded in leagues and national federations under whose auspices mass meetings and annual conventions are held. The federations publish monthly periodicals.

There are two official church papers, one Dutch, the other English, published weekly, and several independent publications
dealing with religious, theological, and cultural issues.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan there are three publishing houses which provide reprints of older, significant works especially of a religious and theological nature, and publish new books, some of which reflect Reformed thinking on contemporary problems. The need for a Christian fiction, measuring up to literary standards, is both felt and expressed, but the experimental stage has scarcely been reached.

Most members of the Christian Reformed Church are protagonists of Christian education, maintaining many primary and secondary schools. These schools, not parochial but parent-sponsored, owe their existence to positive convictions in regard to Christian education, stemming from a strong sense of obligation and responsibility in the Covenant of Grace. The cost of such institutions and of the entire educational program is met by the payment of tuition and the generous giving of the people.

To further the cause of these schools The National Union of Christian Schools has been organized, with headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan.\(^{19}\) This organization has been influential in helping to organize Christian schools among evangelicals of other denominations, who consider with alarm the secularization of the public schools in America.

The Christian Reformed Church maintains a college and a theological school at Grand Rapids, Michigan. Calvin College offers a

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\(^{19}\) In the National Union of Christian Schools there are 177 schools, 1173 teachers, and 33377 pupils. Thirty years ago there were 80 schools and 12582 pupils. In the National Association of Christian Schools, in collaboration with the National Association of Evangelicals, there are 100 schools.
liberal arts education with emphasis on Reformed principles. Calvin Seminary trains young men for the ministry. Most of these divinity students spend eight years on the campus which houses both institutions. An impressive number of students from the college and the seminary have pursued and are pursuing graduate study at universities in the United States and abroad.

Because of its adherence to the Reformed tradition, the Christian Reformed Church guards its heritage with zeal. Its history is marked by a few heresy trials in the years 1920-1925. A professor, charged with sympathies towards some higher critical views, was dismissed from the Theological School; a minister, propagating premillenial opinions, was deposed, taking a following with him; two ministers, with many supporters in their congregations, were ruled out of the denomination because they denied common grace; and another was declared heretical because of his liberal views on the Sabbath.

This church retains its vitality by propagating its Reformed principles in pulpit, press, and class room. Its outreach beyond its own circles is limited partly by a traditional aloofness motivated by the fear of adulteration and change, partly by the general American indifference to doctrinal emphases. Its radio program on a nation-wide scale, known as the Back to God Hour, has proved effective among evangelicals. The influence of a people dedicated to the service of God, whom they consider Sovereign in every sphere of life, is intangible but real.
The charge of isolationism has been levelled against the Christian Reformed Church because of its Neo-Calvinistic emphasis, its refusal, for doctrinal reasons, to join the National and World Councils of Churches, and its zeal for Christian education. The danger of withdrawal, of a pronounced isolationism is always present, and minority voices within the group have expressed alarm. But a strong loyalty and the fear of losing distinctiveness\(^{20}\) produce an inner vitality that is commendable. How that vitality can be made to serve most effectively the larger good of America remains the persistent challenge.

At present this church is experiencing an inner tension, the inevitable result of a concern for purity of doctrine on the one hand, and a vocal Christianity on the other. There are evidences of fundamentalism such as Bavinck lamented in his day within his own group. Moreover, the issue of common grace has been revived, and there is a lively debate between the defenders of this teaching and those who fear its wider implications.\(^{21}\) What is really involved in this matter is the whole problem of the relation between Christianity and culture, the enduring problem that requires careful and persistent re-thinking.

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\(^{20}\) At a Young Men's Convention in the 1930's the theme was: "Distinctiveness without Isolation."

\(^{21}\) This issue will appear again in the last chapter.
CHAPTER IX
CRITICISM OF Bavinck

Though there is little specific criticism of Bavinck's views on the relation of Christianity and culture, there is a general criticism of his position in certain developments of theological thinking in the Netherlands and in the United States. I was privileged to interview some of Bavinck's former students, such as Dr. J. H. Bavinck, nephew of the great theologian, Dr. H. Dooyeweerd, who with Dr. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven has developed the Philosophy of Sphere Sovereignty, and Dr. P. C. Gerbrandy, prime minister of the Dutch government in exile during the Second World War. I also had conversation with Dr. G. C. Berkouwer, the present professor of dogmatic theology at the Vrije Universiteit. These men, Calvinistic scholars and leaders, revealed their great admiration for Bavinck as a Christian scholar, teacher, and man of simple piety and gentleness of spirit; and they all spoke of the scarcity of criticism.¹

