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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HUMAN FREEDOM AND THE INVISIBLE CHURCH
FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF BAVINCK'S PNEUMATOLOGY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

DONG-YAUL TAE

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

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ABSTRACT

Although Reformed pneumatology is generally recognized by scholars of Calvin and Reformed confessions to be relatively well developed compared to the various pneumatologies of the Western theological tradition, it faces two important challenges. First, Reformed pneumatology is directly linked to the critique that Reformed soteriology's accentuation of predestination and effectual grace leads to inevitable fatalism that ignores human freedom. This is because the ministry of the Holy Spirit is crucial in the Reformed understanding of the order of salvation beginning with regeneration and ending with glorification. Second, because the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a key to understanding Reformed ecclesiology, and according to Reformed ecclesiology, the invisible church is a realization by the Holy Spirit and the Word of divine election, the criticism that the distinction in Reformed ecclesiology between the visible and the invisible church is a kind of Platonic dualism that justifies schism is also a problem that is directly linked to Reformed pneumatology.

This dissertation responds to these two challenges against Reformed theology by using the pneumatology of Herman Bavinck as a case study. The point of this study is to grasp the answer to the question: "for Bavinck, is the work of the Holy Spirit clearly distinguishable from the work of Christ, and if so, what role does that work play in soteriology and ecclesiology?" This dissertation will show that Bavinck makes a clear distinction between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit and uses this distinction to demonstrate that the way the Holy Spirit applies salvation obtained by Christ to humans is fully compatible with human freedom since the work of the Holy Spirit is always persuasive, not coercive and operates in and through human nature

without overriding it. Furthermore, it will show that, for Bavinck, the invisible but actual and ongoing application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit plays a key role in realistically understanding the invisible church by which he means the spiritual essence of the church, and the spiritual character of the marks and attributes of the church. In other words, to speak of the “invisible church,” Reformed theology is claiming nothing more than that the church of Jesus Christ is “spiritual.” The “spirituality of the church” is identical to the “invisible church.” To criticize the latter is to criticize the former. In this respect, the closer examination of Bavinck’s soteriology and ecclesiology from the viewpoint of his pneumatology that this dissertation carries out will provide an entry-point to respond to the two criticisms mentioned earlier.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of Thesis

This dissertation sets out to demonstrate that by distinguishing the work of the Holy Spirit from the work of Christ, Herman Bavinck's pneumatology provides a credible rebuttal to two charges commonly leveled against Reformed theology: 1. The accusation that Reformed soteriology's emphasis on predestination and election inevitably leads to philosophical determinism and fatalism that deprives humans of freedom. 2. The accusation that the distinction in Reformed ecclesiology between the visible and invisible church is a species of Platonic dualism that rationalizes schism and disunity.

Our first task is to show that Bavinck clearly distinguishes the objective acquisition of salvation by Christ from the subjective application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit. Having established this point, we will show that Bavinck uses this distinction to demonstrate that the work of the Holy Spirit is never coercive but always persuasive and operates in and through human nature without overriding it; the manner in which the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ is therefore fully compatible with human freedom. Furthermore, the invisible but effective and ongoing application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit is for Bavinck the key to realistically understanding the invisible church by which he means the spiritual essence of the church as well as the spiritual character of the marks and attributes of the (true) church.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Scholarship on Calvin and the Reformed confessions usually acknowledges that this tradition, in comparison with the Western theological tradition more generally, has a relatively well-developed pneumatology.¹ Nevertheless, Reformed pneumatology faces two significant challenges. First, the importance of predestination, election, irresistible grace, etc. in Reformed soteriology has led to the accusation of fatalism.² Second, the distinction made in Reformed ecclesiology between the visible and invisible church is said by some to be a species of Platonic dualism that rationalizes and justifies church schism.³ Both of these are profoundly pneumatological issues. The work of the Holy Spirit is crucial in the Reformed understanding of the *ordo salutis* which begins with regeneration and concludes with glorification. Furthermore, the church of Christ is gathered “through his Spirit and Word” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 54).⁴ And, the invisible church is a realization of divine election through the Holy Spirit and the Word.⁵

¹ See Benjamin B. Warfield, “John Calvin the Theologian,” in *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), 481–87; Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “The Holy Spirit,” in *The Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (Fall 1980): 58–78; Eifion Evans, “John Calvin, Theologian of the Holy Spirit,” in *Reformation & Revival: A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership* 10, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 83–104.

² See Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), 14–18; 92–94; 107–8; Brian Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 63–64; William Gene Witt, “Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 633–35, 639–45.

³ See G. VanDooren, “About Visibility and Invisibility,” *Clarion* (November 10, 1989), 494; Jelle Faber, “The Doctrine of the Church in Reformed Confessions,” in *Essays in Reformed Doctrine* (Neerlandia, AB: Inheritance, 1990), 112–15.

⁴ Christian Reformed Church, *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Publications, 1988), 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003–2008), 4:298, 303; *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit’s Work in Calling*

This dissertation is a response to these two challenges against Reformed theology. I will use the pneumatology of Herman Bavinck as a case study to address the following question: What role does the Holy Spirit play in Bavinck’s soteriology and ecclesiology and is that role clearly distinguished from the work of Christ? The answer will provide an entry point into the two charges raised earlier. The answer will also help us to sort out a debate among Bavinck scholars who are divided on this question. Some scholars minimize the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ while others accent the difference. A closer examination of two important loci in Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, namely soteriology and ecclesiology, will provide important evidence to move the discussion forward.

1.3 Present Status of the Problem

From the emergence of Pentecostalism⁶ in the early twentieth century through the Charismatic movements⁷ of the middle of the century to today, interest in pneumatology

and Regeneration, ed. J. Mark Beach, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 117.

⁶ A short statement on the emergence of Pentecostalism and basic definitions of it can be found in the editorial article, “The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements,” in [*The New International*] *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. S. M. Burgess and G. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988[2002]), 1–6. A very prominent presentation of the history and theologies of worldwide Pentecostalism is Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972 and subsequent editions) and its sequel, *Pentecostalism: Origin and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). See also “The Church in the Power of the Spirit: Pentecostal/Charismatic Ecclesiology,” in Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 68–78; Frank D. Macchia, “The Kingdom and the Power: Spirit Baptism in Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspective”; Grant Wacker, “Early Pentecostals and the Study of Popular Religious Movements in Modern America”; and Margaret Poloma, “The Future of American Pentecostal Identity: The Assemblies of God at a Crossroad,” in Michael Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 109–65.

has grown significantly.⁸ While the current discussions on pneumatology include some interest in the doctrine of the Trinity itself, the real concern in pneumatology is more with the identity, life, and mission of individual believers and the church.⁹ For instance, Jürgen Moltmann, criticizing those who “view the theological doctrine of the Trinity as a speculation for theological specialists, which has nothing to do with real life,”¹⁰ turns the

⁷ An easy introduction to the origins and history of major Charismatic movements is Peter Hocken’s “The Charismatic Movement,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 130–60. See also Karkkainen, “The Church in the Power of the Spirit: Pentecostal/Charismatic Ecclesiology,” 68–78.

⁸ Regarding twentieth and twenty-first centuries’ universal interest in pneumatology, Paul S. Chung says: “The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, becomes a major topic of inquiry in the era of World Christianity. A scholarly investigation of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is greatly appreciated and demanded in a broader theological spectrum.” Paul S. Chung, *The Spirit of God Transforming Life: The Reformation and Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2. See also Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 11; Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 48–50; Michael Welker, ed., *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, vii–xvii; F. LeRon Shults and Andrea Hollingsworth, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 1–2; Yuzo Adhinarta, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Major Reformed Confessions and Catechisms of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2010), 2.

⁹ For instance, this interest in the relation between the Holy Spirit and the identity, life, and mission of individual Christians and the church was well reflected in Jürgen Moltmann’s *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1977), *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl from the German, *Trinität und Reich Gottes* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), and *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997); Colin E. Gunton, “The Community: The Trinity and the Being of the Church” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) 58–85; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); and Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. In the Reformed circle, see Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspective on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1979); Adhinarta, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit”; Joel R. Beeke and Derek W.H. Thomas, eds., *The Holy Spirit and Reformed Spirituality: A Tribute to Geoffrey Thomas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2013).

¹⁰ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 1. Here attention should be paid to the fact that despite his criticism of concentrating on the doctrine of the Trinity itself, Jürgen Moltmann himself also has attempted to newly interpret the doctrine of the Trinity itself as the social Trinity

doctrine of the Trinity into a history of the Trinity as a basis for community life today.¹¹

This new fellowship of men, women, and the world is experienced “in the activity of the Spirit,” according to Moltmann.¹²

The growth of pneumatology as a theological interest has also led to an examination of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed tradition. Some have concluded that the Reformed tradition has not done justice to the Holy Spirit. Yuzo Adhinarta, in his dissertation on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Reformed confessions, took note of this criticism.¹³ For example, George S. Hendry states that the dogmatic tradition of the church including the Reformed tradition provides inadequate clarification for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Hendry argues: “In contrast to the elaborate care and precision which were applied to the definition of the doctrine of the person of Christ, the definition of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which was made at the Council of Constantinople in 381 and which has scarcely been improved upon since, is singularly meager, and might even be described as slipshod.”¹⁵ Although the expression “slipshod” is excessive and

to support his practical understanding of the Trinity. This shows that an understanding of the Trinity *ad extra* inevitably goes along with an understanding of the Trinity *ad intra* though where to put the emphasis could be different as the case may be.

¹¹ Moltmann states: “We understand the scriptures as the testimony to the history of the Trinity’s relations of fellowship, which are open to men and women, and open to the world. This trinitarian hermeneutic leads us to think in terms of relationships and communities.” Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 19.

¹² Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 124.

¹³ Adhinarta, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” 1.

¹⁴ George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1st ed. 1956, 2nd ed. 1965), 13–14.

¹⁵ Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, 13. There are other critics who agree with Hendry. See Lewis S. Mudge, *One Church: Catholic and Reformed* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 68; Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 224. Agreeing with Hendry’s

thus not fair, the general point of Hendry's contentions is valid especially regarding the overall doctrinal tradition of Western Christianity. This is because in the Western theological tradition, the study of pneumatology has generally not kept up with the exhaustive analysis and deliberation given to Christology.¹⁶ In this context, when compared with the Western theological tradition in general, the Reformed tradition, relatively speaking, has emphasized pneumatology and even given it considerable development as well as having at least paid heed to pneumatology from the beginning. This has been demonstrated by scholarship on Calvin and the Reformed confessions.¹⁷

Benjamin B. Warfield, for example, says that it was Calvin "who first related the whole experience of salvation specifically to the working of the Holy Spirit, worked it out into its details, and contemplated its several steps and stages in orderly progress as the product of the Holy Spirit's specific work in applying salvation to the soul."¹⁸ Thus

arguments, Mudge additionally states: "It is a striking fact, for example, that the Westminster Confession of Faith was originally produced without any article dealing directly with the Holy Spirit at all. The result is that in reading what the Bible says about the Spirit we are blind and deaf." Migliore, also agreeing with Hendry's contentions, speaks about the results of the neglect of pneumatology as follows: "When the work of the Holy Spirit is forgotten or suppressed, the power of God is apt to be understood as distant, hierarchical, and coercive; Christocentric faith deteriorates into Christo-monism; the authority of Scripture becomes heteronomous; the church is seen as a rigid power structure in which some members rule over others; and the sacraments degenerate into almost magical rites under the control of a clerical elite."

¹⁶ Regarding the argument that there is no comparable dogma on the Holy Spirit like there is on the person of Christ or on the Trinity, see Albert C. Outler, "Veni, Creator Spiritus: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *New Theology*, no. 4, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 195–96; Kilian McDonnell, "A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?" in *Theological Studies*, no. 46 (1985): 191–92, 194; Herbert Richardson, *Toward an American Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 111; John Bolt, "The Ecumenical Shift to Cosmic Pneumatology," in *Reformed Review* 51, no. 3 (April 1998): 257–58.

¹⁷ Cf. Warfield, "John Calvin the Theologian," 481–87; Gaffin Jr., "The Holy Spirit," 58–78; Evans, "John Calvin, Theologian of the Holy Spirit," 83–104; Chung, *The Spirit of God Transforming Life: The Reformation and Theology of the Holy Spirit*; Beeke and Thomas, eds., *The Holy Spirit and Reformed Spirituality*; Adhinarta, "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ Warfield, "John Calvin the Theologian," 485.

Calvin, says Warfield, “gave systematic and adequate expression to the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit and made it the assured possession of the Church of God.”¹⁹ In this respect, for Warfield, it is justified to call Calvin “pre-eminently *the theologian of the Holy Spirit*.”²⁰

The emphasis in the preceding paragraph was on the *Western* church. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit and pneumatology has been the hallmark of Eastern Orthodox theology at least since Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit*.²¹ In addition, we need to acknowledge that since the time Warfield made his comment about Calvin, the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement has also generated a rich vein of pneumatologically-oriented theology, especially in the past 25 years.²² We also need to acknowledge that the

¹⁹ Warfield, “John Calvin the Theologian,” 485. According to Warfield, this development of pneumatology in Calvin started from his interest which “was most intense in the application to the sinful soul of the salvation wrought out by Christ.” Warfield, “John Calvin the Theologian,” 484.

²⁰ Warfield, “John Calvin the Theologian,” 484. Warfield clarifies this statement as follows: “[I]n the same sense in which we may say that the doctrine of sin and grace dates from Augustine, the doctrine of satisfaction from Anselm, the doctrine of justification by faith from Luther, - we must say that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from Calvin to the Church.” Warfield, “John Calvin the Theologian,” 485.

²¹ See St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. and intro. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011); Paris Joost van Rossum, “The Experience of the Holy Spirit in Greek Patristic and Byzantine Theology,” *Communio viatorum*, 53, no. 3 (2011): 25–39; Philip Kariatlis, “St. Basil’s Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine: A Synthesis of Greek Paideia and the Scriptural Worldview,” *Phronema*, vol. 25 (2010): 57–60.

²² See William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993); *Spirit and Power: Foundation of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Theology and the Christian Spiritual Tradition* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Blandford Forum, U.K.: Deo Pub., 2011); Frank D. Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit: Creation, Redemption, and the Triune God* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010); Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology: The Cadbury Lectures 2009* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2010); *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco, TX.: Baylor University Press, 2012); *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2015); J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a*

pneumatology of Roman Catholicism has developed considerably since Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).²³ Nonetheless, a reasonable case can be made that Warfield’s

Charismatic Perspective (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996); Scott Billingsley, *It’s a New Day: Race and Gender in the Modern Charismatic Movement* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2008).

²³ When referring to the Western theological tradition, we need to consider the Roman Catholic theological tradition as important as well, since it was the mainstream of the Western theological tradition before the Reformation, and also occupied a large part of the Western theological tradition during and after the Reformation. Thus, in relation to the relative assessment of the developmental level of Reformed pneumatology in the era of the Reformation and later Western theological traditions, a brief evaluation of Roman Catholic pneumatology in and after the Reformation period is as follows: Roman Catholic pneumatology in and after the Reformation can be characterized by the works of Catholic Reformers, such as Ignatius of Loyola, John of Avila, and John of the Cross, who have mystical tendencies. Although their views of the Holy Spirit and His ministry have their own unique characteristics based on their own experience and interpretation of Scripture, Catholic pneumatology of this period is not considered to have made a special contribution especially in the sociological and ecclesiological dimension. Meanwhile, the encyclical *Divinum illud munus* (1897) by Leo XIII was one of the precursors of the twentieth century Catholic pneumatological renaissance. And in the Vatican Council II (1962–1965), the Catholic pneumatology made considerable changes and developments. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Yves Congar, and Carl Rahner played an important role in this development. For example, Balthasar soteriologically emphasized three ways in which God manifests himself in the Spirit: gift, freedom, and inward and outward testimony. Congar wrote his pneumatological magnum opus, the three-volume *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, and his pneumatology had a great influence on the Vatican Council II. He accentuated the spiritual and missional aspects of the church as well as the institutional aspects of the church pneumatologically. Congar and Rahner emphasized the continuing need for the spiritual renewal of the church by the ministry of the Holy Spirit by dealing with the “charismatic” theme in particular. Rahner highlighted grace as God’s self-giving in the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit that exists everywhere and works for everyone. Their pneumatology was deeply reflected in the documents of Vatican Council II and the Catechism of Roman Catholic Church. For the development of the Catholic pneumatology during and after the Catholic Reformation and during and after Vatican Council II, refer to Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1997); *The Spirit of God: short writings on the Holy Spirit* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 1:151–66; Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions (sixth - sixteenth centuries)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 193–97; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Holy Spirit and Salvation: The Sources of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 292–94. As for the public pneumatology of the Roman Catholic Church (since the mid-twentieth century), refer to Catholic Church, “Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia: Lumen Gentium” in *The Documents from Vatican II*, i. 4, 39–42; “Constitutio Dogmatica de Divina Revelatione” in *ibid.*, i. 5, iii. 11, 12; “Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in Mundo Huius Temporis: Gaudium et Spes” in *ibid.*, I. i. 22, iii. 38, iv. 40–45; “Decretum de Oecumenismo: Unitatis Redintegratio” in *ibid.*, i. 2–4; “Decretum de Apostolatu Laicorum: Apostolicam Actuositatem” in *ibid.*, i. 3–4; “Decretum de Activitate Missionali Ecclesiae: Ad Gentes Divinitus” in *ibid.*, i. 4–5, 7, ii. 11, 13–15; Catholic Church, *The Catechism*

claim about Calvin remains as true as it was some one hundred years ago. Warfield had in view particularly Calvin's careful, biblical exposition of the Holy Spirit's work in salvation. He did not have an age for the other important dimension of pneumatology, the cosmic work of the Holy Spirit, an emphasis also found in Abraham Kuyper's Calvinian book, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Regarding Calvin's contribution to justifying the cosmic aspect of pneumatology, Hendrikus Berkhof states that Calvin alone saw this cosmic pneumatology.²⁴

However, even when the significant place of the Holy Spirit in Reformed theology is acknowledged – in soteriology and ecclesiology – it encounters two significant challenges. The first is the criticism that Reformed soteriology inevitably leads to philosophical determinism and fatalism that robs humans of freedom.²⁵ It is the doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace that are seen as the culprits here. This criticism can become vitriolic: “Reformed theology has ... ended up creating a monster of theology

of the Catholic Church (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Washington, DC: [distributed by] United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 2nd ed., 180–96.

²⁴ Hendrikus Berkhof says: “This relation between the Spirit and creation is much neglected in Christian thinking. Calvin and, following him, Abraham Kuyper are the only ones I know who tried to do justice to this cosmic aspect of pneumatology.” Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964), 96; cf., Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 217.

²⁵ Pinnock, ed., *Grace Unlimited*, 14–18, 92–94, 107–8; Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 63–64; Witt, “Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius,” 633–35, 639–45; William R. Estep, “Doctrines Lead to ‘Dunghill’ Prof Warns,” *The Founders Journal* 29 (1997): 13; Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), 46–50; Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will—Contrasting Views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2002); David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, eds., *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 54–55, 78–79, 111–17, 220–23, 231–32.

that dampens the place of our passion and partnership with God.”²⁶ We will show that a proper pneumatology has an answer to this objection. In ecclesiology, there is a criticism that the doctrine of the invisible church is a species of Platonic dualism that rationalizes and justifies church schism. This criticism comes from within the camp of conservative Reformed theology itself. For example, G. VanDooren states: “Why is all this talk [respecting the invisible church] ‘harmful’? First, because it is influenced by pagan [Platonic] philosophy and scholasticism. Second, because it relativizes doctrinal differences, contrasts between truth and error, between true or faithful churches and false churches and/or sects. They all play a part in the one ‘orchestra’! Third, it undermines the evangelical call of Art. 28 to ‘maintain the unity of the Church.’”²⁷ Here too, we will show that a proper pneumatology has an answer to this objection.

Probing the validity of these two charges against Reformed tradition in soteriology (fatalism) and ecclesiology (Platonic dualism) from a pneumatological perspective is the concern of this dissertation. The pneumatology of Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), especially in relation to his soteriology and ecclesiology, will serve as a case study.²⁸ The

²⁶ Tim Stafford, “The Pentecostal Gold Standard: After 50 Years in Ministry, Jack Hayford Continues to Confound Stereotypes – All to the Good,” *Christianity Today* 49:7 (July 2005): 27.

²⁷ VanDooren, “About Visibility and Invisibility,” 494. Regarding a moderate criticism on the concept of the invisible church, see Faber, “The Doctrine of the Church in Reformed Confessions,” 112–15. For Faber, the distinction between the visible and invisible church is unbiblical and thus illegitimate. “Faber’s discussion is significant because the essay was delivered formerly as an address to the International Conference of Reformed Churches in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1985. The material was also published as a series in *Clarion* (a magazine published by members of the Canadian Reformed Churches) in 1986.” Stuart R. Jones, “The Invisible Church of the Westminster Confession of Faith,” *WTJ* 59 (1997): 73.

²⁸ Here we need to keep in mind that for Bavinck, soteriology and ecclesiology are very closely related especially from the perspective of pneumatology. Specifically, for him the order of salvation is not only an introduction of soteriology, but also an introduction of ecclesiology with respect to the applicatory work of the Spirit.

focus of this research will be on grasping the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ. We believe that clarity concerning the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit affords a point of entry into responding to these two criticisms.

We will use a distinction made by the Dutch Reformed theologian Arnold A. Van Ruler (1908–1970) between a christological and a pneumatological perspective²⁹ as a heuristic tool for examining Bavinck’s pneumatology. Van Ruler introduces the notion of “theonomous reciprocity”³⁰ to articulate the way in which the Holy Spirit works *with* our human spirits rather than *for us* or *on our behalf* as Christ does in redeeming us.³¹

Using Van Ruler’s distinction as a heuristic entry point into Bavinck’s theology can be justified on two grounds, both of which will be shown in the course of this dissertation: (1) The twin accusations of fatalism and Platonic dualism arise, among other things, from a failure to accurately understand the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ. (2) Although Bavinck’s own interests and emphases are not identical with Van Ruler’s, it will be shown that his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the application of salvation can be summarized with integrity using Van Ruler’s distinctions

²⁹ A. A. Van Ruler, “Structural Differences between the Christological and Pneumatological Perspectives,” in *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics*, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 27–46.

³⁰ Here it is necessary to distinguish Van Ruler’s pneumatological concept of “*thenomous reciprocity*” from Arminius’s pneumatological concept of “cooperation” or “concurrence.” The former underscores *divine initiative*; the latter wants to preserve the freedom of human willing. According to William Gene Witt, “Arminius insists that if grace does not operate according to the mode of free will, it cannot redeem free will. Since grace saves, the free will is saved and accordingly, the free will *concur*s in responding to grace.” (emphasis added) William Gene Witt, “Creation, Redemption and Grace in the Theology of Jacob Arminius” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), 635.

³¹ Regarding Van Ruler’s pneumatological concept of “theonomous reciprocity,” see Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics*, 35, 51, 58, 80.

and his notion of theonomous reciprocity. In fact, others have made a similar connection.³²

Using Herman Bavinck's pneumatology as a case study will serve as a helpful response to the two accusations brought against the Reformed tradition. First, it can be shown how this distinction functions in Bavinck's treatment of the pendulum swings between nomism and antinomism in the Christian, and especially, Reformed tradition. According to Bavinck, the failure to connect Christ's acquisition of salvation with its application by the Holy Spirit led to "neonomianism" and "dead orthodoxy" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, calling forth responses of Pietism and Methodism.³³ In addition, we will show how Bavinck's detailed exposition of the applicational work of the Holy Spirit harmonizes with human freedom. For example, Bavinck states that "the application of salvation is and remains a work of the Spirit ... and is therefore never coercive and violent but always spiritual, lovely, and gentle, treating humans not as blocks of wood but as rational beings, illuminating, persuading, drawing, and bending them."³⁴ In this way, "the Spirit causes their darkness to yield to the light and replaces their spiritual powerlessness with spiritual power," according to Bavinck.³⁵ Furthermore,

³² For example, M. E. Brinkman indirectly compares Bavinck's Christ-centered ecclesiology with Van Ruler's Spirit-centered ecclesiology. M. E. Brinkman, "Pluraliteit in de leer van de kerk? (Een analyse en evaluatie van enkele kernpunten uit de ekklesiologie van Bavinck, van Ruler, Barth en Rahner)," in J. M. Vlijm, ed., *Geloofsmanieren: Studies over pluraliteit in de kerk* (Kampen, Netherlands: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1981), 127–38. By contrast, Eugene Heideman emphasizes the similarity between Bavinck and Van Ruler showing how both distinguish the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit while keeping them intimately connected. E.P. Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason in E. Brunner and H. Bavinck* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1959), 80–82, 238–40.