¹ This comparative silence in regard to Bavinck is in strong contrast with the criticism levelled against the dynamic Kuyper whose leadership in the Neo-Calvinistic movement was subjected to many an attack. A. A. Van Ruler has devoted a book, Kuyper's Idee Eener Christelijke Cultuur, to the critical analysis of the latter's ideas, and has written a series of articles on Kuyper's teachings in regard to common grace, "Kuyper's Leer van de Gemeene Gratie" in De Gereformeerde Kerk, Oct. 7, 1937 - Dec. 15, 1938. In Droom en Gestalte, to which we shall refer again, this author attacks what he considers the weaknesses of the Neo-Calvinistic position, with special emphasis on Kuyper's views. Th. L. Haitjema, S. G. De Graaf, H. Dooyeweerd, and K. Schilder have also expressed themselves in opposition to Kuyper's convictions on Christianity and culture. Later in this chapter we shall refer to some of these works in so far as they touch on the general criticism of Bavinck.
Bavinck, however, was not spared entirely. He was not always appreciated as he should have been,\textsuperscript{2} not even by some of his colleagues. We are concerned especially with reactions to his position in the later developments of Calvinistic theological thought both in the Netherlands and in the United States. A thesis of this kind would be incomplete without reference to Bavinck's lasting influence and to the opposition that has been expressed.

Criticism of Bavinck's views can perhaps be summed up best under two headings: The Issue of Common Grace, and the Emphasis on the Antithesis. In Calvinistic circles both in the Netherlands and in the United States there has been, during the last three decades, a lively discussion of the problem of common grace and the related problem of the antithesis. After the First World War leaders in the Christian Reformed Church in America discussed the question, and at its biannual synod in 1924 this body became the first church to give an official and binding interpretation of general grace on the basis of Scripture and the Reformed creedal position. In the United States there followed, after schism, a period of comparative calm, but in recent years the issue has flared up again, as we shall see below. The related problem of the antithesis is also receiving vigorous attention.

In many respects the views of Bavinck and Kuyper were similar, but differences in personality, methods of expression, and the latter's powerful, practical leadership seem to account for a greater silence in regard to Bavinck's convictions and a more pronounced reaction to Kuyper's. Moreover, the latter's three-volume work, De Gemeene Gratie, which appeared first as articles in the popular De Heraut, called attention to the subject and paved the way for debate.

\textsuperscript{2} J. Waterink, "Dr. Herman Bavinck als man van Wetenschap, speciaal als Paedagoog" in Centraal Weekblad, 2de Jaargang, nr. 50, December, 11, 1954.
both from the conservative and the more moderating points of view. In the discussion the whole matter of the relation of Christianity and culture is involved.

1. The Issue of Common Grace

In the Netherlands and in the United States the controversy in regard to common or general grace has produced a considerable amount of literature of a highly theological and dogmatic nature. It would take us too far afield to enter into the debate fully. However, in any discussion of divine grace the problem of the relation of Christianity and culture is involved. In the welter of theological opinions one can distinguish conflicting attitudes towards Christianity's response and responsibility to culture.

We shall consider first of all the debate in the Netherlands. There the Gereformeerd Kerken are committed to the affirmation of the doctrine of common grace in line with the convictions of Bavinck and Kuyper. But in the 1930's K. Schilder, who for many years taught Dogmatics at the Theological School of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Kampen, began to deny general grace, maintaining that culture had nothing to do with it. He speaks of the vagueness of Bavinck's De Algemeene Genade and of Kuyper's De Gemeene Gratie. Divine grace can be spoken of only in regard to eternal salvation. It is always to be paired with the divine wrath.