³³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:528–40.

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

³⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

we will show that for Bavinck the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the church is invisible, but actual. Bavinck, for instance, says: “[the Holy Spirit] applies all Christ’s benefits, to each in his measure, at his time, according to his order. He does not stop his activity before he has made the fullness of Christ to dwell in his church and the church has reached maturity.”³⁶ Bavinck’s view that the applicational work of the Holy Spirit in the church is not abstract but actual, is connected to his realistic understanding of the invisible church. That is, the invisible or “spiritual” church is not a heavenly entity (the church triumphant) but the concrete church on earth. The distinction does not direct us to “two churches but two sides [visible and invisible] of one and the same church.”³⁷ Bavinck addresses the charge of “Platonism” directly: “the church is not a platonic ideal, not an idea without a corresponding reality, but consists concretely in people who are alive and have by faith obtained the forgiveness of sins.”³⁸

Bavinck’s soteriology and ecclesiology from the perspective of pneumatology has been examined recently by two scholars: Hans Burger and James Eglinton.³⁹ Their works

³⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

³⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

³⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

³⁹ Hans Burger, *Being in Christ: A Biblical and Systematic Investigation in a Reformed Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 87–139; James Perman Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck’s Organic Motif* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 183–203.

show some continuity with earlier studies by Eugene Heideman⁴⁰ and Cornelis Veenhof.⁴¹

However, although Heideman did pay attention to the distinction between Christology and pneumatology, his study is limited by his focus on the relation between reason and revelation. Furthermore, although Veenhof does mention the difference between Christology and pneumatology, the difference does not play a prominent role in his analysis of Bavinck's ecclesiology. Burger's and Eglinton's recent works, which do acknowledge and accent this distinction, are therefore important even though each treats this specific topic relatively briefly.⁴²

Burger accentuates and concretizes the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ especially with respect to Bavinck's view of the *unio mystica*. Arguing that Bavinck's understanding of "*unio mystica* with Christ through the Holy Spirit" needs to be thought of "in a more Trinitarian context," Burger states that for Bavinck "although the Son is the one who restores the relationship with God by his incarnation and work, there is no subjective union with Christ if not by the Holy Spirit, and so we have communion with none other than God himself who made himself known as loving

⁴⁰ Heideman, *The Relation of Revelation and Reason* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V., 1959). Heideman also makes use of Van Ruler's distinctions and judges that they fit Bavinck's understanding of the relation between reason and revelation (238–40).

⁴¹ C. Veenhof, *Volk Van God: Enkele aspecten van Bavincks kerkbeschouwing* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: N.V. Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1969). Veenhof's exposition of Bavinck's ecclesiology portrays the work of the Holy Spirit in harmony with human freedom, dignity, and participation by applying Christ's benefits, pouring out spiritual gifts, and anointing believers to activate the life and mission of the church (26–27, 47–48, 58–60, 64–65, 84, 99, 158, 165, 219–20, 255, 265–66, 276–77, 278–79).

⁴² Burger, *Being in Christ*, 87–139; Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 183–203.

Father.”⁴³ In this vein, Burger more precisely talks about Bavinck’s view of *unio mystica* from a trinitarian perspective as follows:

First, the *unio mystica* originates in the *pactum salutis*, in God’s eternal council. Second, the *unio mystica* is a theological concept that refers to the essence of religion: mystical union with God. To restore this mystical union is the aim of salvation. Thirdly, the mystical union is realized objectively in Christ as head and mediator, when he became man, died and rose again. The church suffered, was crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, glorified and seated in heaven together with Christ. Fourthly, the mystical union *has to be applied subjectively* through the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

Here it can be seen that Burger is emphasizing the distinction between the work of Christ which objectively accomplished salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit which subjectively has applied salvation.

Eglinton, in the last chapter of his book, *Trinity and Organism: Toward a New Reading of Bavinck’s Organic Motif* (2012), dealing with Bavinck’s ecclesiology, more directly accentuates characteristics of pneumatology that are distinctive from Christology. He states that “within the structural theology of *RD*, the concept of ‘church’ is read under the heading of Pneumatology” and that “within Bavinck’s triform structural theology, the church is (both literally and metaphorically) inconceivable without the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵ Salvation is a trinitarian reality “planned by the Father and accomplished by the Son..., applied by the Spirit.”⁴⁶

⁴³ Burger, *Being in Christ*, 107.

⁴⁴ Burger, *Being in Christ*, 107. (emphasis added)

⁴⁵ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 184.

⁴⁶ Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism*, 184.

This emphasis on the distinct work of the Holy Spirit in Bavinck's theology contrasts with that of two other scholars, Lewis Smedes and M. E. Brinkman, who minimize the distinction between Christology and pneumatology.⁴⁷

Smedes's minimization of the distinction between Christology and pneumatology arises from his understanding of this statement from Bavinck: "Christ 'has Himself become Spirit. Through his passion and death, He has made the Spirit of the Father and Son His own Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. He gives His Spirit as He wills, even as the Spirit takes all that He has to offer from Christ.'" ⁴⁸ Smedes concludes that "the Spirit *is* Christ" at work in our church and history because "the Spirit, since the crucial events of the cross and resurrection, was the Spirit of Christ – not merely an independent emissary, but Christ Himself in action."⁴⁹ Although Smedes makes some distinction between the Holy Spirit and Christ, his equation of the Holy Spirit with the exalted Christ is so strong that he is hard pressed to keep any distinction between them after Christ's resurrection and ascension. This is especially shown in Smedes' statement that "He [the risen Lord] was at

⁴⁷ Lewis B. Smedes, "Christ and the Spirit," in *All Things Made New: A Theology of Man's Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 43–77; M. E. Brinkman, "Pluraliteit in de leer van de kerk? (Een analyse en evaluatie van enkele kernpunten uit de ekklesiologie van Bavinck, van Ruler, Barth en Rahner)," in J. M. Vlijm, ed., *Geloofsmanieren: Studies over pluraliteit in de kerk* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1981), 127–38.

⁴⁸ Smedes, "Christ and the Spirit," 75. Cf. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1928), 4:113–14; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:122. The original Dutch text of Bavinck's statement is as follows: "Hij (Christus) is zelf Geest geworden, Hij heeft door zijn lijden en sterven den Geest des Vaders en des Zoons ook gemaakt tot zijn Geest, tot den Geest van Christus, en deelt dien daarom uit, gelijkerwijs Hij wil, terwijl die Geest zelf alles uit Christus neemt." Bavinck's statement is connected especially to his exposition of "a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17)" and of "the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 5:5; 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 5:18)." See Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:50. Cf. *ibid.*, 4:62, 79–80, 87, 89–90, 98, 122–23, 125, 214, 250–51, 460, 577, 660.

⁴⁹ Smedes, "Christ and the Spirit," 76–77. (emphasis added) Here Smedes appealed to Bavinck *and* Barth for his arguments.

work *as Spirit* [after His resurrection and ascension].”⁵⁰ It is of course true that Smedes could also appeal to the apostle Paul’s statement “the Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17). There is not only continuity between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit (e.g., John 16) but Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11). The question here is only whether in emphasizing the continuity between Christ’s work and the work of the Spirit, Smedes also acknowledges the distinctive work of each. To explore this point we will compare Smedes’s treatment of 1 Corinthians 15:45 – “So it is written: ‘the first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit” – with Sinclair B. Ferguson’s treatment of it.⁵¹ Ferguson examines the same statement from Bavinck that Smedes did and says that examples of “the clearest hint” of Bavinck’s identification of the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit “are found in John’s Gospel, particularly in the farewell discourse.”⁵² “There, however, the identification is underlined to assure the disciples that the ministry of the Spirit stands in total continuity with that of the Son.”⁵³ The identification of Christ and the Spirit indicates that the Holy Spirit “is the one who ‘takes what belongs to Jesus’ ([John] 16:14).”⁵⁴ Furthermore, when Jesus says,

⁵⁰ Smedes, “Christ and the Spirit,” 76. (emphasis added)

⁵¹ See Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 55–56. Also, compare it with John Murray’s exposition of the Spirit of Christ. See John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015; originally published in 1955), 176–77.

⁵² Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 56.

⁵³ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 56. Regarding this identification of ministries, Ferguson precisely explains: “Like Jesus, the Paraclete is sent by the Father and comes from the Father, Jesus is the truth, the Paraclete is the Spirit of truth who leads Christians into the truth (Jn. 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:13); Jesus is the teacher of his disciples (14:23, 26); the Paraclete comes to teach them further. Jesus is the witness God has sent; the Paraclete is sent into the world to be a witness (18:37; 15:26). The world does not know or accept Jesus (5:43; 12:48); nor does the world recognize the Paraclete (14:17).” *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁴ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 56.

“I will come [back] to you” (John 14:18), it means that he comes “in the gift of the Spirit.”⁵⁵ Ferguson adds, “So complete is the union between Jesus and the Paraclete that the coming of the latter is the coming of Jesus himself *in* the Spirit.”⁵⁶ Here we need to take note of the difference between Smedes’s expression, “Christ...*as* the Spirit” and Ferguson’s expression, “Christ...*in* the Spirit.” Ferguson’s formulation sounds to a distinction on Bavinck’s part between pneumatology and Christology combined with an intimate connection between them.

Meanwhile, M. E. Brinkman, when treating Bavinck’s ecclesiology, looks at it from a strictly christological point of view – as the mystical body of Christ – and does not mention the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ This might have been significant had not Brinkman treated Van Ruler’s ecclesiology from a christological point of view. By contrast, Brinkman treats Van Ruler’s ecclesiology from a pneumatological rather than a christological perspective.⁵⁸

We are left therefore with a treatment of Bavinck’s soteriology from a pneumatologically christological perspective (Smedes) and one that emphasizes the distinctively pneumatological perspective (Burger). Similarly, we remain with a treatment of Bavinck’s ecclesiology from a primarily christological point of view (Brinkman) and one from a trinitarian/pneumatological perspective (Eglinton).

⁵⁵ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 56.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 56. (emphasis added)

⁵⁷ Brinkman, “Pluraliteit in de leer van de kerk?,” 127–38.

⁵⁸ Brinkman states: “De kerk is voor Van Ruler geen christologische grootheid, maar een pneumatologische.” Brinkman, “Pluraliteit in de leer van de kerk?,” 138, 163.

Our project is to examine Bavinck's soteriology and ecclesiology, to discern his treatment of the distinctive ministries of Christ and the Spirit. From this we will use Bavinck's pneumatology to address the two critiques against the Reformed tradition, namely fatalism in soteriology and Platonic dualism in ecclesiology.

This dissertation will show that by making a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, Bavinck's pneumatology offers a credible refutation to these two charges.

Specifically, this dissertation will seek to show that Bavinck's clear distinction between the objective acquisition of salvation by Christ and the subjective application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit demonstrates that this applicational work of the Holy Spirit is never compulsory but always persuasive and operates in and through human nature without overruling it. The way in which the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ is thus entirely compatible with human freedom and dignity. Moreover, it will also seek to show that the invisible but actual and continuing application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit is for Bavinck the key to realistically understanding the invisible church by which he signifies the spiritual essence of the church and the spiritual nature of the marks and attributes of the (true) church.

The significance of this research has many dimensions. In a broad sense, Bavinck's pneumatology, especially with respect to the application of salvation, could serve as a helpful resource for contemporary discussions in soteriology and ecclesiology. In particular, his pneumatology, with respect to soteriology, sorts out the thorny questions arising from a perceived tension between God's sovereignty and human responsibility, between God's counsel and decree on the one hand, and the active subjective response of

humans on the other. Bavinck's pneumatology also helps us today to avoid some of the pitfalls in these ecclesiological discussions, such as blurring the distinction between the church and the world (universalism), falling into fatalistic quietism or voluntarist activism, overemphasizing either the individual, personal faith of believers or their corporate communal identity, seeing the church only as means or goal, or stressing either the church's unity or its diversity. And Bavinck's understanding of the church's essence as the *body of Christ* in *mystical union* with its Lord remains a constructive contribution to contemporary ecclesiology.

1.4 Proposed Method and Outline

The method we will follow in this study is first to clarify and specify the key differences between the christological and pneumatological perspectives, and then examine Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant to show how he makes use of this distinction. With this evidence in hand we will consider the two charges against Reformed soteriology and ecclesiology respectively, namely fatalism and Platonic dualism. We will unfold and use Arnold Van Ruler's distinction between the christological and pneumatological perspectives as a basis and heuristic device for expounding Bavinck. The outline of our study is as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the question, surveys the scholarship, and states the thesis, method, and outline. Chapter 2 explains and defends Van Ruler's distinction between pneumatology and Christology in order to justify our using it to help explain Bavinck. Chapter 3 follows Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant, showing that Bavinck clearly distinguishes the work of the Holy Spirit from the work of Christ. Chapter 4 uses the material from chapter 3 as a *basis* for concretely responding to the criticism of fatalism in soteriology. Chapter 5 uses the material for responding to the

criticism of Platonic dualism in ecclesiology. Some of the contents of chapter 3 will be a direct or an indirect response to these two criticisms. Chapter 4 will treat Bavinck's view of regeneration, conversion, faith, justification, and sanctification from a pneumatological perspective. The focus will be on the work of the Holy Spirit in and through human nature, freedom, and responsibility. Chapter 5 will treat Bavinck's realistic understanding of the invisible church, the spiritual essence of the church, etc. from a pneumatological point of view.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISTINGUISHING PNEUMATOLOGY FROM CHRISTOLOGY

Because this dissertation sets out to demonstrate that a proper pneumatology – distinct from Christology – is the key to satisfactorily addressing the objections that Reformed soteriology is fatalistic and its ecclesiology dualistic, we need to examine the distinction between the two perspectives more closely. To do this, we are relying on the work of the Dutch Reformed theologian Arnold A. Van Ruler, particularly his essay, “Structural Differences between the christological and Pneumatological Perspectives.”¹ We are aware of the risk of possibly imposing an alien framework on Bavinck’s thought. The degree to which Van Ruler’s distinction helps us to interpret Bavinck better remains to be demonstrated in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. This chapter is an exposition and defense of Van Ruler’s distinction as a justification for using it to help explain Bavinck.

2.1 Spirit or spirit? Structural Differences

Karl Barth (1886–1968) expressed a willingness to give the Holy Spirit greater place in his thought but also articulated what he saw as the danger of a relatively independent pneumatology: “I personally think that a theology of the Spirit might be all right after A.D. 2000, but now we are still too close to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is

¹ Arnold A. Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays toward a Public Theology*, Toronto Studies in Theology, No. 38, trans. John Bolt (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 27–46, cf., Van Ruler, “Grammar of a Pneumatology,” *ibid.*, 47–87.

still too difficult to distinguish between God’s Spirit and man’s spirit.”² But, the task of distinguishing between “God’s Spirit and man’s spirit” arises directly from the challenge of translating *πνεῦμα* in many New Testament passages. Does a particular instance of *πνεῦμα* refer to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit? Recently Gordon D. Fee, in his magisterial work on the Holy Spirit in the Pauline letters, handled this by maintaining the ambiguity of the Greek original and translating *πνεῦμα* as “S/spirit” (the Spirit of God/the human spirit) in those passages. Fee states the following as the reason for translating *πνεῦμα* as “S/spirit” in Romans 1:9: “But when Paul elsewhere refers to his *πνεῦμα* in the context of ‘spiritual’ life (1 Cor. 14:14–15; 1 Cor. 5:4), he intends something like the present translation. He does indeed serve God with his own spirit; but he does so, as always, because his spirit is yielded to the Spirit of God. Just as the Spirit prays or sings through his own spirit (1 Cor. 14:15), so also the Spirit is the source of Paul’s serving God through his spirit. Thus, ‘whom I serve with my S/spirit’ [Romans 1:9].”³ There is a unity as well as a distinction here; the human spirit is not the same as the Holy Spirit but the former is a gift of the latter, cannot exist without it and is wholly dependent on it. The human spirit is thus in the closest relation with the Spirit of God.⁴ Van Ruler’s distinction between the christological and pneumatological perspectives preserves this important unity in duality. Van Ruler’s theology of the Holy Spirit is marked by three key ideas: (a) The *relative* independence of pneumatology as part of a trinitarian theology; (b) the

² Karl Barth, *Karl Barth’s Table Talk*, ed. John Godsey (Richmond, John Knox Press, n.d.), 28.

³ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 484–86.

⁴ Paul Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” *Reformed Review*, XXVI, no. 2 (Winter, 1973): 134.

notion of *theonomous reciprocity*; and (c) mystical union with Christ is for the sake of the kingdom of God.

2.1.1 A Relatively Independent Pneumatology Based on a Trinitarian Theology

Van Ruler explains why a relatively independent doctrine of the Holy Spirit is necessary, alongside the doctrine concerning Christ, as follows: “How do we understand the question how I, as an individual in the present, become a participant in the salvation God has accomplished in Christ?”⁵ What Christ has done for our salvation must be distinguished from the Holy Spirit’s work of applying it to believers. Christ’s work and the Spirit’s work are of course related but not identical. However, since a Christian understanding of God is trinitarian – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and not binitarian – Father and Son – not only must pneumatology be distinct and relatively independent of Christology, both need to be viewed in a trinitarian framework. None of the persons of the Trinity by themselves provides a perspective that should be absolutized. Christian theology must be trinitarian.⁶

For Van Ruler, this “relative independence” is not just true for the Holy Spirit but for all three persons of the Holy Trinity. In other words, “the persons of the trinity are not only related to one another [*op-elkaar-betrekken*] but are *distinct* from one another

⁵ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 47.

⁶ Van Ruler says: “One cannot argue for a pneumatological theology any more than for a Christological theology. To do so would be to absolutize a particular viewpoint. The only valid theology is a Trinitarian theology, that is to say, a kingdom theology. For this reason, pneumatology too has only a relative independence.” Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 47, translator’s note 1. Here we learn that the passage is a marginal note from Van Ruler himself, added by J. van de Guchte who translated the German sections (IV-VII) of “Grammar of a Pneumatology” into Dutch for Van Ruler’s Collected Works [A. A. Van Ruler, *Theologisch Werk*, 6 vols (Nijkerk: G.F. Callenbach, 1969–73), 6:9].

[*uitelkaar-houden*].”⁷ Therefore, “we cannot reduce theology to any of the persons but will also go back and forth from the one to the other, much as movement happens back and forth within God.”⁸

After posing the question about how a believer, “as an individual in the present, becomes a participant in the salvation God has accomplished in Christ,” Van Ruler states that “there are at least another eight considerations hidden in it.”⁹

1. Just as the benefits that Christ accomplished are great, our participation in these benefits by the Holy Spirit is great (acquisition versus application). It is only when we realize how great our lostness is that we can begin to grasp the “unbelievable and insurmountable great” work of God’s redemption in Christ (47). The church’s christological and trinitarian dogma arose from the greatness of Christ’s work of redemption *for us* and the application of that work by the Holy Spirit *in us*. Only God can redeem us and save us. There is a difference between the *acquiring* of salvation by Jesus Christ and the *application* of salvation by the Holy Spirit. According to Van Ruler, “it is precisely the greatness of Christ’s benefits (*beneficia Christi*) that produced the dogma of the divinity and consubstantiality (*homoousia*) of the Son who accomplished this in his flesh” (47-48). But there is more. Participation in the benefits of Christ is something equally great. Therefore, the application of Christ’s benefits to us by the Holy Spirit leads

⁷ Jacob Jan Rebel, *Pastoraat in pneumatologisch perspectief een theologische verantwoording vanuit het denken van A. A. van Ruler* (Kampen, J.H. Kok, 1981), 41–47.

⁸ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 46; Van Ruler, “De leer van de Drieëenheid,” *Elsevier’s weekblad*, May 26, 1956: 4.

⁹ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 47; page numbers of material taken from this essay will be provided in the text in parentheses.

“directly to the dogma of the divinity and *homoousia* of the Holy Spirit” (48). “God himself was needed to truly redeem me” in terms of the redemptive ministry of Christ; “God himself is also needed that I become truly redeemed” in terms of the applicational ministry of the Holy Spirit (48).

2. Faith is not only a gift of God, but also an element in inner grace of the Holy Spirit (faith as a pneumatological reality). Neither the acquisition of salvation by Christ nor our incorporation into the fellowship of Christ’s body is up to us. By ourselves we are lost; we need a work of God to save us from our lostness. This is what Augustine taught the church: in our own capacity, we are bound to our own lostness rather than being led by a full desire for God, the good, salvation, or joy. And we can only remotely perceive the lostness (48). “If we are to come to faith, be in grafted into Christ, and participate in a real redemption from a real lostness,” then “a work of God in us is needed” (48). In this respect, faith is never simply our willing and acting, but “a gift of God” and also “an element in inward grace (*gratia interna*)” (48). Van Ruler’s point here is that this inward grace is “a pneumatological reality” that cannot be understood if we are thinking only in christological terms (48).

3. Our salvation has a subjective reality associated with pneumatological participation in salvation as well as an objective reality associated with the christological fulfillment of salvation (objectivity versus subjectivity). How a believer becomes a participant in the salvation earned by Christ, as an individual now, relates to the subjective aspect of salvation, distinct from the objective aspect of salvation. The objective reality of our redemption is accomplished by Christ. But this is not the complete picture. In Calvin’s words, “as long as Christ remains outside of us,” everything

he has done for the salvation of the human race remains unworthy for us. Therefore, “he had to become ours and to dwell within us” in order to share all of his benefits with us (*Institute*, III. i. 1). Therefore our questions about salvation need to be considered again from a pneumatological perspective after they have been considered in a christological framework (49).

4. The atonement of Christ before God’s eyes needs to be unveiled before our eyes through the work of the Holy Spirit (before God’s eyes versus before human eyes). In Anselm’s view, according to Van Ruler, the atoning of guilt “takes place not before our eyes, but before God’s” and thus it “is directed toward God” (49).¹⁰ Van Ruler states that from Anselm’s perspective “as long as the heart of the salvation in Christ is only apparent to God’s eyes, then what happened in Christ, in his cross and resurrection, still needs to be unveiled before our eyes” (49). For Van Ruler, this is why we, based on Anselm’s point of view, should not only place “such emphasis upon the atonement in the sacrifice of Golgotha,” but also treat “pneumatology with such utmost seriousness” (49–50). This is also the gateway to thinking in a fully trinitarian and therefore fully catholic way (50).

5. Atonement is christological, whereas justification is pneumatological (atonement versus justification). Thinking in this way (i.e., in a complementary pneumatological way) also helps us avoid the pitfall of identifying atonement with justification. Van Ruler calls

¹⁰ Van Ruler’s assertion that in Anselm’s view the atonement occurs “before” God could be explained as follows: For Anselm, the satisfaction is made to God as Trinity by the death of Christ the God-man. What is important about our discussion here is that the atonement by the death of Christ takes place “before” God (cf. Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, book 1, ch. ii). Still, most of what Anselm says about the satisfaction references the Son being obedient to the Father. For instance, Anselm states: “Then that Man owed this obedience to God the Father, and his manhood owed it to his divinity, and the Father required this from him” (Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, book 1, ch. ix). What is noteworthy here is that for Anselm, this obedience of Christ is also done “before” God and given to God.

this an “unholy confusion” (50). His point is that the imputation of Christ’s benefits to the believer is a distinct work of God the Holy Spirit. It is in fact the Spirit’s proper work. Imputation did not take place at Golgotha but takes place in the present through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (50). “It is done to me and for me and in me, also in the shaping of my conscience or, at any rate, in the shaping of my heart and consciousness. This work is directed particularly to individual persons” (50). This pneumatological view of justification corresponds to the Apostle’s Creed as follows: “the article concerning forgiveness of sins is not found in the second, christological part of the Apostle’s Creed, but in the third part, the pneumatological” (50).