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5 Ibid., pp. 35, 36.
What God has brought together we may not separate.\(^6\) Though there is a divine restraining of sin, the continuation and unfolding of the cosmos is not grace, but simply nature.\(^7\) Schilder prefers the term "gemeene gratie" and gives his interpretation of it. "Gemeene gratie" exists in so far as Christ's redemptive work applies to all His people. All others are under the curse.\(^8\)

For Schilder culture, which has nothing to do with general grace, is essential. The divine mandate was announced before the fall, and man cannot escape it. Our starting point must be not common grace, but the divine mandate to which man's original calling responds.\(^9\) Culture, however, is really possible only when it is in keeping with God's will. Christ is its only fountain, and its genuineness depends on special grace. The communion of saints has great significance for its development. Schilder emphasizes the distinction between koinonia, which refers to Christ's people, and sunousia, which relates to all.\(^10\) "To establish koinonia in the sunousia, as members of the mystical union with Christ, that is Christian culture."\(^11\) He cautions that fleeing from culture is sin, but because a war is being waged, the Christian may be compelled to sacrifice eye or hand.\(^12\)

\(^{6}\) Ibid., p. 76.
\(^{7}\) Christus en Cultuur, pp. 60-63.
\(^{8}\) Ibid., p. 65.
\(^{9}\) Ibid., pp. 99, 100, 115.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., pp. 74, 87, 88.
\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 93.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., pp. 96, 97.
It is evident from Schilder's convictions that there is no common ground, no neutral zone for Christians and non-Christians. General grace and general revelation do not exist. Romans 2:14, 15 simply states that the heathen act according to their nature. In the history of culture there is only a becoming obedient to God or a transgressing. Christ is the Saviour of the world and of culture, but as Redeemer and Avenger. His wrath is against sin and evil. A culture that would maintain itself without God can never reach its consummation, but only destroys itself. Though there is a divine restraint, a general tempering of sin, there will be less of it with the coming of antichrist.

Basic to Schilder's convictions is the assertion that God is not favorably disposed to all people. Grace is shown only to Christian believers. For others there is the divine wrath. His saying that God is well-pleased with the creaturely in all people, but that this does not mean He is favorably disposed towards all people impresses one as sophistry to maintain a point. Certainly Romans 2:14, 15 teaches a general revelation, with grace implied, and Schilder's preferring to speak of the heathen as acting according to their nature is questionable exegesis. So also II Peter 3:9 reveals God's long-suffering and His not desiring that any should perish, and Romans 9:22 tells of the divine patience.

13 Wat Is De Hemel?, p. 289.
14 Christus en Cultuur, pp. 80-82.
Schilder's emphasis on the divine general mandate, which was announced before the fall and which accounts for culture in terms of man's response, need not exclude general grace. Both Bavinck and Kuyper hold that such a mandate is grounded in the very grace expressed in creation. God's Gaben precede His Aufgaben. 15

The views of Schilder have a bearing on the eternal significance of culture. He also faces the question whether anything of culture will be carried over into the New Jerusalem. Kuyper speaks of the germ of common grace being transported into the realm of glory. But Schilder criticizes Kuyper for using the term as a bit of imagery borrowed from I Corinthians 15. The attack, however, is quite unfair, for Kuyper is simply using imagery as our nearest approach to expressing what remains a mystery for us all.

Schilder further asks what we could do with our culture in eternity, and maintains that it has significance only for time. But does that hold also for what he understands by a Christian culture? He relies on the interpretation of S. Greydanus in regard to Revelation 21: 24-26, that the honor and the glory of the nations will be brought into Jerusalem's gates in time, not in eternity, although the full revelation will appear beyond time. 16 The implication is that something is carried over. Bavinck and Kuyper hold to that also. With them we bow before the mystery

16 Wat Is De Hemel?, pp. 291, 292.
of the final consummation and believe that the germ of common grace, with all it implies for culture, will have its continuation and fulfillment in the new heaven and earth. The judgment of God will fall on whatever is sinful both in religion and culture, but the divine grace will preserve whatever is true, good, and beautiful. If it is our pride that would draw blue prints of the end as finis and telos, it is our humility, by divine grace, that leaves it all in far more capable hands.17

Of a different kind and positively of a different temper is the criticism of common grace offered by Dooyeweerd, who has a warm affection for Bavinck and Kuyper and is indebted to their teaching. In De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee he cautions that general grace may not be set dualistically over against particular grace. He holds that "common grace is meaningless without Christ as root and head of the reborn human race.... because it manifests itself in the temporal cosmos, which has no existence without religious root."18

He goes on to say that the revelation of God's common grace after the coming of sin is not a blessing to humanity, but a judgment upon all who are outside of Christ. It must not be given an autonomous existence over against special grace, for it is based on the latter. Christ is the King of common grace.19

Dooyeweerd prefers to speak of a temporal or conserving grace, and of a renewing or regenerating grace.20 His conviction is,

17 Sadly enough the Schilder controversy has resulted in schism, manifesting itself in pride, bitterness, and antagonism.
20 Ibid., III, pp. 467-469.
however, that apart from Christ there is no divine grace at all, but only the revelation of God's wrath against sin.