6. The redemption of Christ that has been done on our behalf applies to us as a form of reciprocity in the Holy Spirit between God and us (substitution versus reciprocity). The doctrine of justification in Protestant terms (for example, in the debate with Trent) leaves no room for human contribution or cooperation. Christ is our *substitute*. But this category does not work in pneumatology because we ourselves participate in our salvation. Now, Van Ruler suggests that terms like “indwelling,” “reciprocity,” and “participation” describe the Holy Spirit’s work in us (50). According to Van Ruler, the indwelling Holy Spirit works by *persuasion*, which means that the reciprocity between God and the believer is significant. Because of this reciprocity in the persuasive nature of the work of the Holy Spirit, for Van Ruler, it is necessary to speak of a *passive* as well as an active justification. In an active justification of God (*iustificatio Dei activa*) “it is God who declares me to be a sinner and justifies me as such”; while in a passive justification of God (*iustificatio Dei passiva*) “I give my assent to God’s judgment” (51). “Furthermore, the latter is the form in which the former is executed” (51).

7. The reciprocity between God and us in the Holy Spirit is the reciprocity that God initiates (theonomous reciprocity). Lest there be any misunderstanding, while this reciprocity is real and involves both God and the believer, they are not equal partners. The initiative and priority are God's; that is why Van Ruler calls this "theonomous reciprocity" (51). "Nevertheless," for Van Ruler, "a theonomous reciprocity is still a genuine reciprocity" (35, 51). Here is how Van Ruler explains this with respect to faith. On the one hand "faith itself is the great gift of the Spirit," and on the other hand "the Spirit is only given to and in faith" (51). In this respect, it is necessary to speak of an identity in content with respect to the divine judgment and the human judgment. In the teaching and guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit, "we know, will, and do, what God knows, wills, and does" (51).

8. Communal union, as well as individual union between Christ and believers, is accomplished only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (the mystical union between Christ and the church through the indwelling Spirit). Distinguishing the christological perspective from the pneumatological is essential for ecclesiology. The church is the "body of Christ"; our salvation is communal as well as individual. We are incorporated into this body by the Holy Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit who dispenses gifts for the church's well-being and existence in history (50). Nonetheless this is not an ultimate and real goal; it is all for the sake of the kingdom of God (52–53). And it is the Spirit who leads the church into its calling in the kingdom of God (52). All of this flows from *unio mystica cum Christo*. And this "*unio mystica cum Christo* is only possible through the means of the indwelling Spirit (*inhabitatio Spiritus Sancti*)" (53).

2.1.2 Structural Differences between the Christological and the Pneumatological

In the previous section we provided an overview of Van Ruler's reasons for advocating a "relatively independent pneumatology." In this section we will provide a more systematic and structural explanation of the key differences between a christological and pneumatological viewpoint. Although it is lengthy, the opening paragraph of his essay serves as an excellent summary statement of his position:

It is necessary always to consider the Christian understanding of salvation and with it the relation between God and humanity – in a christological, soteriological sense – from two perspectives, the christological and pneumatological. Salvation is fully given in Christ, without qualification or reservation. But every new person is a new reality to whom salvation must first of all be mediated, secondly applied, and who, in the third place, must work it out. In short: Christ must be preached and Christ must be believed.¹¹

Van Ruler attempts to capture what is at stake in the distinction by forcing the christological hand, so to speak, and asking whether it is proper to speak of "a self-proclaiming Christ" (27). Van Ruler does not object to this notion, saying it "still sounds acceptable" (27). But since Christ must be *believed* as well as proclaimed, he startles us with the parallel notion of a "self-believing Christ" and concludes that with this idea "it is apparent that one is no longer speaking as a Christian (27). It is *we* who believe. That reality cannot be understood christologically (i.e., using the language of "substitution"). It is our faith and faith "is a gift and work of the Holy Spirit" (27).

Once again, Van Ruler takes pains to remind us that "of course, the christological always remains the background of the pneumatological. Without Jesus Christ and his

¹¹ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 27. Page references in the text are to this essay.

work there would be no outpouring or indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Messiah and the *Pneuma* are two gifts and acts of the same God” (28). It is the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who provides for and bring us our salvation. But this triune unity must not be allowed to mitigate the distinct persons and their activities. “The Son is not the Father, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. Redemption differs from creation, and sanctification from redemption. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a new and different act of God, distinct from incarnation” (28). This means, for Van Ruler, that there are dogmatic “structural differences” between Christology and pneumatology: “One cannot gratuitously derive the structure of pneumatological dogma from christological dogma” (28). As Van Ruler sorts out the structural characteristics of pneumatological dogma, he lists eight main ways it differs from christological dogma.

1. The Logos becomes flesh; the *Pneuma* unites God and individual persons (incarnation versus mystical union). Basic to all the structural differences between the christological and pneumatological perspectives is that the heart of the christological mystery is “personal or hypostatic union” (*unio personalis sive hypostatica*) (30). This is expressed in the traditional christological terms *enhypostasis* and *anhypostasis*.¹² The human nature assumed by the Logos is not that of a specific person; rather, the assumed human nature “finds its *hypostasis* in the *Logos* itself” (30). In Van Ruler’s colorful way of putting it: “A ‘Mr. Jesus’ never existed, but always and only ‘God-the-Son-in-human-flesh’” (30). The contrast with pneumatology could not be more stark. Here individual,

¹² “The terms *enhypostasis* (existence, subsistence) and *anhypostasis* (nonexistence, lacking in substance) refer to the christological teaching that the human nature of Christ has no existence on its own (it is *anhypostatic*) apart from its existence (*enhypostatic*) in the divine *Logos*.” Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 30, translator’s note 1; see further, Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, trans. Darrel L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 2:121–24.

personal human identity is crucial; the indwelling Holy Spirit effects a union between God and man in which God the Spirit remains God alone and never becomes incarnate, while the human person who is indwelt stays fully human and never becomes God (31).

2. The Logos assumes a human nature; the Pneuma indwells individual persons (assumption versus adoption). The focus in Christology “is on the human nature which is assumed by the *Logos* and taken up in the unity of his person” (32). In contrast, the focus in pneumatology “is not on the human nature but rather on the human person, on me and on you, on the many human persons and on their fellowship, in which the Spirit indwells. *He* dwells within *me* and within *us*. He and I are in no way one and the same but two distinct realities” (32). Even when the indwelling of the Holy Spirit “is coupled with regeneration, birth is always presupposed. This is not nullified or redone in regeneration” (32). In this respect, regeneration “is not a new creation (*nova creatio*) but a renewal of creation (*recreatio*)” (32). This emphasis on the human person in the work of the Holy Spirit indicates that “one must take individuality very seriously” in thinking through and speaking about salvation and the relationship between God and us (33). The issue here “is my personal participation in salvation. It is my heart, my life, my knowing, and willing that are affected” (33). “*Salvation* is thus not only the object of my faith, but *I* am, so to speak, also the object of salvation” (33–34). Furthermore, this “individualization is coupled with multiplicity. For this reason, communality and tradition are essential to our humanity, and the means by which salvation is appropriated are every bit as essential as the individual” (33).

3. The Messiah acts on our behalf; the Pneuma acts together with us (substitution versus reciprocity). “What is called substitution in christology, is called reciprocity in

pneumatology” (35). “In christology, no matter how one develops this further, the notion of substitution is of crucial significance throughout. What the Messiah does and is, he does and is in our place and for our benefit. As Messiah, he is the one who takes our place. The messiahship by definition is substitutionary” (34). However, in pneumatology, virtually nothing fits this idea. In the work of the Holy Spirit “it is always God the Holy Spirit who is active not only in us, but also, and more precisely, with us in the sense of ‘together with’ us” (34).

In this work of the Holy Spirit, we see the necessity and appropriateness of the substitution of Christ for us, allow this substitution for ourselves, and “allow the mediator to take our place” (35). “The result of this is that we must not only speak of God justifying us (*iustificatio Dei activa*), but also of our justifying God (*iustification Dei passiva*), precisely in God’s act of justifying us” (35). Then we “become aware of the truth of God’s declaration that we are sinners facing a righteous God, and that redemption is to be found in Christ resulting in our adoption as God’s children” (35). These statements imply: “there is also a human juncture in the process of salvation. In the human heart as well as on Golgotha, a decision must be made” (35).

4. Expiation refers only to the atoning sacrifice of Christ on our behalf; reconciliation refers to a sacrifice of reconciliation in the applicational work of the Holy Spirit (*expiatio* versus *reconciliatio*). The structural difference between the christological and the pneumatological perspective with respect to sacrifice is to be found “in the distinction between *expiatio* and *placatio* on the one hand, and *reconciliatio*, *sanctificatio*, and *glorificatio* on the other” rather than “in the distinction between atonement and gratitude [as our offering of thanksgiving in existence and worship]” (37). This is because

expiatio and *placatio* only apply to the strict situation of substitution with regard to only one atoning sacrifice of Christ; while the present and eschatological occurrence of a certain reconciliation apply to a sacrificial offering of reconciliation, sanctification, and glorification in the Lord Supper, in the liturgy, and in the Christian life through the applicational work of the Holy Spirit (37). From this point of view, “gratitude is ... to be seen merely as an element in sanctification” (37).

5. The incarnated Christ dwelt temporarily on earth; the poured-out Holy Spirit continues to dwell on earth since Pentecost (temporary versus ongoing) – this leads to kingdom later. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a singular event in salvation history has “its once-for-all (*eph hapax*) character,” as do the incarnation, the atoning sacrifice of Golgotha, the resurrection, and the ascension (38). “Nonetheless, the *eph hapax* of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring manifests a totally different structure and significance than the *eph hapax* of the atonement. There is no corresponding ascent (*anabasis*) to this descent (*katabasis*) of the Spirit as there was in the case of Jesus Christ” (38). The poured-out Holy Spirit “remains dwelling on earth after Pentecost, particularly in the church. There is a continuity in this once-for-allness which is also found in the church, in its tradition, and in the historical, apostolic, mission activity” (38). In this respect, we need to try to interpret the church, tradition, and the historical process as divine realities pneumatologically, namely as “acts of God the Holy Spirit” rather than to interpret them christologically, for example, as a continuation of the incarnation (38).

6. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in and with us avoids deification of the creature and respects both God’s self-identity and our human identity (indwelling not divinization). “In order to express the continuity of the *eph hapax* of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring, we

are involuntarily led to the idea of indwelling” (39). God the Holy Spirit, the triune God in the mode of the Spirit “dwells in and with us;” “we are a dwelling place of God, in the Spirit” (39–40). Only in this formula can we posit “a deeper and more intimate union [or relationship] between God and humanity,” that respects both God’s self-identity and our human identity and thus does not fall into “a divinization of the creature” (39–40). This point is significant since “if the creature should become God, then all the music of the relationship is lost” (39–40).

7. The christological mystery is that God the Son took the human nature; the pneumatological mystery is that God the Holy Spirit touches a person’s whole personality and existence (assumption versus touch). Paralleling the christological mystery of the incarnation (assumption of human nature), Van Ruler speaks of “touching” or “encounter” as the pneumatological mystery. “To encounter, be touched, is to be enlightened, convicted, liberated. All of this affects the whole person. It touches a person’s understanding, will, heart, selfhood, and very being” (41).

8. The grace of the Holy Spirit permeates and transforms human nature and existence (grace transforms us). The Holy Spirit “touches us and turns our very being around. In doing this he also accomplishes something. Grace becomes infused in us (*gratia infusa*)” (41–42). Van Ruler explains the Spirit’s work relating grace to nature using the category of “mixture or blending” (42). The divine salvation in Jesus Christ becomes mixed “with created and fallen human existence” (42). In this way “Christ takes form (*gestalte*)” not only “in us” but also “through us” (42).

To complete this overview, let us take note of some additional but minor differences.

→ Perfection is necessary in Christology, but a heresy in pneumatology (43).

- In the Spirit we experience the world eschatologically (45).
- The Spirit directs us to Christ but not exclusively; we are also oriented to the eternal kingdom and its glory (46).
- Christ's work was especially directed toward guilt; the Spirit's to the renewal of creation.
- Christ's work is completed; the Spirit's is provisional (46).

2.1.3 Theonomous Reciprocity

We have already introduced the idea of “theonomous reciprocity” as Van Ruler’s pneumatological contrast to the christological term “substitution.” Unlike Christ’s work which is done by a mediator who stands *in our place* and who, *on our behalf*, gives his life as an atoning *expiation* for our sins, the category of substitution completely fails in pneumatology. We can say “Christ died for me,” but such language is intolerable in pneumatology: “One surely cannot say that the Spirit in us prays in our place, or believes in our place, or confesses in our place, or does good works in our place” (34). *I* must believe. “The Spirit witnesses to our spirit, but he also witnesses with our spirit” (34).

Van Ruler characterizes this relation between the Holy Spirit and our spirit with the term “theonomous reciprocity.” The qualifying adjective is very important: in theonomous reciprocity “it is the Spirit that does and gives everything. It is the Spirit, for example, who sets our will free so that we can obtain a truly free will” (35). At the same time – and this is crucial for our response to the accusation that Reformed soteriology is deterministic – Van Ruler insists: “Nevertheless, a theonomous reciprocity is still a genuine *reciprocity*. The chief characteristic of the Holy Spirit’s work is that it sets us to work” (35). In other words, “in the application of salvation, it is I who have salvation

applied to me by the Spirit and in the Spirit, in order that it fully becomes my salvation. Everything hinges on this happening. God's cause must truly become my cause; I repeat God's words as truly mine. That this result takes place is the essence, or, at any rate, the goal of the Spirit's activity!" (73). The most obvious biblical support for Van Ruler's concept of theonomous reciprocity "may be Romans 8:16: αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συναρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ."¹³

In this vein, a pneumatological perspective on justification helps clarify the long-standing debate in Reformation circles about active and passive justification. We must speak, says Van Ruler, "not only...of God justifying us (*iustificatio Dei activa*), but also of our justifying God (*iustificatio Dei passiva*), precisely in God's act of justifying us. We then become aware of the truth of God's declaration that we are sinners facing a righteous God, and that redemption is to be found in Christ resulting in our adoption as God's children" (35). We find our salvation in hearing God's declaration that we are sinners and that in Christ we are saved and we respond in faith by confessing that God's judgment about us is true. We acknowledge God's decision about us in Christ: but we also make Spirit-led decisions ourselves. A decision should be made not only on Golgotha but also in our human mind. In the Holy Spirit, "one allows human beings the freedom to become lost" (35).

We can also view this reciprocity via the category of *indwelling*.¹⁴ The indwelling Spirit "creates the evidence of salvation, the receptive autonomy of judgment, as the

¹³ John Bolt, "The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit: Sanctification, Sabbath Glory, Beauty," *Stulos Theological Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1 (May 1995): 6.

¹⁴ For Van Ruler, the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit is "the foundational notion in pneumatology." See Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 73; Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 53.

liberal (*vrijzinnige*) theologians love to say, or the personal ‘owning’ of salvation, as the theologians of experience (*bevindelijke theologen*) express it. It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that I, as a human being, become aware that salvation truly rests in Christ and, for this reason, I assent to it, experience it, and confess it” (50–51). Inasmuch as “this *persuasio* is one of the essential elements in the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*, “there exists, pneumatologically, an essential and complete reciprocity between God and man” (51). For Van Ruler, this same reciprocity applies also to the relationship between the gift of faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit (51). The distinctive character of the Holy Spirit’s work is also the key here. Van Ruler states: “On the one hand, the Holy Spirit is only given to and in faith. On the other hand, faith itself is the great gift of the Spirit. In this reciprocal relationship between God and us, there is a decided priority given to God; it is a theonomous reciprocity” (51). But, for Van Ruler, that does not say everything: “At the same time, however, it is necessary to speak of an identity of content with respect to the human judgment and the divine judgment. In the Spirit, we know, will, and do, what God knows, wills, and does” (51). These arguments imply that for Van Ruler faith is never coerced; it is a gift that enables us to accept God’s judgment of us.

Meanwhile, according to Van Ruler, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit involves not only individual Christians and the church but also culture or social structure. Van Ruler explains in detail this vast range of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit, God’s own self, dwells in us. But who is this ‘us’? It includes the human. I am the intended dwelling place of the Spirit.... It includes the church and Christian peoples.... And more, indwelling will include the generations, the structures of society, cultures, and the political shape of life. The kingdom, which comes in the power of the Spirit, extends

to peoples, nations, and cultures.”¹⁵ Van Ruler’s understanding of the extent of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling implies the fact that his pneumatology is directly linked to his understanding of the kingdom of God (which is distinguished from the church and encompasses all domains of the world).

2.1.4 Pneumatology as “Theonomous Reciprocity” and Kingdom Theology

Earlier in this chapter we summarized Van Ruler’s considerations for why Christian theology requires a pneumatology that is “relatively independent” from Christology. The eighth consideration was that mystical union with Christ “is not the ultimate and real goal” of our salvation (52).¹⁶ Instead, according to Van Ruler, “the goal is the kingdom of God” (53). More specifically, “the goal is that we ourselves become images of God and experience this world as his kingdom” (39; cf. 52–53). That is what the Holy Spirit, who is poured out and dwells with and in us, does to us (39). In this vein, Van Ruler exposes the relationship between the kingdom of God and history from the perspective of trinitarian pneumatology. He argues: “As soon as one places an accent upon the work of the Holy Spirit, the Christian faith is no longer bound to the evangelical and biblical history, but also includes church history and the history of missions. Christian confession then inevitably begins to display historical aspects, and theology begins to approach the other sciences and philosophy” (97–98). For in pneumatology the concern is not the divine and the human nature of Jesus Christ, “but the salvation wrought by the God-man as mediator on the one hand, and our fallen and to-be-redeemed existence on the other

¹⁵ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 73; also see Paul Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence: An Inquiry into the Theology of F. D. E. Schleiermacher and A. A. Van Ruler with Questions for America*, thesis, Rijksuniversiteit, Utrecht, published by Paul Roy Fries, 1979, 105; Van Ruler, *Theologisch werk*, 1:185. Cf. Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 54.

¹⁶ The numbers in parentheses are the pages of Van Ruler’s *Calvinist Trinitarianism*.

hand” (217). The Holy Spirit establishes the connection between these two “by way of application and appropriation” (217). In the same vein, Van Ruler asserts that “if we are properly to understand the connection between the [eschatological] kingdom of God and history, it is imperative that we observe that, in the biblical testimony about the kingdom, there is a tendency toward expansion (*uitbreiding*) that surrounds the eternal point of calling and election in temporal reality” (98). For in the kingdom of God, everything related to human individual and communal earthly existence in time is of interest. And “preaching, *kerugma*, confession, and faith are simply means to reach that goal” (225).

According to Van Ruler, from the point of view of this pneumatological expansion or extension of the kingdom of God in the world or history, the meaning of the world is “the theater of God’s glory (*theatrum gloriae Dei* – Calvin),” which “reminds us that the meaning and the purpose of all things is that God’s name be hallowed, that his kingdom be established, and that his will be done also on earth” (226). And all things in the world eschatologically have been and are becoming brought “*again* under *one* head” (226). Van Ruler further explains the nature of this pneumatological extension or expansion of God’s kingdom in terms of the realization of salvation: “The salvation which is given us by way of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ... is realized historically in the apostolic and missionary process of christianization from age to age, and from nation to nation” (226). This salvation is realized as such, though there are constant shifts and failures that coexist and “God’s kingdom ever remains a torso, fragmentary, caught up in mixture and contradiction” (226).

These arguments show that Van Ruler’s trinitarian pneumatology insists that not only the messianic ministry of the Son, but the creation ministry of the Father be taken

with utmost seriousness.¹⁷ And this is connected to his understanding of “the pneumatological expansion by which messianic salvation fills the earth,” as we have seen above.¹⁸ Here the pneumatological expansion, in more detail, means that “the Spirit fills existence with messianic redemption, the eschaton arches into the present, existence becomes historical, the law of God takes form in the affairs of men, creation is restored – in short, God brings his messianic salvation to the earth through the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹ In this current of the pneumatic expansion of the messianic salvation, namely, in giving earthly expression to the eschatological kingdom, not only proclamation of the gospel, sacrament, and office are considered as instruments of the Holy Spirit, but also tradition and history, civil law and state, individual and community, etc., are taken for such ministry of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Though already implied in the discussion so far, we here need to pay attention to the fact that for Van Ruler, the church and the kingdom of God “are not identical” (108).²¹ The latter “is a more comprehensive reality than” the former (108). The kingdom of God “clearly has an ecclesiastical form which comes to expression in many ways: in preaching and sacraments, in office (*Amt*) and liturgy, in confession (*Bekennntnis*) and in

¹⁷ Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” 125.

¹⁸ Paul Fries says: “When one’s theology is truly Trinitarian, e.g., when it is constructed from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, then, according to Van Ruler, one must not only speak of the Holy Spirit, but understand the pneumatological ‘expansion’ by which messianic salvation fills the earth. The Trinitarian theologian traces the structure of God’s salvation of the earth; he relates God’s multifaceted revelation to the myriad forms of existence.” Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” 125.

¹⁹ Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” 125; cf. Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 98–99, 216–17, 223–24.

²⁰ Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” 125; cf. Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 108–9.

²¹ Numbers in parentheses indicate pages of Van Ruler’s *Calvinist Trinitarianism*.

fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*)” (108–9). It “also has other forms” in “the whole world and ... all reality” which exist “as genuine reality before the face of God” (109). According to Van Ruler, the kingdom “did not only have this cosmic aspect, but also its human aspects. Coming forth from Jesus, the Spirit’s power purified human hearts and sanctified lives. Furthermore, the playful involvement of human beings with the world – culture in other words – was christianized, and political society and the state were liberated from the demonic. All of these – each in its own way – were incorporated into the Lordship of Jesus Christ” (109). In this diverse and dynamic way, “Jesus Christ took form in all these aspects of existence” (109). In other words, “the form of Christ (*Gestalt Christi*) became expressed in all these aspects” (109).

In this context, Van Ruler emphasizes not only that both the “representation of Christ (*repraesentatio Christi*)” and the “pneumatological real presence (*praesentia realis*) in the totality of human existence” are “the essence of christianizing” (109). But he also accentuates that “this real presence of Christ himself (*praesentia realis Christi ipsius*) is grounded in a new outgoing act of God, the sending and outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (109). “When one believes and lives *en Pneumati*, that is to say, in the Spirit, then Jesus Christ and God in Christ are present to us in a diversity of ways in our entire existence. Furthermore, that presence will vary in each of those forms while at the same time it always is a reality of the Spirit” (109). Through this pneumatological actual presence, Christ now “rules in the midst of his foes;” “the kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ” (110).

In this pneumatological respect, for Van Ruler, since the church knows about God in his particularity and strangeness,²² it “cannot avoid confronting the problem of recoinning all of human life according to” “the form (*morphè*) of Christ and his image (*eikōn*)” (111). The nature of this recoinage is “the form of a servant.” And the form of a servant “is the form of acknowledgment, of submission, of bearing the judgment as the judgment of God,” and “the form of saying yes to judgment and thus to the world which stands under judgment” (111). In other words, it is “the form of poverty, but a spiritual poverty; the form of lowliness, but a lowliness over against the high and glorious God; the form of hiddenness, but a hiddenness of salvation and the kingdom” (112). In this respect, for Van Ruler it “is just this servant form that is the humanity that is forever sought and now finally found” only “in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (112). “It is thus quite appropriate that in his deepest humiliation it was said about Jesus Christ: Behold, the man!” (112) “In this way and for this reason, Jesus is exalted. There is also the resurrected Christ and from that the incarnated Christ. And there is also the earthly Christ. The cross is the center of the gospel, but not its circumference. In the cross, all these other aspects and elements of the gospel are also contained. The crucified Christ is the *Lord!*” (112) According to Van Ruler, the Holy Spirit “does not exclude any of these aspects or elements. The Spirit

²² As to the nature of this particularity and strangeness, which has a special relationship with the form of God in Christ, Van Ruler states: “God enters [the world] in his particularity, in his own form, with his salvation and his righteousness. This entrance immediately confronts paganism, that is to say, the pagan experience of the world [In this respect,] [the] kingdom [of God] “took on the particular form of God’s presence in Israel. This particularity (*Besonderheit*) and strangeness (*Fremdheit*) of God are sharply intensified in Jesus Christ. He *is* a form of God. In him God is fully present outside of us (*extra nos*) and no longer in any way in us (*in nobis*). Now human existence, lived experience at any rate, is no longer a self-evident expression of God (*Ausdruck Gottes*). Life must be recoinced (*umgeprägt*) if it is to express God and be his image at all. One must ask whether God, in the way in which he is present in Christ, can ever be fully expressed. In Christ God has become fully embodied. His revelation has an historical character. The New Testament speaks of the form (*morphè*) of Christ and of his image (*eikōn*).” Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 111.

imprints the whole of Christ on the complete life of humanity. It is for this reason that the New Testament speaks of ‘conforming to Christ’, of ‘being changed into the likeness’. Christ’s image must therefore be imprinted on and received by us. Simply put, the New Testament speaks of the imitation of Christ (*Nachfolge Christi*)” (112). “In this way,” says Van Ruler, “the form of God in Christ, in its particularity, is imprinted on us and in us. In Christ, the kingdom of God is established on earth” (112).