In answer to Dooyeweerd it must be said that he does not prove his proposition that special grace is the basis of general, nor does he convince us that speaking of two realms is positively unscriptural. That there is a manifestation of grace which redeems and a manifestation of grace which restrains sin and allows for the cultivation of much that is good is warranted by Scripture. Bavinck and Kuyper find the evidence there and painstakingly distinguish between the two kinds of grace in respect to their purpose and effectiveness. Bavinck does not object to the statement that Christ is the King of common grace, provided we mean by it that as the Ascended Lord, in a mediating sense, He is also the origin of it.21

Th. L. Haitjema of Groningen has also criticized the views of Bavinck and Kuyper in "De Cultuurwaardeering van het Nieuw-Calvinisme." He sees in these men the tendency to relate the principle of revelation to all our knowledge and action, and the desire to feel at home in the world, to prove that the Christian religion is not hostile to culture, and that it brings the latter to its highest development. He thinks it is to the credit of the new Calvinism that it is opposed to pietistic flight from the world, the practical interest in missions only, and the separation of faith from science. But he maintains that there is a

21 For a refutation of Dooyeweerd and De Graaf's criticism of Kuyper's views see S. J. Ridderbos, op. cit., pp. 287-299.
difference between the new and the old Calvinism.

According to Haitjema, a comparison of Gereformeerd Dogmatiek with the Institutes reveals Bavinck's concern with cultural views of a generally philosophical nature. The accent is not on what a Reformed Christian believes and confesses, but on how he should conduct himself in contemporary cultural life. Bavinck, like Kuyper, makes more of common grace than Calvin did.

Haitjema sees in the new Calvinism a two-directional interest: on the one hand the plea to develop a greater appreciation for culture, and on the other, the conviction that the Christian religion must permeate it. But its regeneration, proceeding from a reborn humanity, cannot be harmonized with the doctrine of common grace. The two lines of culture in general and of the reborn culture are not brought together. The Vrije Universiteit was born too soon, and the problem remains unsolved.22

It is our opinion that Haitjema has a too-onesided view of Calvin's ideas on common grace. We have stated above that in the Institutes Calvin repeatedly refers to a certain divine favor shown towards the unregenerate and to the Christian's appreciating truth wherever it may be found. Bavinck and Kuyper worked out the implications of the Reformer's convictions. What

is new in their thinking is a development of his views on a subject on which neither the old nor the new Calvinism has spoken the last word.

That Bavinck, in contrast with Calvin, acccents how a Christian should conduct himself in contemporary cultural life rather than what he should believe and confess is very wide of the mark. He who reads the Gereformeerde Dogmatiek and all of Bavinck's writings feels the constant throb of the Christian faith and confession.

The charge that the new Calvinism gets too close to the world and has too great a respect for common grace is also unwarranted. Neither Bavinck nor Kuyper attributes to that grace the restoration of the original purpose of creation. Both are Christian theologians and students of the Word, on the basis of which they affirm that re-creation is possible only through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. They do not keep general and particular grace apart as two entirely separate realms, but they do distinguish between them as to their purpose and effectiveness. Though they have not solved once for all the persistent problem of Christianity and culture, their thinking on divine grace has shed light on many a dark area too readily surrendered as waste land.

We turn now to a brief consideration of the issue of common grace in America. There the Christian Reformed Church at the
The biannual synod of 1924 adopted three declarations that have come to be known as the "Three Points of 1924." These deal with the favorable attitude of God towards mankind in general and the well-meant offer of grace in preaching; the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and society; and the civic good which the unregenerate can perform.

The Rev. Herman Hoeksema and others did not agree with these declarations, and their strident disagreement resulted in schism. Hoeksema has maintained persistently that the divine grace is always particular, i.e., only for the elect, that the preaching of the Gospel is not a gracious offer of salvation to all men, but an oath of God that He will infallibly lead the elect unto salvation and eternal glory through faith, and that the unregenerate are totally incapable of doing any good.23

In recent years the discussion has been revived largely by Dr. C. Van Til of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.24 In his re-assessment of the concept of common grace he deviates from the adopted interpretation and also makes a few specific criticisms of Bavinck.