However, here the following fact needs to be recalled that for Van Ruler this “*applicatio* of messianic salvation [by the Holy Spirit] is not to be understood as bringing a quantitative-ontological change in existence, but rather a qualitative-functional one.”²³ For the work of the Holy Spirit is not “the adding of some ‘things’ to existence, but in accordance with the concept suggested by the word *operatio*. Nothing new is added to existence, but in the *gratia interna* God himself (as God the Holy Spirit) is present and active in existence.”²⁴ This implies that in the application of messianic salvation by the Spirit “the essence of life is not changed. God the Holy Spirit unites with common life in all its forms to bring it a new order.”²⁵ In this sense, for Van Ruler, “salvation must not add to nor supercede creation, but rather restore it. Pneumatology serves to protect creation from any kind of ‘Christomonism’ which might threaten to eclipse created reality or to ground it in anything other than the will of the three-personed God.”²⁶

²³ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 100.

²⁴ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 100.

²⁵ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 100. This discussion summarized here regarding the nature of the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit is found in Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de wet, een dogmatische studie over de verhouding van openbaring en existentie* (Nijkerk, G.F. Callenbach, 1947), 216ff.

²⁶ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 100.

2.2 Evaluation of Van Ruler's Pneumatology

We intend to use Van Ruler's important distinction between the christological and pneumatological perspectives as a heuristic device for interpreting Herman Bavinck's pneumatology. Since heuristic techniques are exploratory and involve feedback as one goes along, the real proof of whether Bavinck's pneumatology is amenable to Van Ruler's distinction will be in our actual analysis of Bavinck.²⁷ Nonetheless, we do need to examine some of the positive as well as critical evaluations of Van Ruler and come to our own judgment.

On the one hand, Van Ruler's pneumatology has received favorable responses.²⁸ These friendly responses can be summarized in the words that he has embodied and developed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in a special and exquisite manner, while inheriting traditional pneumatology. For example, Paul Roy Fries states: Van Ruler "refines and develops the doctrine of the Spirit in a manner unique to modern theology There is no doubt that Van Ruler's theological genius is nowhere more apparent than in this area [in his pneumatology]. With Calvin, he may be described as the theologian of

²⁷ Merriam-Webster defines "heuristic" as follows: "involving or serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods · *heuristic* techniques · a *heuristic* assumption; also : of or relating to exploratory problem-solving techniques that utilize self-educating techniques (such as the evaluation of feedback) to improve performance · a *heuristic* computer program." Online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heuristic>.

²⁸ Regarding positive assessments on Van Ruler's pneumatology, see Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 98–114; "Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth," 125–26. Tjaard G. Hommes, "Sovereignty and saeculum: Arnold A. van Ruler's Theocratic Theology," (ThD thesis, Harvard University Divinity School, 1966), 371–86; Bolt, "The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit," 4–6; Allan J. Janssen, *Kingdom, Office and Church: A Study of A. A. van Ruler's Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Office* (Grand Rapids, MI / Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 71–76, 278–81.

the Holy Spirit par excellence.”²⁹ Furthermore, John Bolt argues that “Van Ruler has specified” the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit that leads, sanctifies, and perfects the creatures “more closely” than theologians such as Bavinck, Barth, and Kuyper have done.³⁰ In doing so, Van Ruler inherits and develops the theological tradition which “while insisting that the outgoing works of the triune God are indivisible (*opera ad extra indivisa sunt*), also speaks of an appropriation of distinct works to each person,” according to Bolt.³¹ With his positive evaluation of Van Ruler’s notion of ‘theonomous reciprocity’, Bolt also adds that “we need to go beyond Van Ruler’s somewhat formal though helpful categories and consider more precisely the nature of the Spirit’s work by means of the related notions of holiness/sanctification, Sabbath glory, and finally, beauty.”³²

On the other hand, Van Ruler’s pneumatology also has received criticism, especially from his contemporary theologians such as Hendrikus Berkhof (1914–1995), G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996), and W. H. Velema (1929–).³³ First, Berkhof and Berkouwer criticize Van Ruler for separating Christ and the Holy Spirit or setting them in opposition to each other at the expense of the true humanity or unique contribution of Christ. For instance, Berkhof, in *Christian Faith*, states that Van Ruler, in his own specific

²⁹ Fries, “Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth,” 125–26.

³⁰ Bolt, “The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit,” 2–4.

³¹ Bolt, “The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit,” 2.

³² Bolt, “The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit,” 6.

³³ Regarding negative assessments on Van Ruler’s pneumatology especially in relation to Christology, see W. H. Velema, *Confrontatie met Van Ruler: denken vanuit het einde* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962); R. Schippers, “Het Messiaanse Intermezzo by van Ruler,” *Bezinning*, 6de Jrg., no. 10 (October, 1951); G. C. Berkhouwer, *Het Werk van Christus* (Kampen, J. H. Kok, 1953), 240ff.; Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 326.

formulation of the relationship of the Spirit and the exalted Christ, “puts Christ and the Spirit over against each other in counterpoint fashion: *assumptio* over against *adoptio*, substitution over against reciprocity, etc.”³⁴ He also argues that “in our view this can be maintained only at the cost of the denial of Jesus’ true humanity.”³⁵ In the same vein, Berkouwer, especially in relation to Van Ruler’s notion of ‘pneumatological plus’, holds that Van Ruler “seeks to maintain the relative independence of the Holy Spirit. He does this at the expensive of the unique contribution of the Messiah, which, thus, can be described as an intermezzo.”³⁶ He also contends that “there is no reason to describe the application of the work of Christ in the individual and common life of man by the Holy Spirit, as separate dispensation” and that “this whole activity of the Holy Spirit is already comprised in and result of the atonement and the resurrection of Christ.”³⁷ These criticisms of Van Ruler’s pneumatology by Berkhof and Berkouwer are especially important when considering their influence in their era.³⁸

In a similar vein, focusing on Van Ruler’s distinction between Christology and *eschatology*, which is connected to his distinction between Christology and pneumatology, Velema argues that “Van Ruler wants to distinguish between the Messianic and the eschatological, but cannot sustain it, because the Messianic things

³⁴ Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, 326.

³⁵ Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, 326.

³⁶ Hommes, “Sovereignty and saeculum,” 385; Berkouwer *Het Werk van Christus*, 240ff.

³⁷ Hommes, “Sovereignty and saeculum,” 385; Berkouwer, *Het Werk van Christus*, 240ff.

³⁸ As to the influence of Berkouwer, Berkhof, and Van Ruler in their era, John Hesselink states: “In the area of systematic or dogmatic theology three names are especially prominent and influential today: G. C. Berkouwer, A. A. van Ruler, and H. Berkhof,” though from this “it should not be concluded...that these are the only theologians of significance in the Netherlands today.” John Hesselink, “Contemporary Protestant Dutch Theology,” *The Reformed Review: A Journal of the Seminaries of the Reformed Church in America*, (Winter 1973 vol. 26, no. 2), 78–79.

themselves are already eschatological, though it is in a particular way.”³⁹ For “the role of Christ is not completed at the time of his ascension.”⁴⁰ Velema also contends that “Van Ruler’s interest goes to the end and he chooses his starting point at the end” and that due to the way he relates the end to the center, “the center is relativized from the end.”⁴¹ “Van Ruler’s interest in the end and relativation of the center of history of salvation,” says Velema, “is the cause of the most infamous theologoumenon of the Messianic intermezzo.”⁴²

Van Ruler’s theology, however, has been defended precisely on these points. First of all, Tjaard G. Hommes provides a response to Berkouwer’s criticism of Van Ruler mentioned above with a focus on the meaning of ‘pneumatological plus’. He states that Berkouwer seems to identify “too exclusively the notion of ‘pneumatological plus’ with the work of the Spirit applying the fruits of the atonement to the life of ordinary man.”⁴³ However, says Hommes, Van Ruler “also has in mind that God exercises his kingship through the Holy Spirit in times previous to the incarnation” when he “speaks of the ‘pneumatological plus’.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, Van Ruler “speaks of this ‘plus’ in reference to the fact that the Messiah becomes what he is through the Holy Spirit,” according to

³⁹ W. H. Velema, *Confrontatie met Van Ruler: Denken vanuit het einde* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962), 45.

⁴⁰ Velema, *Confrontatie met Van Ruler*, 45.

⁴¹ Velema, *Confrontatie met Van Ruler*, 45.

⁴² Velema, *Confrontatie met Van Ruler*, 45.

⁴³ Hommes, “Sovereignty and saeculum,” 385–86.

⁴⁴ Hommes, “Sovereignty and saeculum,” 386.

Hommes.⁴⁵ As Hommes himself says, his interpretation is supported by Van Ruler's "suggestion that the order of dogmatics should perhaps be changed and pneumatology be dealt with before Christology."⁴⁶

From this point of view, "the real question which one then should ask is whether the greater inclusiveness ascribed here to the Holy Spirit is biblically and dogmatically justifiable." "It seems to us that there is reason to think so," according to Hommes.⁴⁷ However, he says, "We hasten to add, that it is van Ruler's intention to safeguard dogmatically the equality of the Son and the Spirit," which "then applies to the uniqueness of the work of the Son."⁴⁸ In this respect, he concludes that for Van Ruler the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit as "two modes of God's historical-eschatological acts" "are different from one another and not symmetrical, but in no way

⁴⁵ Hommes, "Sovereignty and saeculum," 386. With respect to the fact that for Van Ruler "the Messiah becomes what his is through the Holy Spirit," refer to Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 60. Here Van Ruler states: "Jesus Christ in his messianic role and his entire messianic work [including the incarnation] is equipped by the Holy Spirit. The servant of the Lord is anointed by the Spirit."

⁴⁶ Hommes, "Sovereignty and saeculum," 386. However, Van Ruler finally adopts the traditional order—Christology being addressed before pneumatology. But not before presenting these cogent reasons for a reversal of that customary sequence. With respect to these reasons, refer to Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 99. Here Fries states that for Van Ruler this greater inclusiveness attributed to this Spirit also includes the following aspect: "Although the messianic work is indispensable, it is encapsulated at a given point in time and space. Only through the Spirit is the capsule dissolved and messianic salvation enabled to flow into the nooks and crannies of existence. And since the kingdom is the goal, the pneumatological intermezzo is broader than and prior to the Christological. There are thus cogent reasons for reversing the traditional order. Van Ruler declines to do so, however, because it is not his purpose to enter into a radical revision of dogmatics, and because he fears developing an independent pneumatology which might jeopardize the Christic content of the Christian knowledge of God (Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 80–81; 184–85). Pneumatology may never be detached from Christology according to Van Ruler's theological method. At the same time, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is given an enormous expansion in this thinking."

⁴⁷ Hommes, "Sovereignty and saeculum," 386.

⁴⁸ Hommes, "Sovereignty and saeculum," 386.

mutually exclusive.”⁴⁹ With these statements, we think that Hommes is answering Berkouwer’s critique of Van Ruler as follows: (1) It is hard to say that Van Ruler’s notion of “pneumatological plus” based on his “relatively independent pneumatology” sacrifices or damages the uniqueness of the ministry of the Messiah. This is because his conception of the greater inclusiveness ascribed to the Holy Spirit is biblically and theologically valid and because he, in his exposition of “pneumatological plus” and “the relative independency of pneumatology,” dogmatically shields the equality of the Son and the Spirit which implies the uniqueness of the work of the Son; (2) Although Van Ruler is specific about the distinctiveness between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, he in no way separates them; (3) Although there is an inseparable relationship between pneumatology and Christology in Van Ruler’s theology, there is also a clear distinction between these two, on a biblical and dogmatic basis. For example, the atonement and the resurrection of Christ are foundational for salvation, while their application by the Holy Spirit is enormously expansive toward the completion of salvation, despite the inseparable relationship between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jan Veenhof also responds to this criticism of “pneumatological plus” in the soteriological aspect, especially from the perspective that this “pneumatological plus,” (or “pneumatological synergy”) relates to sanctification rather than justification and to “theonomous reciprocity” (between God and humans) associated with sanctification. He states that although Van Ruler was well aware of the controversial nature of the word “synergism” and the major role it played in the controversy between Rome and the

⁴⁹ Hommes, “Sovereignty and saeculum,” 386.

Reformation, he used the word “synergism” as a challenging expression.⁵⁰ In particular, Veenhof emphasizes that Van Ruler is talking about a pneumatological synergy that refers to sanctification and not to justification.⁵¹ He also states that for Van Ruler this pneumatological synergy associated with sanctification is a pneumatological reciprocity between God and humans. And it is theonomous reciprocity, because the Holy Spirit does and gives everything, for example, freeing our will, so that we get free will. At the same time, it is a genuine reciprocity since the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit is that it puts us to work.⁵² So, God’s work does not destroy humans’ own share. On the contrary, God’s work creates, supports, and carries humans’ own work. “The relationship between God and human is not 99%–1%, neither 50%–50% but 100%–100%. There is no question of any competitive relationship, a division of domain or division of tasks between God and human. Both work for the full 100%, but at different levels.”⁵³ In sum, Veenhof is saying that Van Ruler’s “pneumatological plus” soteriologically indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit has its own uniqueness especially with respect to a pneumatological reciprocity between God and humans, distinct from the uniqueness of the ministry of Christ.

Given this understanding of Van Ruler’s theonomous reciprocity in relation to his “pneumatological plus,” Dirk van Keulen’s argument for the similarity between Van Ruler’s concept of theonomous reciprocity and Berkouwer’s concept of correlation is

⁵⁰ Jan Veenhof, *De Kracht Die Hemel en Aarde Verbindt: De identiteit van de Geest van God als relatiestichter* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2016), 107–8; cf. A. A. van Ruler, *Verzameld Werk* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2011), 4-A:306, 517, 530.

⁵¹ Veenhof, *De Kracht Die Hemel en Aarde Verbindt*, 107.

⁵² Veenhof, *De Kracht Die Hemel en Aarde Verbindt*, 107.

⁵³ Veenhof, *De Kracht Die Hemel en Aarde Verbindt*, 107.

interesting and persuasive. Van Keulen states: “What Van Ruler understands under ‘theonomous reciprocity’ is in my opinion similar to what Berkouwer means in his speech about ‘correlation’. In that sense he seeks a middle course between subjectivism and objectivism, on the one hand, trying to do justice to human and emphasizing the priority of God. Berkouwer’s concept of correlation is therefore also essentially theonomous.”⁵⁴

Now here are Velema’s two criticisms of Van Ruler, which are interrelated: 1. The accusation that Van Ruler distinguishes the Messianic from the eschatological, a distinction that falls into a contradiction because the self of the Messiah is already eschatological in its particular way, and the ascended Christ continually rules the church and all things. 2. The accusation that Van Ruler’s interest in the end, choosing his start-point at the end (or God’s future), and the relativation of the center of salvation-history due to the way he relates the end to the center, is the cause of the most notorious theologoumenon, the Messianic intermezzo.

Here are defenses against Velema’s two criticisms by scholars such as Paul Roy Fries and Allan Janssen. Their answers to the first criticism can be summarized as follows: Fries says that for Van Ruler, the eschatological salvation that fills time is not through the Holy Spirit alone but “through the trinitarian acts of God.”⁵⁵ That is, fulfillment “is a fully trinitarian work and is thus also pneumatological.”⁵⁶ And, for Van Ruler, “one can make no antithesis between the messianic and the pneumatic” since “both the works of the Messiah and the Spirit are results of the decree of God and move from (and toward)

⁵⁴ Van Keulen, “Inleiding” in Van Ruler, *Verzameld Werk*, 4-A:83.

⁵⁵ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 87.

⁵⁶ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 87.

the eschatological kingdom of God.”⁵⁷ Rather, says Fries, “there is a congruence between the two.” “The fullness of time, occurring during the last days, is the time when existence is filled with messianic-pneumatological salvation and in which all things find their fulfillment.”⁵⁸ More specifically, Janssen states that, for Van Ruler, Christ is “the one who rules [the church and all things] as the ascended one, but who is present through the Spirit.”⁵⁹ In this respect, Van Ruler describes the work of the triune God in the eschaton: “God acts *in Christ through* (by means of) the Holy Spirit;”⁶⁰ or “God in Christ enters the *gestalts* of human existence through the Spirit.”⁶¹ Van Ruler’s understanding of this relationship between the ascended Christ and the Holy Spirit explains why he “defends the filioque clause, although without a high degree of enthusiasm.”⁶²

Their answers to the second criticism can be recapitulated as follows: Janssen states that for Van Ruler the kingdom of God is God’s ultimate intention. “It doesn’t simply embrace everything, but extends beyond the sum of all reality. For all things are subject to the actions of the God who is future and whose essence is Will.”⁶³ Said another way, the future definitely depends on the ultimate intentions of God and the actions of God on them. In this respect, the kingdom of God as the ultimate intention of God not only includes everything but also expands beyond *summa omnium rerum*. And this ultimate

⁵⁷ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 88.

⁵⁸ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 88.

⁵⁹ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 146, footnote 97; also see *ibid.*, 70–71.

⁶⁰ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 71.

⁶¹ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 55.

⁶² Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 101.

⁶³ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 48–49.

intention of God, this kingdom of God “is none other than creation experienced as that kingdom.”⁶⁴ These arguments imply that Van Ruler’s eschatological view makes salvation history a history of the restoration of creation according to God’s ultimate intention, but it is hard to say that his eschatological view relativizes the center of salvation history especially when we regard the atonement ministry of Christ not only as the center of salvation but also as a key means for the sake of the kingdom, God’s ultimate intention. These assertions also imply that although Van Ruler’s eschatological view is the cause of his theological term, “messianic intermezzo,” it is hard to think of the term and its meaning so negatively as to treat the term as “the most notorious theologoumenon.” In the same vein, Fries argues that “by speaking of emergency measures and intermezzos, Van Ruler is clearly not attempting to devalue the salvatory work of God in history.”⁶⁵ “There is no trace in Van Ruler’s writings of any interest in mitigating the significance of the means of salvation. His concern is rather to see things from the perspective of the beginning and the end.”⁶⁶ His concern is also to reject “the thought that the destination of reality would in any way include an elevation to a higher reality.”⁶⁷ In other words, he uses this term “intermezzo” to emphasize that the relation between the created reality and its destination “is not vertical but horizontal.”⁶⁸ Moreover, “Van Ruler’s Christology moves within the boundaries of the Reformed rendering of the Chalcedonian formulations concerning the *unio personalis* and the Anselmic doctrine of

⁶⁴ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 79.

⁶⁵ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 97.

⁶⁶ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 97–98.

⁶⁷ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 70.

⁶⁸ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 70.

satisfaction. Salvation is fully, uniquely and unconditionally given through Jesus Christ. This is the once and for all ground for the appropriation of salvation in ‘the last days’.⁶⁹ According to Janssen, another noteworthy fact here is that for Van Ruler, “the ‘intermezzo’ is characterized by the ascension of the incarnate Christ. Christ’s ascension is that of the rule of the living Christ.”⁷⁰ This reign is only through the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ Also, this reign is not the reign of Christ alone, but also the reign of God the Father. Expressed in a trinitarian way, “God acts [reigns] in Christ through (by means of) the Holy Spirit.”⁷² These contentions mean that for Van Ruler the messianic intermezzo does not ignore or devalue the continuous ministry of the ascended Christ and that the continued ministry of the ascended Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit are clearly distinguished and closely connected.

⁶⁹ Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 98. Another thing to remember here is that Van Ruler insists on pneumatic intermezzo as well as messianic intermezzo. That is, for Van Ruler, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit “too has its boundaries” though “the scope of the Spirit’s indwelling is vast indeed;” “in the eschaton there shall be no need for the indwelling of the Spirit.” Fries, *Religion and the Hope for a Truly Human Existence*, 105. This implies that for Van Ruler, as the pneumatic intermezzo does not devalue the importance of the Holy Spirit and His ministry, the messianic intermezzo does not devalue the importance of Christ and His ministry.

⁷⁰ Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 70.

⁷¹ In this sense, for Van Ruler, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. This is explained in detail in Van Ruler’s statement: “[T]he Spirit is ‘earned’ (*verworven*) by Jesus Christ ... [T]he Messiah is the one who brought the Spirit in the world, he is the one who, through his perseverance under God’s judgment, earned the Spirit and gives him to the world [T]he Spirit is messianic deed and gift, not only in this sense that God gives the Spirit in the kingdom of the Messiah, but also in this sense that the exalted Christ pours out and sends the Spirit; he baptizes with the Holy Spirit [T]he Spirit takes everything from Christ and proclaims it to us in order to glorify Jesus Christ. To summarize in word: the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. This means that the *Pneuma* proceeds from the Messiah and returns to him. It also means that the Messiah is given to us in order that the Spirit could be given. The Messiah is thus the means, and the Spirit the goal. In the notion of the glorification of Christ by the Spirit, the relation is exactly the reverse; the Spirit is the means, and the Messiah the goal.” Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 59.

⁷² Janssen, *Kingdom, Office, and Church*, 71.

The defense of Hommes, Veenhof, Van Keulen, Fries, and Janssen is quite convincing. This is because they not only analyze Van Ruler's writings broadly but elaborately and precisely, but also effectively defend him from criticism of Berkhof, Berkouwer, and Velema, focusing on the core of their critique of Van Ruler's theology.

Finally, a more specific response is needed in relation to Hendrikus Berkhof's criticism that by his own specific formulation of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the exalted Christ, especially in relation to the "intermezzo," Van Ruler causes the denial of Jesus' true humanity. Although the portions discussed so far on the "intermezzo" are directly or indirectly related to this issue, my additional response to this criticism is this: It is hard to say that Van Ruler brings about a denial of the true humanity of Jesus Christ in his claim concerning the end of Christ's incarnation (and of the Holy Spirit's indwelling) after the eschatological completion of salvation, namely after a full and genuine synthesis between creation and redemption. This is because except for statements related to "after the eschatological completion of salvation," Van Ruler firmly maintains an objective Christology, built on the christological foundation stones provided by Nicea, Chalcedon, Anselm, and the Reformed confessions.⁷³ That is, he adheres to "the doctrine of the personal union (*unio personalis sive hypostatica*)" which "expresses the conviction that in the person of the *Logos*, the divine and human nature, his being God and being man, are united."⁷⁴ He does so by regarding the incarnation as a once-for-all historical occurrence which may not, need not, be repeated,⁷⁵ and by anchoring salvation in the

⁷³ Cf. Fries, "Van Ruler on the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of the Earth," 123.

⁷⁴ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 30–31.

⁷⁵ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 32. Regarding the characteristic of the incarnation, Van Ruler states: "In the incarnation, the *Logos*, or the Son, did not take on a specific man, a

incomparable, “once-for-all (*eph hapax*)” (or unrepeated) atoning work of Jesus Christ as a mediator.⁷⁶ To put this point more strongly, Van Ruler’s argument for the messianic intermezzo can be said to be in harmony rather than inconsistent with the reality and significance of the true humanity of Christ since his assertion of the end of Christ’s incarnation after the eschatological completion of salvation shows his confidence in the historical reality and importance of the incarnation of Christ.

Now, let us summarize the contents of this chapter among the whole flow of this dissertation. The contents in this chapter provide justification for using Van Ruler’s distinction between the christological and the pneumatological perspectives and his notion of “theonomous reciprocity” as a heuristic tool to examine Bavinck’s pneumatology on the following two grounds, along with the contents to be developed in the course of this paper: (1) Van Ruler’s distinction and his concept of theonomous reciprocity are essentially relevant to Bavinck’s understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the application of salvation especially in relation to soteriology and ecclesiology, and useful for discovering its core. This will be evident in the remaining chapters of this dissertation, although it is already somewhat illustrative of Bavinck’s statements cited in

person who already existed, but took on the human nature. This human nature is formed – one is almost led to say created – from Mary (*ex Maria*)... Jesus became a specific person... The Son of God in human flesh is a unique manifestation (*eigen instantie*). He is a historical figure. He is also a real *perfectum*. Even as the risen and glorified Lord he is more than a figure from history, a function, an ideogram for the relation between God and man. He also always remains himself.”

⁷⁶ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 36–37, 38. Van Ruler, regarding the characteristic and significance of atonement (*verzoening*), says: “It is utterly obvious that one cannot speak christologically about salvation and the relationship between God and us without placing the sacrificial atonement (*offer van de verzoening*) and the notion of substitution at the center. That is why, so to speak, we need a mediator. The mediator offers himself as a sacrifice in our place...there is only one atoning sacrifice, the sacrifice of God the Son in human flesh.” Like this, for Van Ruler “the work of Christ is outside of us (*extra nos*) and – in contrast to classical Roman Catholic ideas of the mass as a resacrifice – has a once-for-all (*eph hapax*) character.” Bolt, “The Characteristic Work of the Holy Spirit,” 4.

the introduction of this dissertation. In order to use Van Ruler's distinction and notion as a heuristic device without diluting Bavinck's claims, this paper will use his tool heuristically in the last section of each chapter to analytically summarize Bavinck's view.

(2) Van Ruler's tool is very useful for responding to the twin charges of fatalism and Platonic dualism against Reformed theology since these charges are, among other things, caused by a failure to correctly grasp the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ. We have seen in the first part of this chapter how Van Ruler is precisely shaping this distinctive work of the Holy Spirit. The usefulness of his tools is reinforced by the validity of his trinitarian pneumatology and its core elements such as the distinction between the christological and the pneumatological views, and the notion of theonomous reciprocity, which is what we have looked at in this chapter. In other words, this usefulness is strengthened by the positive evaluations of scholars about Van Ruler's trinitarian pneumatology, and by the validity of the response to criticisms of it.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTOLOGY AND PNEUMATOLOGY IN BAVINCK'S THEOLOGY OF COVENANT

In this chapter we will show that in his treatment of the doctrine of the covenant, Bavinck clearly distinguishes the work of Christ from the work of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, this chapter will show not only to what degree Bavinck distinguishes the work of the Holy Spirit from the work of Christ, but also what roles that distinctive work of the Holy Spirit plays in his soteriology and ecclesiology by following the flow of his doctrine of the covenant.¹ Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant, together with the doctrine of the Trinity, provides his soteriology and ecclesiology with an overall framework.² In the first section we will examine biblical foundations of the distinction between Christology and pneumatology in Bavinck's theology of covenant. We will do so by observing Bavinck's view of common and different characteristics in the work and endowment of the Holy Spirit between the Old Testament (Covenant) and the New Testament (Covenant) periods. The second section will consider Bavinck's view of the covenant of grace. In doing so, we will especially probe the roles of the ministry of the

¹ With respect to the great significance of the doctrine of covenant in Bavinck's theology, Anthony A. Hoekema states: For Bavinck, "since religion is essentially fellowship with God, it follows that the covenant is the essence of true religion.... Bavinck expresses this same thought as follows: If religion is truly to be fellowship between God and man, in which God retains His individuality but in which man also retains his individuality as a rational, moral being, receiving rights along with his duties, then this can only happen in this way: that God descends to man and makes a covenant with him." Anthony A. Hoekema, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1953), 111–12.

² Hoekema elaborately displays the covenantal framework of Bavinck's theology and its biblical development throughout his dissertation, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant." Additionally, the trinitarian structure of Bavinck's theology has recently been thoroughly discussed in James Perman Eglinton's book, *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (2012).

Holy Spirit as distinct from the ministry of Christ in relation to soteriology and ecclesiology as well as grasp the degree of the distinction between Christology and pneumatology. The third section will examine the distinction between Christology and pneumatology and the soteriological and ecclesiological meanings of this distinctiveness especially with respect to Bavinck's view of the *pactum salutis* as the foundation of the covenant of grace. The last two sections of this chapter will summarize the contents covered in this chapter, summarizing them once in a general way and once again in an analytical way using the distinction made by Van Ruler between the christological and the pneumatological perspective as a heuristic tool for interpreting Bavinck's pneumatology. To convey Bavinck's own opinion without adding to or subtracting from his own view, Bavinck's view is first summarized without using Van Ruler's tool; then to better find or understand the structure, principles, and key concepts of Bavinck's trinitarian pneumatology, Bavinck's view is resummarized with Van Ruler's tool. Through this study, this chapter will provide a basis for an elaborate response to the two charges against Reformed theology (fatalism and Platonic dualism).³ Some parts of this chapter will serve as a direct or an indirect response to these two charges.

3.1 Biblical Foundations

As Jonggil Byun says, although Bavinck emphasizes the fact that the covenant of grace is originally one in the Old and the New Covenants and "emphasizes the unity of

³ This response will be done more extensively in chapters 4 and 5 by using Bavinck's pneumatology as a case study.

the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son in the work of creation and recreation,⁴ he does not overlook ‘a remarkable and essential difference’ (*een aanmerkelijk en wezenlijk verschil*) in the activity and endowment of the Holy Spirit between the O.C. and the N.C. periods.”⁵ Bavinck’s view of this can be explained in three ways that are closely related to each other.

First, “the Old Dispensation always looked forward still to the appearing of the Servant of the Lord upon whom the Spirit of the Lord was to rest in all its fulness as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of

⁴ Bavinck’s emphasis on this unity, and his reason for emphasizing it, is evident in his following statements: “[T]he covenant of grace was ready-made from all eternity in the pact of salvation of the three persons and was realized by Christ from the moment the fall occurred. Christ does not begin to work only with and after his incarnation, and the Holy Spirit does not first begin his work with the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. But just as the creation is a trinitarian work, so also the re-creation was from the start a project of the three persons. All the grace that is extended to the creation after the fall comes to it from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The Son appeared immediately after the fall, as Mediator, as the second and final Adam who occupies the place of the first, restores what the latter corrupted, and accomplishes what he failed to do. And the Holy Spirit immediately acted as the Paraclete, the one applying the salvation acquired by Christ The Father is the eternal Father, the Son the eternal Mediator, the Holy Spirit the eternal Paraclete. For that reason the Old Testament is also to be viewed as one in essence and substance with the New Testament. For though God communicates his revelation successively and historically and makes it progressively richer and fuller, and humankind therefore advances in the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of revelation, God is and remains the same. The sun only gradually illumines the earth, but itself remains the same, morning and evening, during the day and at night. Although Christ completed his work on earth only in the midst of history and although the Holy Spirit was not poured out till the day of Pentecost, God nevertheless was able, already in the days of the Old Testament, to fully distribute the benefits to be acquired and applied by the Son and the Spirit. Old Testament believers were saved in no other way than we. There is one faith, one Mediator, one way of salvation, and one covenant of grace.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215–16. In this respect, Bavinck states that “the Spirit together with the Father and the Son is the Creator of all things, and ... in the sphere of redemption He is the Implementer of all life and salvation, of all talent and ability.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 386.

⁵ Jonggil Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet: A Study on the Relationship between the Coming of the Holy Spirit and the Glorification of Jesus according to John 7:39* (Kampen: Kok, 1992), 81; Herman Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1909), 435; *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. from the Dutch edition, *Magnalia Dei*, by Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), 386.

knowledge and of fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2).”⁶ In other words, with respect to the Messiah *totally and completely replete with the Holy Spirit*,⁷ the O. C. is the expectation of his appearing based on divine promise, while the N. C. is the fulfillment of it. According to Bavinck, “the Son of God [had] appeared more than once in the days of the Old Covenant.”⁸ But, he “chose human nature as a permanent dwelling,” which caused the special relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit.⁹ With respect to this relationship, Bavinck states that Christ “was not only conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb, and was not only anointed at His baptism without measure by that Spirit, but He also continuously lived and worked through that Spirit.”¹⁰ Interestingly, for Bavinck, this nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the humiliated Christ has a similarity with the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the church of Christ. Bavinck states: “Just as this Spirit first sanctified Christ through suffering, perfected Him, and led Him to the highest pinnacle,¹¹ so He is now committed *in the same way* to forming the body of Christ until it achieves its full maturity and constitutes the fulfillment, the pleroma, of Him who fulfills all in all.”¹² This statement of the Holy Spirit-driven life of Christ and the church affords a key clue to understanding why the imitation of Christ

⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 386; *Magnalia Dei*, 435.

⁷ In this respect, Bavinck argues that “Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed of God, pre-eminently.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 387.

⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390.

⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 387.

¹¹ If we explain this christologically, we can say as follows: although Christ was God, he lived his earthly life as a perfect Man, depending upon the Holy Spirit of God.

¹² Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390. (my emphasis added)

(*imitatio Christi*) is a core theme in Bavinck’s trinitarian cultural-ethical ideal with respect to the life of the church and the believers,¹³ which can be regarded as a significant implication of the applicational work of the Holy Spirit distinct from the work of Christ.

According to Bavinck, in the New Covenant such a relation between the Holy Spirit and the humiliated Christ is very close but clearly distinct from the relation between the Holy Spirit and the exalted Christ. Bavinck states that Christ accomplished the objective acquisition of salvation “on earth, in the state of humiliation, by his suffering and death”; in contrast he accomplishes the subjective application of salvation by the Holy Spirit “from heaven, in the state of exaltation.”¹⁴ This implies that “no matter how inseparably connected the acquisition and application of salvation are, there is a distinction between them.”¹⁵ Bavinck gives a detailed account of this distinction between the acquisition and the application of salvation as follows:

[T]hough it is perfectly correct to posit a most intimate connection between the work of Christ and the benefits of salvation and not to separate them even for a moment or at any point, *there is definitely a distinction* between what Christ *did* for us with God and what he *now does* for us with God, between the work he *did* in the state of humiliation and the work he *does* in the state of exaltation, between the *acquisition* and the *application* of salvation.¹⁶

¹³ To grasp this issue in detail, refer to John Bolt, “The Imitation of Christ Theme in the Cultural-Ethical Ideal of Herman Bavinck” (PhD diss., St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology, 1982). Bolt’s dissertation has recently been reprinted after being modified and updated: John Bolt, *A Theological Analysis of Herman Bavinck’s Two Essays on the Imitatio Christi: Between Pietism and Modernism* (Lewiston·Queenston·Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013). This issue will be partially treated in the later sections of chapter 4 of this dissertation.

¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:498.

¹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:498.

¹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:592. (my emphasis added)

This statement makes us pay attention to the fact that Bavinck's explanation of the meaning of the ascension of Christ with respect to the relationship between the exalted Christ and the Holy Spirit is significant for our investigation of the relation between the ongoing work of the exalted Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church. Understanding the former (the meaning of the ascension of Christ) is an important clue to understanding the latter (the relation between the continuous work of the exalted Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit). Bavinck says: "And at the ascension, in which he made all angels, authorities, and powers subject to himself (Eph. 4:8; 1 Pet. 3:22), he fully received the Holy Spirit along with all his gifts. Ascending on high, he took captivity captive, gave gifts to humans, and ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things (Eph. 4:8–10)."¹⁷

This argument implies that "Christ must first have earned and appropriated that Spirit fully for Himself before He can give it to His church."¹⁸ "On the basis of his perfect obedience," Christ, at the ascension, actually "obtained the full and free command over the Holy Spirit and over all the gifts and powers of that Spirit."¹⁹ Thus, Christ "can now share it with whom He will and in the measure that He will, not in conflict, naturally, but quite in accordance with the will of the Father and of the Spirit both, for the Son sends the Spirit of the Father (John 15:26)."²⁰ "And the Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son (John 14:26)."²¹ In this sense, "the Spirit of God has become 'the Spirit

¹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:499.

¹⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 388.

¹⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 387.

²⁰ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 387–88.

²¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 388.

of Christ' (*de Geest van Christus*).²² For Bavinck, this confirms the doctrine of *filioque* (and from the Son) since it implies that the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ “proceeds from both the Father and the Son, not only within the Godhead but, in keeping with this, also in the dispensation of salvation, and is sent forth as much by the Son as by the Father (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7).”²³ Here we can see that, for Bavinck, the Holy Spirit becoming the Spirit of Christ does not mean his stopping being the Spirit of the Father since he, after the exaltation of Christ, proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Furthermore, for Bavinck, the Spirit of Christ also implies that “the Spirit will not speak of Himself, but will speak that which He hears; just as Christ Himself on earth always glorified the Father, so the Spirit in His turn will glorify Christ, receive everything from Christ, and show it to Christ’s disciples (John 16:13-14).”²⁴ The Holy Spirit does so by “freely” putting “Himself in the service of Christ.”²⁵ More specifically, Bavinck states that “the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who, on the one hand, takes everything from Christ and freely binds himself to his Word but who, on the other hand, since the day of Pentecost, dwells personally in the church and in each of its members and fills them with all the fullness of God.”²⁶ Bavinck also incorporates this point in trinitarian terms: “All the benefits of salvation that the Father has awarded to the church from eternity and the Son acquired in time are at the same time gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus Christ by the

²² Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet*, 80, footnote 4; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:499.

²³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:499.

²⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 388.

²⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 388.

²⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:593.

Spirit, and the Father himself by Christ, incorporates all his children into most intimate fellowship with himself.”²⁷

Through these statements, we can see that, for Bavinck, the meanings and implications of the Spirit of Christ do not eliminate nor weaken the distinction between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation (*applicatio salutis*) by the Spirit; rather they make that distinction clearer since it plainly attributes the acquisition of salvation to Christ, and the application of salvation to the Holy Spirit.

In this context, Bavinck depicts the pouring of the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit he [Christ] bestows proceeds from the Father, is received by him from the Father, and *is subsequently poured out* on his church by Christ himself (Luke 24:49; John 15:26). It is the Father himself who sends the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name (John 14:26).”²⁸

Bavinck is saying that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit happens in the present tense. This implies that the Holy Spirit has been subsequently poured out on the church by Christ who receives the Holy Spirit from the Father. In this sense, it can be said that the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the unique starting point, while the sending of the Holy Spirit itself has been a continuous reality since Pentecost.²⁹ Then, how can the continuous sending of the Holy Spirit to the church harmonize with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church? With respect to this indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church, Bavinck states: “The event that took place on that day [of Pentecost] can therefore have no other meaning than that the Holy Spirit, who also existed before that day and gave

²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:593.

²⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:499. (my emphasis added)

²⁹ Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:503. For Bavinck, this continuous sending of the Holy Spirit does not indicate the so-called second blessing which means that the Holy Spirit comes to the believer repeatedly many times.

many gifts and did great works, now, after Christ's ascension, began to dwell at Christ's initiative in the church as in his temple."³⁰ Bavinck is saying that the Holy Spirit *started to dwell* in the church, which is *the* meaning of the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. This implies that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church has been an ongoing reality in its connection to the sending of the Holy Spirit to the church. For Bavinck, this continuous sending (or coming) of the Holy Spirit to the church and this constant indwelling of Holy Spirit in the church indicate the special and continuous relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, between the Holy Spirit and the church, and between Christ and God the Father and the church through the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In this respect, for Bavinck, there is a clear distinction between "two kinds of activity arising from the Holy Spirit."³¹ One of these "is that the Holy Spirit, poured out in the hearts of the disciples, will comfort them, lead them into the truth, and stay with them forever (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7)."³² "[T]his Spirit of consolation and guidance is granted only to the disciples of Jesus."³³ The other is that "in the world the Holy Spirit engages in a very different kind of activity; living in the church and impacting the world from that base, he convicts it of sin and righteousness and judgment, proving it wrong on all three points (John 16:8–11)."³⁴ As such, Bavinck makes it clear that the outpouring, the indwelling, and the salvific-work of the Holy Spirit are applied only to believers. Quite different kinds of activity of the Holy Spirit related to

³⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

³¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

³² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

³³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

moral reproach are applied to the world. They apply in a way that affects the world from the church as a base.

In sum, for Bavinck, these features of the special relation between the Holy Spirit and the exalted Christ, along with the features of the relation between the Holy Spirit and the humiliated Christ mentioned earlier, demonstrate a significant difference in the activity and endowment of the Holy Spirit between the Old Covenant and New Covenant periods. Bavinck's concrete exposition of these features of that relationship also shows that there is an important distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ.

Second, "the Old Testament itself predicts that even though there was then already a certain granting and activity of the Holy Spirit [to the saints in the Old Testament], that Spirit would not be *poured out* over all flesh, over sons and daughters, old and young, menservants and maidservants, until the last days (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; and Joel 2:28f)."³⁵ This implies that there is a significant difference in the nature, degree, and object of the works of the Holy Spirit between the O. C. and the N. C. periods. Bavinck states that the Holy Spirit was already "the implementer and the guide of the spiritual life" in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:12 and 143:10).³⁶ "He is there especially promised as the One who in the days of the New Testament will teach all men, who will grant a new heart, and write the law of the Lord upon it (Isa. 32:15; Jer. 31:33; 32:39; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; and Joel 2:8)."³⁷ This work of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant includes testifying of Christ, further dwelling in the church "in order to regenerate it (John 3:5), to bring it to

³⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 386–87; *Magnalia Dei*, 435.

³⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 419.

³⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 419.

the confession of Jesus as its Lord (1 Cor. 12:3), to comfort and to lead it, and eternally to remain with it (John 14:16; Rom. 8:14; and Eph. 4:30),” and operating out of the church “to penetrate the world and to convict it of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).”³⁸

Bavinck also affords a concrete explanation of the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in the works of the Holy Spirit especially from the perspective of God’s sanctifying work through the Holy Spirit. Bavinck states: The Old Covenant also promises that God will himself circumcise the hearts of his people “and that of their seed in order that they may love the Lord their God with all their hearts and with all their souls (Deut. 30:6)” and “this promise came into its fulfillment for the saints in the history of Israel (Ps. 51:12)”; while “it is to receive a much richer fulfillment in their future, when God will make a new covenant with His people, will pour out His Spirit over all, will give them a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone, and will write His law upon their hearts (Jer. 24:7; 31:31–34; 32:39; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26–28; Joel 2:28; and elsewhere).”³⁹ Here we can see that, for Bavinck, an important difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in the works of the Holy Spirit lies in the fact that the New Covenant church and believers participate in “a much richer fulfillment” of the promise of their sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit than the believers in the history of Israel who participate in some degree of its fulfillment.⁴⁰

³⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 419.

³⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 424.

⁴⁰ Of course, we must bear in mind here that Bavinck’s statement also implies that there is a significant continuity in the work of the Holy Spirit between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, especially with regard to a work of sanctification.

In this respect, Bavinck argues that evangelical sanctification (*evangelische heiligmaking*) distinguished from legalistic sanctification (*wettische heiligmaking*) “consists of this: that in Christ God gives us the perfect sanctification along with the justification, and that He gives us this as an internal possession through the regenerating and renewing operation of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is therefore God’s work, a work of His righteousness and of His grace at the same time.”⁴¹ This evangelical sanctification “causes them [the New Covenant believers] to walk in His ways and makes them His people (Jer. 31:33; 32:38; Ezek. 36:27 and 28).”⁴² These statements show how a much richer fulfillment of the promise of sanctification can be applied to the believers of the New Covenant.

Third, in former times, “the Holy Spirit had come down *to a few, independent persons*,” “and only *temporarily for a specific purpose*.” However, the Holy Spirit now “descends upon the whole church and upon *all its members*, and it *remains dwelling and working there permanently*.”⁴³ For Bavinck, this is an essential difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in the features of the Holy Spirit, especially when considering that “the same expression” as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” at Pentecost “occurs earlier also (Ex. 31:3; Micah 3:8; and Luke 1:41).”⁴⁴ And it can be said that, for

⁴¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 476; *Magnalia Dei*, 541.

⁴² Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 476–77. The issue of the relation between divine sovereignty and human nature with respect to Bavinck’s doctrine of sanctification will be elaborately treated from a pneumatological perspective in the next chapter of this dissertation. And, in order to grasp this issue in detail, also refer to Jae-Eun Park, “Driven by God: Active Justification and Definitive Sanctification in the Soteriology of Bavinck, Comrie, Witsius, and Kuyper” (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2016), 120–62.

⁴³ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390; *Magnalia Dei*, 439. (my emphasis added)

⁴⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390.

Bavinck, the Holy Spirit's permanent dwelling in the whole church and all its members is the core of that characteristic of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant era distinct from that of the Holy Spirit of the Old Covenant era. To emphasize this permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the whole church, Bavinck mentions a similarity between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church and the incarnation of Christ, both of which give rise to a definitive difference in their features between the O. C. and the N. C. eras: "Just as the Son of God appeared more than once in the days of the Old Testament but chose human nature as a permanent dwelling only at the conception in the womb of Mary, so formerly, too, there was all kinds of activity and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but only on the day of Pentecost does He make the church His temple which He continually sanctifies, builds up, and which He will never forsake."⁴⁵ In this respect, for Bavinck, this "indwelling of the Holy Spirit gives the church of Christ an independent existence."⁴⁶ That is, the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the whole church of Christ breaks the national, geographical, and ritual boundaries of the church, such as the boundary of the nation of Israel, the boundaries of Palestine, the temple on Zion, so that it enables this church to live independently and leads this church to spread itself out over the whole world, according to Bavinck.

In this vein, he argues that on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit started to dwell in it, the church was born as "mission church and world church" (*zendingskerk en wereldkerk*).⁴⁷ Thus, "this church was, however small and undistinguished, truly

⁴⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390.

⁴⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390.

⁴⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 390; *Magnalia Dei*, 440. In this regard, Bavinck states: "That church is no longer contained by the nation of Israel nor the boundaries of Palestine, but

universal and catholic.”⁴⁸ And in that sense, for Bavinck, Pentecost is “the birthday of the church” (*de geboortedag der gemeente*).⁴⁹ Moreover, he makes this noticeable statement while discussing the tongues of Pentecost:⁵⁰ “At the creation the morning stars sang together and all the children of God rejoiced. At the birth of Christ the multitude of heavenly hosts raised the jubilee of God’s good will. On the birthday of the church that church itself sings the wonderful works of God in myriad tones.”⁵¹ This statement is consistent with Bavinck’s statement that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to the church

lives now independently through the Spirit that dwells in it, and it spreads itself out over the whole earth. Out of the temple on Zion God proceeds to dwell in the body of the church of Christ, and so on that day [of Pentecost] this church is born as mission church and world church.”

⁴⁸ Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet*, 82; cf. Bavinck, *De katholiciteit van christendom en kerk* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1888), especially p. 11ff; “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” in *Calvin Theological Journal*, no. 27 (1992), 220–51, trans. John Bolt, especially p. 224ff. Admittedly, for Bavinck, there are also important roles of the Father and the Son in making the church truly universal and catholic, and those roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have a close mutual relationship. See Bavinck, “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church,” 224ff. However, attention needs to be given to the fact that those roles of each person of the Trinity are clearly distinct from each other even in their perichoretic relations with one another such as co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration: the Father – the Planner, the Creator, the Originator; the Son – the Gainer, the Redeemer, the Mediator; the Holy Spirit – the Applier, the Sanctifier, the Completer. To observe Bavinck’s statement of the perichoretic relationship between the three persons of the Trinity, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:331.

⁴⁹ Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet*, 81; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:502–3.