Van Til approaches the question of common grace from his fundamental principle of interpretation, the Ontological Trinity. God, particularizing Himself in three Persons, is a concrete universal, manifesting Himself in time and in history. Now the core of world history is the problem of commonality and particularity.

In the Ontological Trinity there is no conflict between these, but in the world there are elect and reprobate persons. But what do these, as particularities, have in common? The problem of common grace deals with the question: "What do entities, which will one day be wholly different from one another, have in common before that final stage of separation is reached?"25 Strictly speaking, they have nothing in common as far as grace is concerned. For Van Til speaks of common grace as an earlier grace, applying to mankind in general, but not to men as men. As Daane points out, such grace is limited to non-existence and is not real in time and history.

Though Van Til cannot be said to deny common grace, his concept of earlier grace seems to be a denial of the reality for men as men. He maintains that there is less grace now (if you can speak of grace applying to an abstraction) than at an earlier stage, and that the wrath of God increases against the non-elect as time goes on.26

Van Til criticizes Bavinck specifically on several points. According to him Bavinck does not make a thorough break with scholasticism, proceeds on the assumption that all reasoning must be on common ground as the old Princeton position and the natural theology of Roman Catholicism do, does not distinguish between the Christian and non-Christian notion of mystery in

25 Common Grace, p. 68.
26 Ibid., pp. 82, 83.
speaking of mystery as the life of dogmatics, and deals too much in ambiguities and abstractions.\textsuperscript{27}

Such criticism is perhaps inevitable when one in reality denies common grace and emphasizes the divine wrath, when one sees no common ground at all for the regenerate and unregenerate in their reasoning, and when one makes persistent use of ambiguities and mystifying abstractions. If there is a multiple fact that stands out in Bavinck's teaching, it is that he bows before the Word, respects reason as a gift of God wherever he finds it, recognizes its limitations, and recoils from abstract speculation that either asserts itself against special revelation or uses it as a springboard for metaphysical soaring.

2. \textbf{Emphasis on the Antithesis}

In the discussion presented in the preceding section there is involved the problem of the antithesis, which in Calvinistic thinking refers to the line that separates and distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate. Because there is redemption, the new birth in Christ, there is evident in every sphere of existence and also in the life of each Christian a line of demarcation, a barrier that divides good from evil. Divine revelation in the Word makes a distinction which no erasure or levelling can negate without denying the full implication of that revelation.

In the Old Testament the distinction is seen in the calling of Abraham and the history and significance of Israel. The New

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 45-57.
Testament refers to the people of God as not of the world though in it, and as those who partake of the new life in Christ. Augustine's *De Civitate* sets the City of God over against the City of Man. Throughout the history of Christianity emphasis is laid on the distinction brought about by regeneration.

It is in the application of the principle that differences of opinion arise. Kuyper repeatedly stresses the antithesis and has been accused of intellectualizing it in somewhat of a humanistic sense. Bavinck is fully aware of the line that separates the regenerate from the unregenerate and is charged with having too great an appreciation for what we might call culture on the left.

In *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* Dooyeweerd, developing Kuyper's ideas, uses the principle of the antithesis as a dominating thought. Not one sphere of life, not even the seemingly neutral, escapes the cleavage. Schilder and Hoeksema, denying general grace, Van Til, speaking of earlier grace which diminishes as time goes on, and Dooyeweerd make much of the wrath of God which increases with the years. They view history from the double aspect of divine grace and judgment and stress the latter.

Within the circle of those who accept the principle of the antithesis there are two schools of thought: those who tend to overstress the principle, among whom the men we have just mentioned are representative, and those who, convinced of it, are more

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28 G. Brillenburg Wurth, "Christelijke Cultuurbeschouwing" in *De Antithese in Dezen Tijd*, p. 12.
moderate in its application and more reserved as to where to draw the line. From our study of Bavinck we conclude that he belongs with the latter group.

At this point it is illuminating to consider the views of several twentieth century Calvinistic thinkers whose thoughts agree in general with Bavinck's teachings.