⁵⁰ Byun, *The Holy Spirit Was Not Yet*, 81. Bavinck, on a dimension of the purpose of this miracle of tongues on Pentecost, also states: “The purpose of this miracle of speech... was not to equip the disciples permanently with the knowledge of foreign languages but in an extraordinary way to produce a powerful impression of the great fact that had now taken place. How could this have been done better than by letting this just-established, small world church proclaim in many languages the mighty works of God?” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:502–3. (my emphasis added)

⁵¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 392; *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:503. The original Dutch version of Bavinck’s contention is as follows: “Bij de schepping zongen de morgensterren en juichten alle kinderen Gods; bij de geboorte van Christus hief eene menigte des hemelschen heirlegers het jubellied van Gods welbehagen aan; op den geboortedag der gemeente bezingt zij zelve in velerlei tonen de groote werken Gods.” Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei*, 442.

is the third great work of God, following creation and redemption.⁵² It also suggests parallels with Van Ruler's point that the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit is a theonomous reciprocity; the church is itself involved in this work of the Holy Spirit.

Bavinck's view of the clear distinction between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the intimate relationship between the two, and his view of soteriological and ecclesiological implications of such a distinction, have been examined in this section. This investigation has been done especially following his descriptions of an essential difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant periods in the activity and bestowment of the Holy Spirit. Bavinck's view of this distinction between the two and the implications of that distinction, based on his biblical exegesis of the work of the Holy Spirit, is best understood in terms of his view of the covenant of grace (*foedus gratiae*) to be discussed in the following section. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and the indwelling of this Holy Spirit in the church, which are the core of Bavinck's biblical interpretation of the work of the Holy Spirit, mark the progress of the covenant of grace into a higher dispensation when the fullness of time had come and Christ had completed his work on earth.⁵³

3.2 The Covenant of Grace

⁵² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500–501. In this vein, Bavinck says: “Scripture clearly indicates the unique significance of this event on Pentecost by speaking of it as an *outpouring* or a *shedding* of the Holy Spirit.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 386. However, for Bavinck, this statement does not mean that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is restricted only to the day of Pentecost. Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:503.

⁵³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:223.

This section will consider Bavinck's view of the covenant of grace. In doing so, we will probe an importance of the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ in soteriology and in ecclesiology.

For Bavinck, the covenant of grace is set up for man, discloses the way to the Father's house to the fallen and straying creature, and gives access to eternal salvation.⁵⁴ It is called the covenant of grace "because it issues from the grace of God, has grace as its content, and has its final purpose in the glorification of God's grace," according to Bavinck.⁵⁵ The content of this covenant of grace, says Bavinck, consists of "promise and faith."⁵⁶ He also states that the promise of the covenant of grace is "the one, great, all-inclusive promise": "I will be thy God," "and ye shall be my people."⁵⁷ Specifically, this promise "is comprehensive and includes everything; the whole accomplishment and application of salvation, Christ and his benefits, the Holy Spirit and all His gifts."⁵⁸ In other words, for Bavinck, "a single straight line runs from the mother-promise of Genesis 3:15 to the apostolic blessing of 2 Corinthians 13:14."⁵⁹ And, "in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is contained the whole of salvation for the sinner."⁶⁰ In this respect, for Bavinck, "the covenant of grace is

⁵⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 271.

⁵⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁵⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 271.

⁵⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 24, 274.

⁵⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁵⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁶⁰ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

everywhere and at all times one in essence.”⁶¹ However it “always manifests itself in new forms and goes through differing dispensations.”⁶² In other words, “the covenant of grace can throughout the centuries remain the same because it depends entirely upon God and because God is the Immutable One and the Faithful One.”⁶³ While “unchangeable the covenant of grace is in its essence, it changes in its forms, and takes several shapes in the several dispensations,” according to Bavinck.⁶⁴

Soteriology

For Bavinck, the doctrine of this covenant of grace “maintains both God’s sovereignty and man’s rational and moral nature.”⁶⁵ How does the doctrine of the covenant of grace maintain both? This *how* appears especially in Bavinck’s exposition of the relation between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works and his exposition of the relation between christological fulfillment and pneumatological fulfillment of the two covenants.

First of all, Bavinck makes it clear that the covenant of grace does not discard or annihilate, but rather fulfills the covenant of works.⁶⁶ For Bavinck, Christ fulfills on our

⁶¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁶² Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁶³ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 274.

⁶⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 275.

⁶⁵ Hoekema, “Herman Bavinck’s Doctrine of the Covenant,” 112 (see footnote 108); Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 277–78.

⁶⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 410. That is, for Bavinck “the covenant of grace is not, as Cocceius taught, the successive abolition of the covenant of works but its fulfillment and restoration. ‘Grace repairs and perfects nature’. God stands by the demand that eternal life can be obtained only in the way of obedience; and when a person violates his law, it is expanded with another: the law that the violation must be paid for by punishment. After the fall, therefore, God lays a double claim on humans: that of the payment of a penalty for the evil done and that of perfect obedience to his law (satisfaction and obedience).” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:226.

behalf what God required of us according to the covenant of works. Based on this eschatological fulfillment, says Bavinck, the covenant of grace puts “the law of the covenant of works into its service” and unites “itself with that law” immediately after the fall of man.⁶⁷ Bavinck elaborates this in terms of the distinction between christological fulfillment as an acquisition of salvation and pneumatological fulfillment as an application of salvation, which provides the key to understanding the relation between divine sovereignty and human freedom and dignity in salvation. Bavinck argues that by the applicatory work of the Holy Spirit the covenant of grace can bring the law of the covenant of works to its fulfillment in believers.⁶⁸ That is, this pneumatological fulfillment of the covenant of works or of the righteousness of the law has its place firstly in the believers’ receiving eternal life by grace through faith in Christ, secondly in their walking in newness of life.⁶⁹ These two aspects of the pneumatological fulfillment of the covenant of grace reflect not only divine sovereignty but also human freedom and duty. It can be said more precisely that these two aspects reflect divine initiative reciprocity between the applicatory work of salvation by the Holy Spirit and human freedom and dignity. For in the covenant of grace it comes to more striking expression that the entire

This statement clearly shows why Christ, on our behalf, should fulfill what God required of us according to the covenant of works.

⁶⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 410.

⁶⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 410.

⁶⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 410–11. According to Bavinck, this distinction and this connection between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works, and thus between the gospel and the law teach why both antinomianism and nomism should be rejected. In this vein, Bavinck states that “thus there is no room in Christianity for antinomianism, for despising or violating the law. Law and gospel should go together, as in the Scriptures, so also in preaching and teaching, in doctrine and in life. They are both indispensable and real constituent parts of the one complete word of God. All the same, identifying the two is as bad as separating them. Nomism, which makes of the gospel a new law, is in error no less than antinomianism.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 411.

work of salvation is “God’s work totally and exclusively; it is pure grace and nothing is introduced that derives from human,” while “it is all the more important to note that it at the same time beautifully allows the rational and moral nature of humans to come into their own.”⁷⁰

Here Bavinck gives a fine explanation of how a unilateral feature of the covenant of grace harmonizes with a bilateral feature of it. Bavinck states that although “in the covenant of grace ... there are actually no demands and no conditions” since “God supplies what he demands” through Christ’s acquisition of the benefits of the covenant of grace for us, and the Holy Spirit’s application of them to us, “in its administration by Christ, the covenant of grace does assume this demanding conditional form.”⁷¹ The purpose of this assuming is “to acknowledge humans in their capacity as rational and moral beings; still, though they are fallen, to treat them as having been created in God’s image; and also on this supremely important level, where it concerns their eternal weal and eternal woe, to hold them responsible and inexcusable; and, finally, to cause them to enter consciously and freely into this covenant and to break their covenant with sin.”⁷² In this vein, Bavinck concludes that although “the covenant of grace ... is indeed unilateral” as “a work of the triune God” in its origin, design, definition, maintenance, and implement, “it is *destined* to become bilateral, to be consciously and voluntarily accepted and kept by humans in the power of God.”⁷³ “This is the will of God, which so clearly

⁷⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:228–29.

⁷¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

and beautifully manifests itself in the covenant [of grace],” according to Bavinck.⁷⁴ The aim of this divine will is “that the work of grace may be clearly reflected in the human consciousness and arouse the human will to exert itself energetically and forcefully.”⁷⁵

In this respect, Bavinck contends that the covenant of grace totally embraces human beings “with all their faculties and powers, in soul and body, for time and eternity,” rather than deadening them or treating “them as inanimate objects.”⁷⁶ The covenant of grace “deprives them of their impotence” far from destroying their power.⁷⁷ It frees humans’ will from sin and delivers their consciousness from darkness.⁷⁸ It prompts the whole person, “freely and independently, with soul, mind, and body, to love God and to dedicate itself to him” by re-creating it and, “having renewed it by grace.”⁷⁹ These arguments imply that the covenant of grace is for Bavinck “very different from election” because “in election humans are strictly passive but in the covenant of grace they also play an active role.”⁸⁰ These arguments also have a significant pneumatological implication in soteriology especially with respect to the way of the salvific work of the Holy Spirit in humans, which will be explored in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Ecclesiology

⁷⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁷⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁸⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:229.

Meanwhile, for Bavinck, the covenant of grace is significant not only in the soteriological aspect but also in the ecclesiological aspect especially with respect to election. This is because for him the covenant of grace as the way of realizing election implies that election is realized not just individually, but organically and historically “in families, generations, nations.”⁸¹ “The covenant of grace is the organization of the new humanity under Christ as its head.”⁸² And “the covenant of grace is never made with a solitary individual but always also with his or her descendants” and includes “everything that is his or hers.”⁸³ This makes it self-evident that “the covenant of grace will temporarily – in its earthly administration and dispensation – also include those who remain inwardly unbelieving and do not share in the covenant’s benefits.”⁸⁴ For Bavinck, this reality means that “the covenant of grace is one, and the external and internal sides of it,” though on earth the two sides never fully coincide with each other and “may not be split apart and placed side by side.”⁸⁵ In other words, here on earth those who are like “bad branches on the vine” or “chaff among the wheat” “are connected with the elect in

⁸¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 277.

⁸² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:231.

⁸³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:231. For Bavinck, this Reformed doctrine of the covenant of grace derived from Scripture avoids two extremes: (1) “the danger of following Rome, which argues that since the church in its concrete existence always includes the institution, salvation depends on the institution of the church, of the priest, and of the sacrament” and (2) “the danger of Anabaptism, which seeks to purify the church once and for all, and definitively severs all the operations of grace from Word and sacrament.” Bavinck, *Saved by Grace*, 75–76.

⁸⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:231.

⁸⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:232. Here Bavinck offers biblical verses supporting his argument as follows: “Certainly, there are bad branches on the vine, and there is chaff among the wheat; and in a large house, there are vessels of gold as well as vessels of earthenware (Matt. 3:12; 13:29; John 15:2; 2 Tim. 2:20).” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:232. Interestingly and significantly, these verses are the same ones supporting his view of a distinction between the visible and the invisible church.

all sorts of ways; and the elect themselves...can as an organism only be gathered into one under Christ as their head in the way of the covenant.”⁸⁶ These statements show how dynamic and complex the realization of the covenant of grace is, especially in its connection to ecclesiology. These arguments also afford us an important clue to understanding the invisible church, the spiritual essence of the church, and the spiritual character of the marks and attributes of the (true) church, etc. This ecclesiological implication of the covenant of grace will be explained in greater detail in chapter 5 in its connection with Bavinck’s pneumatology.

Bavinck’s view of the covenant of grace has its root in his view of the *pactum salutis*. Specifically, for Bavinck, the certainty of the covenant of grace is grounded in the *pactum salutis*.⁸⁷ Given the relation between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the covenant of grace discussed in this section, this implies that his view of the relation between Christology and pneumatology is also grounded in the *pactum salutis*.

3.3 The Covenant of Redemption

There are two basic reasons why Bavinck’s soteriology and ecclesiology are not only christological, but also pneumatological within his triform-structured theology. And these two reasons are closely linked. The first basic reason is that Bavinck’s soteriology and ecclesiology are grounded in the *pactum salutis* (covenant of

⁸⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:232.

⁸⁷ Byunghoon Woo, “The *Pactum Salutis* in the Theologies of Witsius, Owen, Dickson, Goodwin, and Cocceius,” (PhD diss., Calvin Theological Seminary, 2015), 395-96; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215. Bavinck states: “The covenant of grace revealed in time does not hang in the air but rests on an eternal, unchanging foundation. It is firmly grounded in the counsel and covenant of the triune God and is the application and execution of it that infallibly follows.”

redemption),⁸⁸ namely, the covenant between the three persons of the Trinity which forms the eternal background for the covenant of grace.⁸⁹ This *pactum salutis* as a fountainhead for making Bavinck's soteriology and ecclesiology pneumatological as well as christological, by way of definition, means that there is a clear distinction between the three persons as three subjects in the immanent Trinity.⁹⁰ For this covenant of redemption is itself a covenant in the immanent Trinity where "Father and Son and Spirit are all three active,"⁹¹ "all cooperate,"⁹² and each of them "receives His own task and does His own work."⁹³ In this respect, Bavinck states that "the pact of salvation makes known to us the

⁸⁸ For Bavinck, the biblical texts that were often used to support the doctrine of the *pactum salutis* were deficient. However, Bavinck himself provides biblical verses supporting the *pactum salutis*. Bavinck states: "This doctrine of the pact of salvation, despite its defective form, is rooted in a scriptural idea. For as Mediator, the Son is subordinate to the Father, calls him his God (Ps. 22:2; John 20:17), is his servant (Isa. 49f.) who has been assigned a task (Isa. 53:10; John 6:38–40; 10:18; 12:49; 14:31; 17:4) and who receives a reward (Ps. 2:8; Isa. 53:10; John 17:4, 11, 17, 24; Eph. 1:20f.; Phil. 2:9f.) for the obedience accomplished (Matt. 26:42; John 4:34; 15:10; 17:4–5; 19:30). Still, this relation between Father and Son, though most clearly manifest during Christ's sojourn on earth, was not first initiated at the time of the incarnation, for the incarnation itself is already included in the execution of the work assigned to the Son, but occurs in eternity and therefore also existed already during the time of the Old Testament. Scripture also clearly attests this fact when it attributes the leadership of Israel to the Angel of Yahweh (Exod. 3:2f.; 13:21; 14:19; 23:20–23; 32:34; 33:2; Num. 20:16; Isa. 63:8–9), and sees Christ also functioning officially already in the days of the Old Testament (John 8:56; 1 Cor. 10:4, 9; 1 Pet. 1:11; 3:19). For there is but one mediator between God and humankind (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5), who is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8), who was chosen as Mediator from eternity (Isa. 42:1; 43:10; Matt. 12:18; Luke 24:26; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8), and as Logos existed from eternity as well (John 1:1, 3; 8:58; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; etc.)." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:213-14.

⁸⁹ With respect to the relation between the *pactum salutis* and the covenant of grace, especially see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215, 405; *Our Reasonable Faith*, 265, 273-74. And this relationship will particularly be treated in this section.

⁹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:270, 271, 279, 305, 306, 326, 332; 3:213, 276, 365, 405.

⁹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:405.

⁹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

⁹³ Hoekema, "Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant," 103; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215. Hoekema states that, for Bavinck, in the covenant of redemption, "salvation of

relationships and life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom.”⁹⁴ He also argues that “within the Divine Being, the covenant flourishes to the full.”⁹⁵ For “whereas the covenant between God and humankind – on account of the infinite distance between them – always more or less has the character of a sovereign grant (διαθηκη) here, among the three persons, it is a pact (συνθηκη) in the full sense of the word,” a pact where “the greatest freedom and the most perfect agreement coincide.”⁹⁶

The other basic reason is that his soteriology and ecclesiology center on the believers’ *unio mystica* with Christ and with God through the Holy Spirit which originates from the *pactum salutis*.⁹⁷ This *unio mystica* is realized objectively by Christ and subjectively by the Holy Spirit along with the unshakable faithfulness of the covenant of grace as the fulfillment of the *pactum salutis*.⁹⁸ In this realization of the *unio mystica*, “the application of salvation is no less an essential constituent of redemption than the acquisition of it. ‘Take away its application and redemption is not redemption.’ ... Just as surely as the re-creation took place objectively in Christ, so surely it must also be carried out subjectively by the Holy Spirit in the church.”⁹⁹ In this realization of the *unio mystica*, the believers enter and continually remain in communion

God’s people was planned, and in which each Person pledged Himself to carry out His particular role in the execution of that plan of salvation.” See *ibid.*, 104.

⁹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214.

⁹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214.

⁹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214–15.

⁹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:523.

⁹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:122–23.

⁹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:524.

with Christ and in communion with one another by the Holy Spirit,¹⁰⁰ which causes their joining together in all the benefits of Christ.¹⁰¹ Here the fact that this *unio mystica* was already forged in the *pactum salutis* is the essential reason for the distinction in unity between christological acquisition and pneumatological application of salvation as well as the certainty of both.¹⁰² This fact also indicates that the ingathering of the elect must not be conceived of atomistically. Since this *unio mystica* has already been settled in the *pactum salutis*, all the elect have been given eternally to Christ together, have been included in the covenant of grace, have all been born in due time from Christ as their head, and have been made copartakers of all the benefits of Christ by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ In this respect, for Bavinck, “the church is an organism, not an aggregate; the whole, in its case, precedes the parts.”¹⁰⁴ Bavinck’s statements of this actual realization of divine election, and of the grounds of this realization imply that “the church, even taken in its broadest sense, is not a Platonic state that exists only in the imagination and never becomes a reality.”¹⁰⁵ Rather, the church “is a company of people that has the guarantee

¹⁰⁰ Bavinck makes it clear that “this mystical union [of believers with Christ], is not immediate but comes into being by the Holy Spirit.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251.

¹⁰¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:506. This corresponds to Bavinck’s assertion that “after Christ completed his work on earth, *he* was glorified at the right hand of God and *by the Spirit communicated himself* to his church on the day of Pentecost.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:234. (my emphasis added)

¹⁰² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:523–24.

¹⁰³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:524.

¹⁰⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:524.

¹⁰⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

of its existence, now and in the future, in God's decree, in the firm security of the covenant of grace, the mediatorship of Christ, and the promise of the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁶

Now this can be asked: for Bavinck, what matters of content does the *pactum salutis* have, and what are the implications of this content for soteriology and ecclesiology?

According to Bavinck, when all the data of the Scripture are gathered, this *pactum salutis* "has especially three matters as its content."¹⁰⁷ "The first is election" of those whom God "had before known in love to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29)."¹⁰⁸ This election of individuals is compatible with "election of peoples or nations," the reason of which will be explained in the remainder of this section.¹⁰⁹ In the second place, this *pactum salutis* contains "the achievement of that whole salvation which God wants to grant to His elect" through the Mediator Christ, who is appointed for the achievement of this salvation. Thus He "Himself can be called the object of God's election."¹¹⁰ In this vein, Bavinck states that "those who arrive at faith in time are chosen *in Christ* before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4)."¹¹¹ He also asserts that "in His election God aims at nothing less than placing Christ the Mediator at the Head of His church, and to conform the church to the body of Christ."¹¹² In the third place, this

¹⁰⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

¹⁰⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 266.

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 266.

¹⁰⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 266.

¹¹⁰ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 267.

¹¹¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 268. (my emphasis added)

¹¹² Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 268. As the truth that this origin (or foundation) of the *unio mystica* appeared in the *pactum salutis* implies, divine election is connected not only to each individual elect but also to the church as a gathering of the elect. That is, divine election is not only individual but also collective from its origin.

pactum salutis includes the application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit.¹¹³

Bavinck elaborates this as follows:

[T]he redemption or re-creation takes place only through the applicatory activity of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who is earned, promised, and sent by Christ (John 16:7 and Acts 2:4, 17), who testifies of Christ and receives everything from Christ (John 15:26 and 16:13, 14), and who now works regeneration in the church (John 3:3), faith (1 Cor. 12:3), the adoption (Rom. 8:15), the renewing (Titus 3:5), and the sealing unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13 and 4:30). And all this the Holy Spirit can work out and bring into being because, together with the Father and the Son, He is the one true God who lives and reigns eternally. The love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are well founded for the people of the Lord in the eternal and immutable counsel of God.¹¹⁴

These statements imply that for Bavinck the Holy Spirit is indicated for application of salvation to the church in the *pactum salutis* as “the eternal and immutable counsel of God.”¹¹⁵ And, the fact that this application of salvation by the Holy Spirit is founded “for the people of the Lord” (for the church) in the *pactum salutis*, implies that the applicatory

¹¹³ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 268.

¹¹⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 268.

¹¹⁵ Bavinck states: “[T]he covenant of grace was ready-made from all eternity in the pact of salvation of the three persons and was realized by Christ from the moment the fall occurred. Christ does not begin to work only with and after his incarnation, and the Holy Spirit does not first begin his work with the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. But just as the creation is a trinitarian work, so also the re-creation was from the start a project of the three persons. All the grace that is extended to the creation after the fall comes to it from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The Son appeared immediately after the fall, as Mediator, as the second and final Adam who occupies the place of the first, restores what the latter corrupted, and accomplishes what he failed to do. And the Holy Spirit immediately acted as the Paraclete, the one applying the salvation acquired by Christ. All the change that occurs, all the development and progress in insight and knowledge, accordingly, occurs on the side of the creature. In God there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17). The Father is the eternal Father, the Son the eternal Mediator, the Holy Spirit the eternal Paraclete.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:215.

work of the Holy Spirit is in time applied not only to each individual elect, but also to the elect (in a collective meaning).¹¹⁶

In this understanding of the *pactum salutis*, a question arises: Does this *pactum salutis* annihilate or impair human individuality as a rational and moral being? Bavinck, rejecting the criticism that “such a counsel of God leaves no room whatsoever for any freedom and responsibility of man,”¹¹⁷ responds to this question. He argues that the apostle Paul rightly calls this kind of criticism blasphemy since “the counsel of God not only determines the results, but it also governs the means;” “it includes not merely the consequences, but also the causes.”¹¹⁸ Here we need to pay attention to Bavinck’s conception that although “all the things that are antecedent to the ultimate goal [the glory of God with the manifestation of his perfections] as means” are subordinate to that ultimate goal, these means “are not for that reason subordinate to each other.”¹¹⁹ In this

¹¹⁶ Here one can ask why the counsel of God is revealed and proclaimed in the Scriptures. According to Bavinck, the purpose of this revelation is in order that “we, sensing our guilt and helplessness, should depend upon that counsel of God with a childlike faith, and should in all distress and need put the full confidence of our whole heart into it.” “For if salvation to a greater or lesser extent depended upon man, upon his faith and his good works, then salvation would be eternally lost to him.” The purpose of this revelation is also to let us know that redemption “must be recompensed to” God again (Rom. 11:34–35) by teaching us that “the work of redemption is from beginning to end the work of God, that it is most uniquely the divine work.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269.

¹¹⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269. Bavinck surely recognizes that this criticism has been prevalent in the whole of church history. He states: “That the confession of the counsel of God has often been abused in this way is most certainly true. Nor has it been since Augustine and Calvin alone that this abuse has been practiced. It happened already in the days of Jesus and the apostles. For it is said of the Pharisees and scribes that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves which became apparent to them in the baptism of John, so that what should have served them as a means of conversion became in their hands an instrument for their doom (Luke 7:30). The apostle Paul calls it blasphemy when he is charged with lauding the doing of evil in order that good might come out of it (Rom. 3:8), and he puts a restraining hand on the mouth of pny man who dares find fault with God (Rom. 9:19–20).” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269.

¹¹⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269.

¹¹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390.

sense, for Bavinck, “creation is not just a means for the attainment of the fall, nor is the fall only a means for the attainment of grace and perseverance, and these components in turn are not just a means for the attainment of blessedness and eternal wretchedness.”¹²⁰ Precisely speaking, these diverse elements “are not just subordinated to each other, but are also related coordinately.”¹²¹ Bavinck’s statements imply that divine decrees “are as abundantly rich in content as the entire history of the world” since “the latter is the total unfolding of the former.”¹²² Furthermore, for Bavinck, the entire history of the world as the whole unfolding of divine decrees “is not a means that can be dispensed with once the end has come; instead, it has continuing impact and leaves its fruits in eternity” as follows:

Certainly the creation of the world did not just occur to make room for the event of the fall, but resulted in something that will continue even in the state of glory. The fall did not just take place to produce creatures existing in a state of misery, but retains its meaning as a fact with all the consequences that have arisen from it. Christ did not only become a mediator – a position that would have been sufficient for the expiation of sin – but God also ordained him to be head of the church.¹²³

For Bavinck, election and reprobation themselves also “do not follow two straight parallel lines, for in unbelievers there is much that does not arise from reprobation, and in believers there is much that cannot be attributed to election.”¹²⁴ In this respect, for Bavinck, the counsel of God “establishes just such relationships [between the causes and

¹²⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390.