G. Brillenburg Wurth recognizes that the anti-Christian forces compel the unified assertion of the Christian faith and life, but also sees three dangers. (1) There is the possibility of intellectualizing and globalizing the antithesis to the extent of forgetting the divine grace. (2) There is also the threat of pride, expressed in the feeling of superiority. The antithesis implies judgment and criticism, but also of self. (3) Christians may neglect their responsibility to the world. God plans and expects the separation of His people from the sinful world, but that must not be understood in a negative sense. They are to be a blessing; and it is their mission to understand others and to convince them of the Christian view of life.29

He goes on to say that the distinction between the old and new Calvinism is quite absurd. Historic Calvinism does not lay claim to being another kind of Christianity, but strives for purity and a wise synthesis. It honors God, His revelation, and all creation. Man's cultural task is implied in his being created in the divine image. His calling by virtue of creation, rather

29 Ibid., pp. 19-23.
than common grace, should be our starting point. Common and special grace are not territories lying next to each other. Both reveal God's goodness, and each has a separate purpose. Man exists in relation to creation and to re-creation. The Christian may neglect neither. He should avoid the glorification of culture, express a holy earnestness as to the reality of sin, but he must be more than a bystander. Guided by the Word and the Spirit, he should be concerned about reclaiming as much of the world as possible. It is his duty and privilege to see the problem of culture in the light of the redemption in Christ, to understand the cosmic significance of the Cross. His decision is not between being a cross-bearer and a bearer of culture. It is rather to be a cross-bearer in every sphere of life.

The Christian must also recognize the power of Christ's resurrection in regard to culture. It is part of the triumph that the divine wrath falls upon a worldly culture but also upon what is evil in ourselves and in our proud systems. It is, moreover, part of the triumph that whatever is of value in this life will be kept and transferred to the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of a renewed nature and culture. "Your labor (also cultural) is not in vain in the Lord," I Corinthians 15:58.

Against those who exclude too much from the Christian domain W. J. Aalders issues a wise warning. He holds that the Christian,

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30 Ibid., pp. 31, 32.
31 Ibid., pp. 32-37.
in despising culture, must not attempt to be more fastidious than God, who did not consider it beneath Him to create nature with all its rich unfolding.33

B. Wielenga reflects a worthy moderation in reminding us of man's responsibility to himself and his relation to the world. Culture is not first of all what man does outside of himself, but what he is in himself and does to himself. (We recall Bavinck's concern expressed in the Stone Lecture, "Revelation and Culture"). Jesus Christ possessed the true and perfect culture of spirit. By divine grace man must develop his whole self, not in isolation, but in relation. The significance of Jesus Christ for the world must appear in man's significance for the world. Matthew 16:26 does not speak of despising culture, but of the cosmic balance restored. Man, who has lost the best judgment of himself, is of more value than the whole world. Christ saves man, the microcosm, and thereby also saves the macrocosm.34 Wielenga quotes Aalders as saying that the incarnation of the Word means the glorifying of creation and the anticipation of culture. And he adds, "That is healthy language and also prophetic."35

In the same vein as these thinkers J. Waterink maintains that the end of all culture-activity is the glorifying of God. If the product answers to the reality of creation, it is culture;

33 Christendom en Cultuur, p. 36.
34 "Jesus Christus en Het Cultuurleven" in Jesus Christus en Het Menschenleven, pp. 223-235.
35 Ibid., p. 236.
if it does not, it is non-culture. He seems to imply that only the Christian can recognize and appreciate genuine culture. But, mindful of the boundary understood in the antithesis, he asks just where it might be. On the one side there is an illumined field with dark spots; on the other, a dark field with light spots. But it is pride to determine who is on the one side and who on the other. "And pride is a dark place on the illumined field."\(^3\) Under confessional standards there is a danger of cramping the area.\(^3\)

The inner tension of Bavinck reveals itself in the interpretation of the antithesis. In him there is a tremendous struggle between the Reformed faith and his profound interest in the best the world offers. For him Jesus Christ holds the central position in the heart, but also in the cosmos. On the one hand there is his faith in God who reveals His saving grace in Scripture and most fully in Christ. On the other, there is his great appreciation of all that culture at its widest, deepest, and best reveals. He strives to relate the fundamental thoughts of Christianity to the ineradicable needs of the human heart. That is why even some of his admirers think he did at times tread upon dangerous ground.\(^3\)

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But all in all Bavinck is not afraid of dangerous ground because of his deep conviction that God has much to tell us in His Word and in His world, and that the truths of revelation are resolved in Him who is the Truth. Whatever is revealed, no matter where, gains clarity from God's redemptive revelation in Jesus Christ. It is the Christian's privilege and task to progress in faith and knowledge, always living in decision, constantly aware of his limitations and the divine grace, and also responding with animation to all that God is revealing.

During his lifetime Bavinck answered some of his critics who accused him of having too great an appreciation for the world's culture and of being neither orthodox nor modern. He replies by asking what orthodoxy means. It implies agreement with the Confessional Standards. But a certain freedom must be allowed. The Confession is subject to Scripture and remains open to revision and expansion. There has been such an advance in knowledge that the last word has not been spoken. Even the Vrije Universiteit rests on a Reformed, not on an orthodox basis. It stands for the revision of doctrine and life according to scriptural and historical principles.

In all his teaching Bavinck emphasizes the distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate, between special grace that issues in redemption and general grace shown to all men. He has

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39 Modernisme en Orthodoxie. See Notes to the published address.
40 Ibid., pp. 15-22.
a worthy respect for that humanity, reason, creativity, and appreciation which men at their best have in common by divine grace, but he also has the conviction that the entire realm of culture has greater meaning in the light of special grace.

Bearing in mind Bavinck’s serious and sincere struggle in which his Christian faith triumphs and his reasoning strives valiantly, we know his answers to the following questions.

Granted that saving grace makes a distinction and draws a line between the redeemed and the unredeemed, is it not presumptuous to draw up a neat scheme in which all the grace falls on one side and all the wrath on the other? Is there no grace at all, no favorable attitude of God towards all mankind, manifesting itself especially in the general offer of the Gospel, in the restraint of sin in the life of individuals and society, and in the performance of some good by the unregenerate? Has culture on the left no other significance than to become increasingly the object of divine wrath? Has Jesus Christ, the Word, no cosmic meaning for the world as revelation of God? And in spite of, and because of, the judgment upon sin wherever it is found, is not the triumph of grace the Christian message to the world?41

We must consider another criticism of the principle and practice of the antithesis. It comes from those Christians who desire no separate Christian organizations in the spirit of separatism.

but a witnessing in the midst of the world. A. A. Van Ruler in *Droom en Gestalte* develops his concept of the theocracy.

Jesus is Lord. Church and state are related. The latter is the center of culture. We must be interested in a Christianized culture (*gekerstende cultuur*). Spiritual Israel is the Church and Christianized culture, the body of Christ, and the body of Christianity.  42

Van Ruler holds that Christians should not form separate political parties and establish Christian schools. That way the nation is split rather than Christianized. A Church of the people (*volkskerk*) and a baptized nation are essential. Letting our light shine in the midst of reality, in every sphere of life is more beneficial than setting up a ghetto in the national culture.  43

The writer cautions that we must not expect a complete Christianization of culture. There is always a mixture of revelation and heathendom in the Christian life.  44

He also makes the charge, as Haitjema and Dooyeweerd do from another point of view, that in Kuyper common and special grace do not touch.  45 The criticism may apply to Bavinck as well because he also stood for Christian organization as distinctive, though not in the spirit of separatism.

Bavinck was fully aware of the judgment against Christian

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schools, a Christian political party, and other organizations distinguished from the general cultural pattern. Yet, in spite of his broad sympathies, he felt it weakens the evangelical Christian's power to borrow, in various spheres, the principles and thought images of his opponents. The Christian must seek his strength in isolation until he has attained a firm basis for himself. He can be assured of victory only when he is clad in his own armor and contends in the name of the Lord of Hosts.46

The criticism of which we speak is often heard in America, especially against separate Christian schools. Sensitive people feel it, even as Bavinck did, but like him they have their defense. They are aware of the danger of an entrenched isolationism motivated less by great principles than by narrow convictions. And they are on guard against it.