¹²¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390.

¹²² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390.

¹²³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390.

¹²⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:390–91.

the consequences] as are seen to exist in life itself.”¹²⁵ So it leaves plenty of room for human freedom and responsibility. In this vein, the *pactum salutis* “does not...annihilate the rational and moral nature of man, but creates it, rather, and guarantees it, and always to the same extent as history causes us to know it,” according to Bavinck.¹²⁶

Bavinck’s view of these vastly diverse relationships between the causes and the consequences established by the counsel of God, and of their unfolding in the entire history of the world, is supported by the fact that Bavinck plainly recognizes the secondary causes as follows:

The world, accordingly, is pregnant with the causes of beings. “For as mothers are pregnant with unborn offspring, so the world itself is pregnant with the causes of unborn beings, which are not created in it except from that highest essence, where nothing is either born or dies, begins to be, or ceases to be” (Augustine, *The Trinity*, III, 9). The world is a tree of things (*arbor rerum*), bringing forth branch and blossom and fruit (Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, VIII, 9). *God so preserves things and so works in them that they themselves work along with him as secondary causes.*¹²⁷

With respect to the relation between the primary and the secondary cause and the implication of this relationship, Bavinck argues that “precisely because the primary and the secondary cause do not stand and function dualistically on separate tracks, but the primary works through the secondary, the effect that proceeds from the two is one and the product is one.”¹²⁸ In this sense, for Bavinck, “there is no division of labor between God and his creature, but the same effect is totally the effect of the primary cause as well as

¹²⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269.

¹²⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 269.

¹²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:609–10. (my emphasis added)

¹²⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:614.

totally the effect of the proximate cause”; “the product is also in the same sense totally the product of the primary as well as totally the product of the secondary cause.”¹²⁹ However, says Bavinck, “because the primary cause and the secondary cause are not identical and differ essentially, the effect and product are in reality totally the effect and product of the two causes, to be sure, but formally they are only the effect and product of the secondary cause.”¹³⁰ Two examples of this are given by Bavinck: (1) “Wood burns and it is God alone who makes it burn, yet the burning process may not be formally attributed to God but must be attributed to the wood as subject.”¹³¹ (2) “Human persons speak, act, and believe, and it is God alone who supplies to a sinner all the vitality and strength he or she needs for the commission of a sin. Nevertheless, the subject and author of the sin is not God but the human being.”¹³² “In this manner,” states Bavinck, “Scripture draws the lines within which the reconciliation of God’s sovereignty and human freedom has to be sought.”¹³³

Finally, with respect to Bavinck’s view of the relation between the *pactum salutis* and human freedom, we need to note the core characteristic of the Trinity *ad intra* as well as the Trinity *ad extra*, namely diversity in unity since it helps us to discover the deep root of his view of the kind of relationship that exists between the two so far described. As regards diversity in unity as an essential characteristic of the Trinity, Bavinck says that the unity and diversity in the entire work of the Trinity *ad extra* has its origin, source, and

¹²⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:614–15.

¹³⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

¹³¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

¹³² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

¹³³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

end in the unity and diversity in the Trinity *ad intra*.¹³⁴ This unity and diversity in the Trinity *ad intra* means that the triune God is one in his essence (the unity), and at the same time there are the three persons in the godhead – the Father is Maker, the Son Restorer, and the Holy Spirit Fulfiller, which is the archetype of the unity and diversity of all things.¹³⁵ Thus, it is necessary for Bavinck that the entire work of the triune God “is unbroken whole, and nevertheless comprises the richest variety and change.”¹³⁶ These arguments imply that just as the very intimate relation among the three persons in the Trinity *ad intra* is the origin, foundation, and end of the deepest unity of all things, so the clear distinction among them is the origin, foundation, and end of the richest diversity of all creatures. And they also imply that in the richest variety and change of the entire work of the triune God, based on the clear distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity *ad intra*, the highlight is the surprising diversity and variation of human activities and relationships with each other, with nature, and with God which

¹³⁴ Bavinck states: “God is the architect and builder of all those deeds, the source and the final end of them. Out of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. He is their Maker, Restorer, and Fulfiller. The unity and diversity in the works of God proceeds from and returns to the unity and diversity which exist in the Divine Being. That Being is one being, single and simple. At the same time that being is threefold in His person, in His revelation, and in His influence. The entire work of God is an unbroken whole, and nevertheless comprises the richest variety and change.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 145.

¹³⁵ Bavinck says: “As a result of all this, Scripture offers us a multifaceted and glorious picture of the work of redemption. The pact of salvation makes known to us the relationships and life of the three persons in the Divine Being as a covenantal life, a life of consummate self-consciousness and freedom. Here, within the Divine Being, the covenant flourishes to the full. Whereas the covenant between God and humankind – on account of the infinite distance between them – always more or less has the character of a sovereign grant (διαθηκη) here, among the three persons, it is a pact (συνθηκη) in the full sense of the word. The greatest freedom and the most perfect agreement coincide.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:214–15.

¹³⁶ According to Bavinck, God “reveals Himself in His triune existence even more richly and vitally than in His attributes.” Furthermore, for him, “[i]t is in this holy trinity that each attribute of His Being comes into its own, so to speak, gets its fullest content, and takes on its profoundest meaning.” Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 143.

derive from their freedom, responsibility, and participation because humans are the *imago Dei* and thus are rational and moral beings.¹³⁷

3.4 Summary

As part of our efforts to grasp a basis for thoroughly responding to the two criticisms against Reformed theology (fatalism and Platonic dualism) from the viewpoint of Bavinck's pneumatology, in this chapter we have looked at the degree to which the work of the Holy Spirit is distinguished from the work of Christ, and at the diverse roles of the distinctive work of the Holy Spirit especially in the stream of Bavinck's doctrine of the covenant. We also have observed that a part of Bavinck's arguments in the chapter provides a direct or an indirect response to these two criticisms. This research can be abridged into the following three points.

First, the biblical bases of Bavinck's view of the significant distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, along with the implications of this distinction, are revealed in his exposition of the essential threefold difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant periods in the activity and bestowment of the Holy Spirit. (1) With regard to the incarnated Christ totally and completely replete with the Holy Spirit, the Old Covenant is the expectation of this Christ based on divine promise, while the New Covenant is its fulfillment. Specifically, on the basis of his perfect obedience, Christ, at the ascension, actually obtained the full and free command over the Holy Spirit and over all the gifts and powers of that Spirit, and therefore he can now share it with whom he will and in the measure that he will. In this sense, the Holy Spirit

¹³⁷ With respect to the relation between the Trinity and the diversity of activities of humans as the *imago Dei*, refer to Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:557.

became the Spirit of Christ. However, the Holy Spirit becoming the Spirit of Christ does not mean his stopping being the Spirit of the Father, since the Holy Spirit, after the exaltation of Christ, proceeds from both the Father and the Son. It also does not eliminate or weaken the distinction between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Spirit, rather it makes that distinction clearer. This is because the Spirit of Christ means that the Holy Spirit will speak that which he hears from Christ, glorify Christ, receive everything from Christ, and show it to Christ's disciples by freely putting himself in the service of Christ; and because this meaning of the Spirit of Christ plainly attributes the application of salvation to the Holy Spirit, and the acquisition of salvation to Christ. In this way, just as the clear distinction between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit does not weaken the intimate relationship between the two, so the intimate relationship between the two does not weaken the clear distinction between the two. (2) There is a significant difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant periods in the nature, degree, and object of the work of the Holy Spirit. This work of the Holy Spirit in the church of Christ includes testifying of Christ, further dwelling in the church to regenerate it (John 3:5), to bring it to the confession of Jesus as its Lord, to comfort and lead it, to remain eternally with it, and operating out of the church to penetrate the world and to convict it of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Specifically, the New Covenant church and believers participate in a much richer fulfillment of the promise of their sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit than the believers in the history of Israel who participate in some degree of its fulfillment. These statements soteriologically display the ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation as significantly distinct from the ministry of Christ who acquired salvation. (3)

The Holy Spirit's permanent dwelling in the whole church and all its members is a core characteristic of the Holy Spirit of the New Covenant era, whereas in the Old Covenant era the Holy Spirit came down to a few, independent persons, and only temporarily for a specific purpose. This permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church of Christ breaks the national, geographical, and ritual boundaries of the church, such as the boundary of the nation of Israel, the boundaries of Palestine, and the temple on Zion, enabling the church to live independently and leads her to spread herself out over the whole world. In this vein, Bavinck argues that on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit started to dwell in her, the church was born as "mission church and world church." These statements imply that there is an important distinction between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit from the perspective of ecclesiology.

Secondly, Bavinck's view of the distinction between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, based on his biblical exegesis of the work of the Holy Spirit, is best understood in terms of his view of the covenant of grace. For Bavinck, although the covenant of grace as a framework of his soteriology and ecclesiology is truly unilateral as a work of the triune God in its source, scheme, denotation, upkeep, and instrument, it is destined to become bilateral as embracing the conscious and voluntary acceptance and obedience of humans. This nature of the covenant of grace originates from the divine will, which very explicitly and beautifully exhibits itself in the covenant of grace. The purpose of this will of God is to enable the work of grace to be vividly reflected in human consciousness, and to awaken the human will to exert itself vigorously and powerfully. In this respect, the covenant of grace entirely embraces humans together with all their

faculties and abilities of their souls and bodies in time and eternity rather than deadening them and treating them as lifeless objects. It divests them of their impotence by freeing their will from sin and delivering their consciousness from darkness. The covenant of grace also causes the whole person, with soul, mind, and body, to freely love God and to devote itself to him, by its re-creation and renewal by grace. These statements have a significant pneumatological implication in soteriology, especially in relation to how the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation harmonizes with human freedom. For such a nature of the covenant of grace corresponds to the way the Holy Spirit applies salvation to each believer. Furthermore, for Bavinck, the covenant of grace is also important in ecclesiology especially in relation to election since this covenant of grace is the way of realizing election not just individually, but organically and historically. The covenant of grace is with the new humanity whose head is Christ, and thus it is never made with an isolated individual but always also with his or her descendants and contains everything that is his or hers. This implies that the covenant of grace will temporarily – in its earthly execution and dispensation – also contain those who remain inwardly unbelieving and do not participate in the enjoyment of the covenant of grace. These arguments show great dynamic complexity in the realization of the covenant of grace, especially in its connection to ecclesiology. These contentions also provide us with an important clue to understanding the invisible church as a realization of election by the work of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual essence of the church, and the spiritual character of the marks and attributes of the church, etc.

Thirdly, the *pactum salutis* as a basis of Bavinck's soteriology and ecclesiology implies a clear distinction between the three persons as three subjects in the immanent

Trinity, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all three active, all collaborate, and each of them receives and does his own task. In this *pactum salutis*, just as Christ is called the Mediator, so the Holy Spirit is called the Applier. The *unio mystica* of believers with Christ and with God through the Holy Spirit on which Bavinck's soteriology and ecclesiology center, originates from this *pactum salutis*. And this fact is the essential reason not only for the certainty of christological acquisition and pneumatological application of salvation, but also for the distinction in unity between them. This fact also implies that the applicatory work of the Holy Spirit is in time provided to the elected (in a collective meaning) as well as to each individual elect. Furthermore, for Bavinck, the counsel of God establishes uncountable diverse relations between causes (means) and consequences as are seen to exist in life itself. On the basis of the counsel of God, though all the things that are antecedent to the ultimate goal (the glory of God) are as means subordinate to that ultimate goal, these things (means) are not for that reason subordinate to each other but are related coordinately. Also, based on this counsel of God, the history of the world is not a means that becomes unnecessary once the end has come, but has continuing impact and leaves its fruits in eternity. This implies not only that the creation, the fall, and salvation-history are not subordinate to one another as means and purpose but are coordinately related, but also that they eternally retain their meaning as facts with all the consequences that have arisen from them. In this vein, for Bavinck, the counsel of God does not annihilate the rational and moral nature of man, but vouches for it, and always leads us to know it. This conception of the *pactum salutis* has its root in a major characteristic of the Trinity, namely, diversity in unity.

With these statements forming a basis for responding to the two criticisms against Reformed theology (fatalism and Platonic dualism) from the viewpoint of Bavinck's pneumatology, the next chapter will discuss Bavinck's view of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom, to see whether the criticism of Reformed soteriology (fatalism) is answered by Bavinck. On this basis, chapter 5 will deal with Bavinck's view of the relationship between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the invisible and visible church in Reformed ecclesiology in order to determine whether the critique of Reformed ecclesiology (Platonic dualism) is answered by Bavinck. Before moving on to the next chapters, the last section of this chapter will summarize the contents covered in this chapter again using Van Ruler's distinction described in the previous chapter. This will help the reader to grasp the structure and principles and key concepts of Bavinck's trinitarian and covenantal pneumatology.

3.5 Resummary of Trinitarian Pneumatology in Bavinck's Theology of Covenant Using Van Ruler's Distinction

This section will resummarize the contents of this chapter using Van Ruler's pneumatological distinctions to help the reader better find or understand the structure, principles, and key notions of Bavinck's trinitarian pneumatology. This resummary will first be made by introducing the essential correspondence between Van Ruler's pneumatology and Bavinck's pneumatology, followed by additional work using Van Ruler's pneumatological distinctions. Our assessment of Bavinck's pneumatology will be done collectively in the last section of the next chapter, which deals with Bavinck's view of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom.

It was stated in the introduction of this dissertation that we presuppose there is an essential correspondence between Bavinck's pneumatology and Van Ruler's pneumatology. Given Bavinck's statements discussed in this chapter and Van Ruler's statements discussed in the previous chapter, this essential correspondence between Bavinck's pneumatology and Van Ruler's pneumatology can be explained in several ways. First, the essential correspondence between their pneumatologies is, above all, evident in their views of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Van Ruler specifically states the relationship between and the distinctiveness of Christology and pneumatology related to the meaning of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as follows: Although "without Jesus Christ and his work there would be no outpouring or indwelling of the Holy Spirit," the outpouring or indwelling of the Holy Spirit should be understood as "a new and different act of God, distinct from the incarnation."¹³⁸ The interesting fact is that Van Ruler positively mentions Bavinck's statement that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is after creation and incarnation the third great work of God, saying that we should praise this amazing work by God, especially in fulfilling his own purpose in time.¹³⁹ These claims imply that Van Ruler's "relatively independent pneumatology" and his conception of "the structural differences between Christology and pneumatology" emphasize the distinctive features of pneumatology on the basis of the close relationship between Christology and pneumatology. And it could be said that Van Ruler's arguments are

¹³⁸ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 28.

¹³⁹ Van Ruler, *Verzameld Werk*, 4-A:403. Van Ruler writes: "Bavinck, [GD] III, 494: de uitstorting van de Heilige Geest is na schepping en vleeswording het derde grote werk van God. Men moet het werk van God in zijn geheel eren – in belijdenis en theologie." Cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:500.

consistent with Bavinck's view of the relationship between and distinctiveness of Christology and pneumatology in this chapter.

The essential correspondence between Bavinck's pneumatology and Van Ruler's pneumatology is also found in their views of *unio mystica cum christi*. For Van Ruler, based on this *unio mystica*, it is necessary to speak of "we with Christ" and even "we in Christ" as well as "Christ in us and in our place." And this *unio mystica cum christi* is embodied through the work of the Holy Spirit, according to Van Ruler. The focus of this *unio mystica* is not only on our fellowship with and participation in the fruits and benefits of Christ's work, but also on our fellowship with and participation in his work itself (the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ), in Christ himself, and in the state of his humiliation and exaltation. Moreover, this *unio mystica cum christi* is also "a union with the triune God himself," which leads us to behold God himself, his decree and his eternal election, and allows us to recognize ourselves as being elect from eternity and preserved unto eternity. This *unio mystica*, realized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, emphasizes believers as individual beings and at the same time emphasizes believers as community, the church. For the focus of the indwelling Spirit's work is on the human person as an individual, on the many human persons, and on their fellowship. *The Holy Spirit* dwells within *me* and within *us*. Van Ruler's view of the *unio mystica* is essentially consistent with Bavinck's view of it that we have seen in this chapter. As in Van Ruler's case, to Bavinck, the believers' *unio mystica* with Christ and with the triune God is embodied through the Holy Spirit. The realization of this *unio mystica* by the Holy Spirit leads believers to participate together in all the benefits of Christ, in Christ himself, and his

work itself. This *unio mystica*, which is based on divine decree and election and is realized by the indwelling Spirit, makes believers copartakers of all the benefits of Christ.

Such an understanding of the relationship between and distinctiveness of Christology and pneumatology, or of the work of the Holy Spirit as distinct from the work of Christ, also gives Van Ruler a basis for exploring (the most important) structural differences between Christology and pneumatology with a focus on the distinction between the two, while always keeping in mind the close relationship between Christology and pneumatology.¹⁴⁰ Van Ruler states that these structural differences (or the differences in terms and categories) between the christological and the pneumatological can be a key means in discussing Christian salvation and the relationship between God and humanity described in that salvation from a pneumatological perspective.¹⁴¹ This statement also can be said to correspond essentially to the views of Bavinck who tried to distinguish between the objective acquisition of salvation by Christ and the subjective application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, and to explain the relationship between God and humans in the perspective of pneumatology distinguished from the perspective of Christology.¹⁴²

Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, for Van Ruler, the work of the Holy Spirit who takes initiative in applying salvation is in perfect harmony with the free and responsible participation of people in salvation. This is also essentially consistent with Bavinck's view of the work of the Holy Spirit applying salvation in a spiritual and moral

¹⁴⁰ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 28.

¹⁴¹ Van Ruler, *Calvinist Trinitarianism*, 28–29.

¹⁴² This essential correspondence between these two figures' pneumatologies will also be explained in the following chapters.

way, namely always by persuasion, for the purpose of completing salvation following the way of the covenant of grace as stated in this chapter. This essential consistency with regard to the specific nature of the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit will be explained in more detail in the next two chapters.

On the premise of this essential correspondence between Bavinck's pneumatology and Van Ruler's pneumatology, in addition to the previous resummaries of the contents of this chapter in the course of discussing this essential correspondence between the two, we can further re-summarize them using Van Ruler's tool as follows: For Bavinck, the greatness of our participation in the *beneficia Christi* by the Holy Spirit that is distinct from the greatness of *beneficia Christi*, is rooted in the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace, and is manifested in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and in the nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit continually dwelling in the church after that event. Bavinck also expresses this distinction between these two great divine ministries in terms of the distinction between the objective acquisition of salvation by Christ and the subjective application of salvation by the Spirit. Furthermore, this greatness of the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit as distinct from the greatness of God's salvation in Christ is also embodied by Bavinck's exposition of the remarkable and essential difference between the O. C. and the N. C. eras in the activity and bestowment of the Holy Spirit. These characteristics of Bavinck's pneumatology make it clear that the focus of this dissertation with respect to human freedom and the nature of the invisible church in Bavinck's theology should be placed on the subjectivity of the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit that relates to how believers become

completely oriented to the object and content of their faith, rather than on the objectivity of the acquisition of salvation by Christ that relates to the object and content of their faith.

CHAPTER 4

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HUMAN FREEDOM

This chapter will respond to the first criticism against the Reformed tradition (an inevitable fatalism in soteriology) by using Bavinck's pneumatological view of human freedom as a sample study focusing on his soteriology. Specifically, the first section of this chapter will display the harmony between divine sovereignty and human freedom based on the characteristics of the Holy Spirit's work as distinct from that of Christ's work. From the nature of the case, Bavinck's view of regeneration, faith, conversion, justification, and sanctification will be chiefly treated from the viewpoint of his pneumatology. The focus in this section will be on the work of the Holy Spirit in and through human nature, freedom, and responsibility. As in the previous chapter, the second section will summarize the contents of the first section as a whole, and the third section will resummarize the contents of the first section using Van Ruler's tool to better discover and understand the structure, principles, and core concepts of Bavinck's exposition of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom.

4.1 Humanity Constituted and Preserved by the Holy Spirit

4.1.1 Before and after the Fall

Here we will explore the work of the Holy Spirit in human nature before and after the fall. This will be a good clue to understanding the saving work of the Holy Spirit in and through human nature that will be discussed later in this section.

For Bavinck, God "is able not only to take hold of man from the outside by His words and works, but He can penetrate man's heart directly, without means, as it were

from inside through the whole.”¹ God can do so by living in all humans through the Holy Spirit.² In this sense, “in Him [God] we live, move and have our being, Acts 17:28.”³ According to Bavinck, the providential work of God is also applied to every creature as follows: “God not only creates and preserves all things by His Word, so that they repose in thought, but that He also penetrates into the innermost being of every creature by His Spirit and forms it from inside out, inspires, adorns it, in the natural as well as in the spiritual sphere.”⁴ “The Spirit of God,” says Bavinck, “is God Himself, proceeding towards, dwelling in, exercising fellowship with His creation.”⁵ “To this extent, the Spirit comes to all creatures, animate and inanimate, natural and spiritual.”⁶ So “there is no creature, not even in hell, who does not owe his existence to God, and who is not preserved from moment to moment by God’s Spirit and who is not by the Spirit equipped with powers and gifts.”⁷ In this respect, for Bavinck, “by His Spirit God is imminent in all His creatures,” and particularly the Spirit of God himself “is the Author of being, and still further, of being-as-it-is, of the diversity and beauty of creatures.”⁸

As can be naturally deduced from these features of the work of creation and preservation of the Holy Spirit, for Bavinck, the state of Adam before the fall has a close

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, trans. H. Hanko (Grand Rapids, MI: Protestant Reformed Theological School, 1974), 58.

² Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 58; cf. *Our Reasonable Faith*, 178.

³ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 58; cf. *Our Reasonable Faith*, 178.

⁴ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 39.

⁵ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 39.

⁶ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 39.

⁷ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 39.

⁸ Bavinck, *Biblical and Religious Psychology*, 39; cf. *Our Reasonable Faith*, 178.

relationship with the work of the Holy Spirit. He argues that “just as the Son was already the mediator of union [with God] before the fall, so also the Holy Spirit was even then already the craftsman of all knowledge, righteousness, and holiness in humanity.”⁹ In other words, “man in the state of integrity only possessed the virtues of knowledge and righteousness by and in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ Adam’s nature “was holy and did not, as in the case of believers, have to be made holy.”¹¹ This means that his nature was “fit for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”¹² In this sense, Bavinck contends that “in the case of Adam ... this indwelling was entirely natural.”¹³ Furthermore, because “a human being in a full and true sense is and must be an image of God, a child of God, God’s own offspring, living in communion with him by the Holy Spirit,” a human being before the fall was also “the dwelling place of the entire holy Trinity, a most splendid temple of the Holy Spirit,” according to Bavinck.¹⁴

For Bavinck, the state of humans after the fall also has an important relationship with the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, especially with regard to Bavinck’s understanding of the image of God. Bavinck states that “even though, like the lost son in the parable,” humans have fled their paternal home, still, even in their most distant straying, they cherish a memory of their origin and destination.¹⁵ In their profoundest fall

⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:558.

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:558.

¹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:558.

¹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:558.

¹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:558.

¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:559.

¹⁵ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 42.

they still retain “certain small remains of the image of God after which” they were made.¹⁶ For “God reveals Himself *outside* of” the human heart; “He reveals Himself also *within*” the human heart through the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ God “does not leave Himself without witness in the human heart and conscience.”¹⁸ In other words, “the grace of God” in the dimension of the providential ministry of the Holy Spirit, “after the fall, too, permitted man to remain man and continued to regard him and deal with him as a rational, moral, and responsible being.”¹⁹ In this respect, for Bavinck, although “man, bereft of the image of God, is wholly corrupted and inclined to all evil,” “human nature yet remained human nature” “even in its lowest, deepest fall.”²⁰ Bavinck summarizes this on the basis of the traditional Reformed understanding of God’s image as follows: After the fall, humans lost the image of God in the narrower sense, but still hold the image of God in a broader sense.²¹

Here, Bavinck gives five specific biblical examples related to this understanding of the image of God that “man still continued to be called the image of God”: (1) “In Genesis 5:1-3 we are reminded once more that God created man, man and woman together, in His image; and that He blessed them, and that Adam thus begot a son in his own likeness, after his image”; (2) “In Genesis 9:6 the shedding of man’s blood is forbidden for the reason that man was made in the image of God”; (3) “The poet of the

¹⁶ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 42.