One of the best defenses of Christian higher education is presented by W. H. Jellema,47 professor of philosophy at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and for some years head of the Department of Philosophy at Indiana University. Committed to Christian education on all levels, he speaks of man's choosing that civitas which shall shape him. There is the civitas of modernity which, in America, has come to stand for neutrality in education. There is also the civitas dei under the aspect

46 De Theologie van Prof. Dr. Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye, pp. 96, 97.
47 "Calvinism and Higher Education" in God-Centered Living, A Symposium, pp. 105-128. The entire volume deals with Calvinistic action in various spheres.
of which the very essence of education "lies in the maturing....
of (man's) insight into the meaning and structure of the city
as glorifying God, and in the deepening of his allegiance to it.
A formal education which, though it might have acquainted the
student with culture, had not, and in the process, made cor-
respondingly more meaningful and contentful God's self-defini-
tion, would have failed to be Christian.48

The citizen of the civitas dei, who is bound up with the
existing culture, must learn to distinguish between this king-
dom and other kingdoms. Christian higher education is a neces-
sity, not an ornament, in order to stress the glorifying of God
and "to articulate meaningfully the answer to the question who
God is."49

What the writer says is in the spirit of Bavinck.

It is unjust to look upon Christian education and other
Christian organized activity as an experiment in separatism.
At its best it must be considered as concentration for the
greater mission. When education caters to modernity, and, there-
fore, to neutrality, Christians find themselves compelled to ex-
press their deepest convictions in action. It is not a matter
of being a ghetto, but of being a city on a hill, the salt of the
earth, and the light of the world.

Well aware of the dangers of narrowness, of the wrong inter-
pretation and application of the antithesis, the wisest advocates

48 Ibid., p. 122.
49 Ibid., pp. 126, 127.
of Christian education, among whom Bavinck is a leader, are convinced that the best education is that under God and for Him. It is a corollary of their view of life and the world. Guided by God's special revelation, culminating in Jesus Christ, illumined by His general revelation made most meaningful through the Word, they cherish the riches to which man is heir. Convinced of the grace in Christ which redeems, they are also mindful of the manifestations of that grace which makes culture possible. In the world, yet, not of it, they seek to answer to their calling, to witness faithfully, to cultivate and to appreciate what is best. In making their distinctions and selections they are conscious of the divine grace and their own shortcomings, leaving the final judgment to Him who remembers His own and what is His. Their lives, lived in decision, know perils, but above all the victory that is and is to come.

If Bavinck has not answered all our questions, nor his own, in assessing the relation of Christianity and culture, he has led us farther into "the thinking of the thought divine."

B. Wielenga puts it well when he says, "As far as I know, no one has pictured the new culture, the changed world so broadly and with such majestic comprehensiveness in their meaning for Christianity as this knower of history."50

3. Thoughts at the Centenary

As December, 1954 marked the centenary of Bavinck's birth,

50 Quoted by A. B. W. M. Kok, Dr. Herman Bavinck, p. 90.
religious periodicals honored the occasion with many articles on his person and work, and on his lasting influence. Such evaluations bear out and reinforce the basic thoughts of this thesis. Though nothing new is presented, there is a re-emphasis of Bavinck's significance for the Reformed faith reforming.

These writers stress the relationship between Bavinck's sterling and magnetic Christian personality and his scholarship. His wide interests reveal that nothing human was foreign to him. A man of inner tension and conflict, of modesty and discretion, "he understood the holy art of listening," as G. Brillenburg Wurth says.

He was always the sworn enemy of mere speculation. For him, in the last analysis, Christianity meant the assurance of faith. He expressed that in his devotional book on the subject, and what he says is in keeping with his Gereformeerde Dogmatiek and with all his thinking. He saw the grave danger of no longer confessing one's faith, but of believing one's confession. From him we learn again that faith is not at all to be equated with narrowness of heart and mind. On the contrary, it must bear fruit in answering to one's calling in the world. It is fed and inspired by the love of God, and expresses itself in love to God and to one's fellowmen.

Two statements, seemingly wide apart, but very closely related,
present the real Bavinck. Dr. W. H. v.d. Pol, a Roman Catholic, thinking especially of the Stone Lectures, compares Bavinck with Barth in that both contend against any monistic, immanentistic, humanistic theology and religiousness. And F. H. Von Meyenfeldt recalls a sermon Bavinck preached sixty years ago, and remembers the impression it made on him as a boy of twelve years. In these two evaluations lies the greatness of Bavinck. Permeating his scholarliness there breathes a warm, personal trust in God, that living faith which he respected so highly in the simple lives of the unlettered saints.

For Bavinck the Christian pilgrimage is the way of storm, but also of joy because of the certainty of faith. Ever new conflicts and difficulties arise, but victory is assured. Through all the ages the Christian witness repeats one major theme: the triumph of divine grace.

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