¹⁷ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 42.

¹⁸ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 42.

¹⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 211.

²⁰ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 211.

²¹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 208.

beautiful eighth psalm sings of the glory and majesty of the Lord which reveals itself in heaven and earth, and most splendidly of all in insignificant man and his dominion over all the works of God's hands"; (4) "When Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars Hill, he quoted one of their poets approvingly: For we are also His offspring (Acts 17:28)"; (5) "In James 3:9 the Apostle by way of demonstrating the evil of the tongue makes use of this contrast: that with it we bless God, even the Father, and with it we curse men who are made after the similitude of God."²² Furthermore, Bavinck argues that "Scripture not only calls fallen man the image of God, but it keeps on regarding and dealing with him as such throughout."²³ That is, the Scripture "constantly looks upon man as a reasonable, moral being who is responsible to God for all his thoughts and deeds and words and is bound to His service," according to Bavinck.²⁴

As mentioned in the foregoing, humans' retention of these small remains of the image of God despite their very profound fall, is by the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. And the features of this presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in all people, can be made clearer by Bavinck's view of the relation between the primary cause and the secondary cause. Although discussed in the previous chapter, let us think about this relationship between the two once again, in order to have a specific understanding of the Holy Spirit's presence and ministry in all people. With respect to the nature of the secondary causality, Bavinck states that "in relation to God the secondary causes can be compared to instruments (Isa. 10:15; 13:5; Jer. 50:25; Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:20–23); in

²² Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 207.

²³ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 207.

²⁴ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 207.

relation to their effects and products they are causes in the true sense.”²⁵ Here Bavinck also makes it clear that these effects and products are totally the effects and products of the primary cause as well as totally the effects and products of the secondary cause.²⁶ This implies that “the effect that proceeds from the two [causes] is one and the product is one,” “precisely because the primary and the secondary cause do not stand and function dualistically on separate tracks, but *the primary works through the secondary*.”²⁷ But, for Bavinck, “formally” the effect and product “are only the effect and product of the secondary cause” though they “are in reality totally the effect and product of the two causes.”²⁸ Bavinck gives us an example of this. He says, “Wood burns and it is God alone who makes it burn, yet the burning process may not be formally attributed to God but must be attributed to the wood as subject.”²⁹ He also provides us with another example as follows: “Human persons speak, act, and believe, and it is God alone who supplies to a sinner all the vitality and strength he or she needs for the commission of a sin. Nevertheless the subject and author of the sin is not God but the human being.”³⁰ “In this manner Scripture draws the lines within which the reconciliation of God’s sovereignty and human freedom has to be sought,” according to Bavinck.³¹ The main

²⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:614.

²⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:614–15.

²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:614. (my emphasis added)

²⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

²⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

³⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615.

³¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:615. According to Bavinck, this view of the relation between the primary cause and the secondary cause is effective in disputing pantheism on the one side and Deism on the other, especially with respect to the doctrine of providence. “In the former [pantheism] providence coincides with the course of nature as blind necessity; in the latter [Deism]

point in Bavinck's arguments is that "the primary works through the secondary," so that they "do not stand and function dualistically on separate tracks." Thinking in connection with what is mentioned earlier in this section, this relationship between the primary cause and the secondary cause, and between divine sovereignty and human freedom is directly related to the feature of the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit in all humans: The Holy Spirit as a provider of life, wisdom, and strength works in everyone, which especially includes preserving the human nature as God's image in a broader sense; in this providential ministry of the Holy Spirit, human persons freely speak, act, and believe as the subject of such acts and as the formal cause of such acts.

Then naturally this question comes to mind: What is the difference in the work and bestowment of the Holy Spirit between all humans and Christ-believers? According to Bavinck, while "as a spirit of life, of wisdom and of power He [the Holy Spirit] works ... in those who do not believe,"³² yet he "as a spirit of sanctification dwells in believers only."³³ More precisely speaking, unlike the case of non-Christians, the Holy Spirit

providence is replaced by pure chance, and God is removed from the world. In this manner an attempt was made to exalt human autonomy; for humanity to have freedom God must be absent or powerless. God's sovereignty is viewed as a threat to humanity." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:591; cf. *ibid.*, 614.

³² Herman Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," *The Princeton Theological Review*, trans. Geerhardus Vos (1909): 455. With respect to the specific nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in those who do not believe, Bavinck states: "It is contrary to Scripture as such a perpetual blindness as would render him unable to form any true conception. On the contrary, there is light still shining in the darkness, men still retain a degree of love for the truth, some sparks of the truth have still been preserved. Men carry in themselves the principles of the laws which are to govern them individually and in their association with one another. They agree in regard to the fundamentals of justice and equity, and everywhere exhibit an aptness and liking for social order. Sometimes a remarkable sagacity is given to men whereby they are not only able to learn certain things, but also to make important inventions and discoveries, and to put these to practical use in life. Owing to all this, not only is an orderly civil society made possible among men, but arts and sciences develop, which are not to be despised. For these should be considered gifts of the Holy Spirit." *Ibid.*, 455.

³³ Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," 455.

dwells in Christians in a specific way, unites them with Christ and with the triune God, and imparts to them the benefits of Christ which consist in calling and regeneration, in faith and justification, in sanctification and glorification.³⁴

4.1.2 The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation Affirms Human Freedom

Now let us explore Bavinck's view of how the Holy Spirit dwells and works in the believer especially with a focus on the relation between the Holy Spirit's work and human freedom in the application of salvation.

4.1.2.1 Refuting the Pelagian Critique

Inasmuch as looking at Bavinck's refutation of the Pelagian critique of Reformed soteriology is an important historical background and clue to his understanding of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom in the order of salvation, this subsection will deal with his refutation of the Pelagian criticism before addressing his view of this relationship.

For Bavinck, the application of salvation "has the Holy Spirit as its author and may be called his special work."³⁵ Thus "the whole way of salvation is the applicatory grace of the Holy Spirit."³⁶ However, says Bavinck, the objection against this view of the order of salvation "is always raised that in that way the right of humanity is denied, human self-activity is suppressed, and an ungodly life is fostered."³⁷ This objection, for Bavinck, especially comes "from the side of Pelagianism," namely, from those who on their misunderstanding "overturn the scriptural testimony that by the works of the law no

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:505.

³⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

³⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

³⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

human being will be justified (Rom. 3:20).”³⁸ This objection is, for Bavinck, incorrect since “the view of the ‘application of salvation’ [as the special work of the Holy Spirit and thus] as God’s work does not exclude but includes the full recognition of all those moral factors that, under the guidance of God’s providence, affect the intellect and heart of the unconverted person.”³⁹ In this vein, Bavinck argues that “the application of salvation is and remains a work of the Spirit ... and is therefore never coercive and violent but always spiritual, lovely, and gentle, treating humans not as blocks of wood but as rational beings, illuminating, persuading, drawing, and bending them.”⁴⁰ Through this application of salvation, the Holy Spirit “causes their darkness to yield to the light and replaces their spiritual powerlessness with spiritual power.”⁴¹ That is, this applicational work of the Holy Spirit “does not destroy” “all their faculties and powers, in soul and body” and does not “take up humans into a supernatural order” by adding “a supernatural quality” to them, but “deprives them of their impotence.”⁴² For grace does not oppose (human) nature, but it opposes only sin and frees humans from sin.⁴³ Sin “is overcome only by the power of” grace.⁴⁴ In this way, “grace restores nature and takes it to its

³⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

³⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:572.

⁴⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁴¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁴² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230, 577.

⁴³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573, 577.

⁴⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573. Bavinck is now here among the various meanings of grace discussing especially “those gifts of grace which the Holy Spirit communicates subjectively – internally – to humans and which are most intimately related to their salvation.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:574.

highest pinnacle” without adding “to it any new and heterogeneous constituents.”⁴⁵ “[A]s soon as and to the same degree that the power of sin is broken, the opposition between God and humans ceases.”⁴⁶ This means that to the extent that the power of sin breaks down through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, human nature and freedom join in God’s will and work. For Bavinck, this view is supported by various Bible verses as follows: “It is God’s Spirit who ‘bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God’ (cf. Rom. 8:16). ‘I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God’ (cf. Gal. 2:20). ‘It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure’ and who himself wants us to work out our salvation ‘with fear and trembling’ (cf. Phil. 2:12–13).”⁴⁷

These arguments imply that the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer does not override his or her natural faculties, nor is subject to them. But he restores and works in and through them without overriding and subjection. Moreover, for Bavinck, “this theological view is so far removed from fostering an ungodly life that, instead, it alone guarantees the reality of a new Christian life, assures believers of the certainty of their salvation, infallibly vouches for the victory of the kingdom of God, and causes the work

⁴⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:577. According to Bavinck, this Reformation and Reformed view of the relation between grace and nature clearly differs from the following thinking of Rome which is a species of “Neoplatonic mysticism”: “Grace ... is, in the first place, a supernatural quality added to human beings by which they are in principle taken up into a supernatural order, become partakers of the divine nature, of the vision of God, and are able to perform supernatural acts such as by a condign merit deserve eternal life. The forgiveness of sins is secondary here. Faith has only preparatory value. The primary thing is the elevation of human beings above their nature: divinization, ‘both becoming like God and union with him’ (Dionysius, in J. Heinrich and C. Gutberlet, *Dogmatische Theologie*, VIII, 595).” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:577.

⁴⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁴⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

of the Father and of the Son to attain completion in that of the Spirit.”⁴⁸ In this respect, Bavinck contends that this Reformed view of the working of the Holy Spirit, corresponding to Augustine and his allies’ view of it, overcomes Pelagian criticism that Reformed pneumatology annuls human nature, freedom, and duty.⁴⁹

Here Bavinck not only defends the Reformed pneumatology from the Pelagian criticism, but also reveals what is the key difference between Pelagianism and the Reformed. He argues that “Pelagianism, by contrast, makes everything wobbly and uncertain – even the victory of the good and the triumph of the kingdom of God – because it hangs everything on the incalculable arbitrariness of humans.”⁵⁰ Pelagianism stood up for human rights, trampling on the rights of God, and humans eventually only get the right to make a whim. But the Reformation took place for the rights of God, and it gained recognition for human rights again because of that very fact.⁵¹ For “those who start with God can also do justice to humans as his rational and moral creatures; but those who start with humans and first of all seek to secure their rights and liberties always end up limiting the power and grace of God,” according to Bavinck.⁵²

⁴⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁴⁹ Bavinck states: “We do not see...why the Holy Spirit, who calls people to faith and repentance by his Word, should nullify that moral effect of the Word on the human heart and conscience that Pelagianism attributes to it. Reformed doctrine contains not less but more than what is recognized by Pelagius and his followers. They think they can be content with that moral effect. Augustine and his allies, however, while considering it inadequate, still fully included it in the Holy Spirit’s working of grace.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁵⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

⁵¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573. Bavinck states: “Standing up for the rights of humankind, it [Pelagianism] tramples on the rights of God and for humans ends up with no more than the right to be fickle. But the Reformation, standing up as it did for the rights of God, has by that very fact again gained recognition for the rights of humankind.”

⁵² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:573.

4.1.2.2 The Holy Spirit and Human Freedom in the *Ordo Salutis*

Bavinck's description of the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation (including calling, justification, sanctification, etc.) acknowledges human freedom and responsibility in the sovereignty of grace.

THE SPIRIT WORKS WITH THE WORD

In order to rightly understand Bavinck's view of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation and human freedom, we need to first grasp his view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word in calling, regeneration, and faith.

Calling and Regeneration

What is the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in all human beings and the Spirit's work in Christ-believers? For Bavinck, "the Holy Spirit always works in the human heart directly and immediately ... as a rule in connection with the Word," or by freely binding himself to the Word.⁵³ This understanding of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word leads Bavinck to say that "calling, the preaching of the gospel therefore precedes all other benefits."⁵⁴ This is especially important in understanding Bavinck's view of the logical sequence between calling (the preaching of the gospel) and regeneration. For Bavinck, calling precedes regeneration since while "the grace of regeneration was granted to the elect children of the covenant *either* before, *or* during, *or* after baptism (that is, they specified one of these) or simply before, during, or after baptism (that is, they maintained that it was one of these but refused to specify

⁵³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:593.

⁵⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:593.

which),” “as a rule the Holy Spirit binds himself to the Word” in the work of regeneration.⁵⁵ The fact that the Holy Spirit as a rule works with or through the Word even in regeneration implies that his saving work is in principle persuasive and is in harmony with the free and responsible response of humans.

To illustrate this harmonization more specifically, Bavinck distinguishes regeneration as active and passive regeneration. That is, “a distinction between the activity of God by which he regenerates, and the fruit of that activity in the person who is being regenerated.”⁵⁶ Here “the regenerative activity of God, is only another name for the call: the efficacious call of God.”⁵⁷ Bavinck also explains the nature of “the connection between the calling in this sense (active regeneration) and regeneration in the passive sense” as follows: this connection between the two “is the same as that between the Father’s speaking and our learning from him (John 6:45), between the Father’s drawing and our following (6:44), between the Father’s granting and our accepting (6:65), between the efficacious offer and our passive acceptance of salvation, between the sowing and what is sown.”⁵⁸ These arguments imply that for Bavinck the immediateness and sovereignty of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are never in conflict with

⁵⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:582, 593.

⁵⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:77. According to Bavinck, this “differentiation is indispensable for a correct understanding here,” though “in reality both things [active and passive regeneration] are closely interconnected and are frequently summed up in the one word ‘regeneration’.” Ibid., 4:77.

⁵⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:77.

⁵⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:77.

human nature and freedom even in regeneration. For “in the internal calling and regeneration, there is no coercion on the part of God.”⁵⁹

In this regard, Bavinck states that even though people would want God’s coercive work in their call and regeneration, the work of his grace cannot be like that, because how God acts in the work of grace is essentially not oppressive but persuasive.⁶⁰ And this way of God’s ministry is based on God’s eternal will.⁶¹ In addition, as a figurative explanation of regeneration by the work of the Holy Spirit, Bavinck states that “there is no more reason to speak of coercion here [in regeneration] than in connection with a person’s birth.”⁶² This means that while regeneration by the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of divine election is not a product of our efforts or merit, just as our physical birth by our parents, but by God entirely, this is by no means a violation of our freedom.⁶³ Furthermore, for Bavinck, in regeneration, there is no coercion of human nature, nor is there any new substance added to human nature as follows: “When re-creation removes sin, it does not violate and suppress nature, but restores it. Similarly, it does not introduce a new ‘substance’ into a human nature. Regeneration does not consist in an infusion of a new heavenly substance, nor in a communication of the divine human life of Jesus or of the divine life itself such that our spiritual life would be made substantially or essentially

⁵⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:86.

⁶⁰ Bavinck says: “It would likely have been their wish that God had more forcefully broken sin in them and made them partakers of salvation and blessedness without their having to travel such a long road of struggle and grief. But that is not how God acts in the work of grace: all coercion is alien to its essence.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁶¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:230.

⁶² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:86.

⁶³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:86–87.

homogeneous with it and in a real sense divinized or eternalized.”⁶⁴ He also says that neither does regeneration “consist in a physiological change of our body effected by the implantation of the germ of our spiritual resurrection body.”⁶⁵ “All this is excluded in Scripture by the fact that communion with God and with Christ is always effected and remained in effect by the Spirit: not in a magical or ‘natural’ fashion but in a spiritual and personal way,” according to Bavinck.⁶⁶

Here Bavinck gives a representative example of how regeneration is considered to be coercive and to change human nature: “Those who view the Holy Spirit purely as a supernatural force that descends upon humans, controlling and impelling them as it were from without, run the danger of regarding regeneration as a pantheistic or theosophical change.”⁶⁷ However, argues Bavinck, “the confession of the Trinity protects us from such a view” since “it knows of no other than *a union of persons*, even if such a union is as close as that between a vine and a branch, between the head and the parts of a body, between a husband and a wife.”⁶⁸ Bavinck’s statement implies that just as the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity is a union of distinct persons, so the union between the Holy Spirit and us, or the union of God with ourselves through the Holy Spirit, is a union of distinct persons. This is so, even though the union between the Holy Spirit and us, or the union between God and us through the Holy Spirit, is a very close union. Bavinck is saying that this trinitarian perspective prevents us from falling

⁶⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:92.

⁶⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:92.

⁶⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:92.

⁶⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:92–93.

⁶⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:93. (my emphasis added)

into the error of pantheistic or theosophical understanding of regeneration. In this respect, Bavinck summarizes the nature of regeneration as follows: “Regeneration, in a word, does not remove anything from us other than what, if all were well, we should do without, and it restores to us what we, in keeping with the design of our being, should have but lost as a result of sin. In principle it restores us to the likeness and image of God.”⁶⁹

According to Bavinck, this restoration of human nature by the Holy Spirit “liberates the fallen, sinful human nature from its darkness and slavery, its misery and death.”⁷⁰ This feature of the regenerating ministry of the Holy Spirit, says Bavinck, was expressed in the most beautiful language by the Canons of Dort: ““When God carries out his good pleasure in his chosen ones, he, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds’ (*Canons of Dort*, III–IV, art. 12).”⁷¹ In this sense, for Bavinck, regeneration “works so little with coercion that it is truer to say that it liberates people from the compulsion and power of sin: it is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing.”⁷² Bavinck also expresses this characteristic of the spiritual life of believers by regeneration in trinitarian language: The spiritual life “is born of God, flows down to us from the resurrection of Christ, and is from the beginning effected,

⁶⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:93.

⁷⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:94.

⁷¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:94.

⁷² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:94.

maintained, and confirmed in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”⁷³ “For that reason,” says Bavinck, “it cannot sin or die, but lives, works, and grows, and in due time manifests itself in deeds of faith and conversion.”⁷⁴ Bavinck’s statements show that the main characteristic of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is freeing us from sin and restoring our nature so we can do good deeds freely.

Faith

Bavinck’s view of this characteristic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is not coercive but always persuasive, even in regeneration, corresponds to his understanding of faith as a restored-natural capacity to believe. For Bavinck, the term “the knowledge of faith” “by no means implies that this ‘knowledge of faith’ is something that is alien to human nature and is added to it as a ‘superadded gift’ (*donum superadditum*).”⁷⁵ This is not only because “the light of knowledge belongs to the image of God, which originally was integral to human nature,” but also because “not even faith in the restricted sense, ‘justifying’ or ‘saving’ faith, is a supernatural addition to human nature” in the Roman Catholic sense, but “a gift of God (Acts 5:31; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29), the product of his power (1 Cor. 2:4–5; Eph. 1:19; 1 Thess. 2:13) and specifically bestowed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:13).”⁷⁶ Here Bavinck explains these claims about this nature of faith in more detail. He states that “before the fall Adam possessed the natural capacity to believe in Christ, even though he did not of course know Christ and at the time did not

⁷³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:95.

⁷⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:95.

⁷⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:100.

⁷⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:100.

need him as Savior.”⁷⁷ For Bavinck, this nature of faith applies even to Jesus in his state of humiliation. He says, “As a human being on earth Christ had lived by faith.”⁷⁸

Furthermore, it also applies to regenerated believers as follows: “Since regeneration is basically the re-creation of the whole person in the image of him who created humans, the capacity to believe (potential, seminal, or habitual faith, the seed or root of faith) is automatically implied.”⁷⁹ In this vein, Bavinck states: “Just as babies are rational creatures before they possess the actual power to reason, so if they are children of the covenant, they are also believers before they can actually believe.”⁸⁰ This implies that “in principle the whole person is renewed by” regeneration and thus “in regeneration, along with all human capacities and powers, the capacity to believe is also restored.”⁸¹ In this respect, “to the regenerate person, believing in God or in Christ as such is just as natural as it is for everyone to believe in the world of the senses,” according to Bavinck.⁸²

Here Bavinck makes it clear that “the capacity to believe implanted by regeneration only becomes an act of faith in response to the ongoing internal calling.”⁸³ But, this continuous internal calling does not mean that “the regenerate draw this knowledge of God in Christ from their own hearts from the internal instruction of the Holy Spirit,”

⁷⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:100–101.

⁷⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101.

⁷⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101.

⁸⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101.

⁸¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101.

⁸² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101. This claim is closely related to Bavinck’s epistemology, which will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

⁸³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:101.

apart from the Word.⁸⁴ Rather, it means that on the premise of “a relationship or kinship between the object and the subject,” “for us to know God in the face of Christ, the Spirit has to be added to the Word, the internal calling to the external calling, and illumination to revelation.”⁸⁵ In this context, Bavinck makes the following analogy to the relationship between the new life in the believer and the Word: “Just as in the natural world every creature seeks the food that suits it, so the new life in the believer is always drawn toward the gospel, the word of Christ, the Scriptures, as the basis of its support, as the food by which it is strengthened.”⁸⁶ Thus, the Scripture is increasingly essential and glorious for those who grow in faith. Also, the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers binds them to the Scripture with the same degree and power as to bind them to the person of Christ himself.⁸⁷

In this vein, for Bavinck, “the internal and external calling go hand in hand.”⁸⁸ God “strengthens and nourishes the spiritual life [of his children] from moment to moment by the power of his grace and the blessings of his Word” which he carries to people in diverse ways.⁸⁹ These various methods “include the reading of Scripture, the advice and admonition of parents, the instruction of teachers, and public preaching.”⁹⁰ According to Bavinck, “the moment faith awakens out of the seedbed of the new life, it links up with

⁸⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:102.

⁸⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:102.

⁸⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:103.

⁸⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:103.

⁸⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:125.

⁸⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:125.

⁹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:125.

that word, and the moment it has heard that word, it in turn finds resonance in that new life.”⁹¹ Here Bavinck offers a parable to describe this: “Just as a human being, becoming conscious, automatically and without coercion recognizes the world outside oneself, so the soul, which lives from out of God’s communion, in childlike faith accepts the word of Christ, gratefully and with joy.”⁹² These arguments show that, for Bavinck, when the Holy Spirit causes faith from the seedbed of the new life with the Word in various ways, it is *simultaneous* that faith is awakened from the seedbed of the new life, that faith is connected to the Word, and that the faith connected with the Word leads to life. This implies that the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit is in perfect harmony with the believer voluntarily accepting the Word of God and living according to it from moment to moment, in his or her new life.

Bavinck’s view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer and the Word draws our attention to his view of the true meaning of believing (or faith). For Bavinck, “believing always includes acceptance of the witness God has given of his Son through the apostles as well as unlimited trust in the person of Christ.”⁹³ So, these two “are inseparable”: “Those who truly accept the apostolic witness trust in Christ alone for their salvation; and those who put their trust in Christ as the Son of God also freely and readily accept the apostolic witness concerning that Christ.”⁹⁴ “The two together, subjectively speaking, constitute the essence of Christianity,” according to

⁹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:125–26.

⁹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:126.

⁹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:107.

⁹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:107–8.

Bavinck.⁹⁵ In this sense, for Bavinck, faith is a confession of Christ as the Son of God that is “rooted in the faith of the heart” under the Holy Spirit’s witness to Christ in us and the Scripture’s guidance to Christ.⁹⁶ The subject who believes and confesses here is a person. “For a person believes with the heart and so is justified, and confesses with the mouth, and so is saved (Rom. 10:10).”⁹⁷ With regard to our primary concern, the relation between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and human nature and freedom, these arguments tell us that the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit that as a rule applies salvation with and through the Word is fully in harmony with the subjectivity of humans who freely and voluntarily believe in Christ as the Son of God with the heart and confess it with the mouth. The main reason for this harmony is that, for Bavinck, as mentioned before, the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit is to work with and through the Scripture, to restore human nature, and to work in and through human nature.

CONVERSION INVOLVES THE WILL

Bavinck’s view of the role of the will in conversion reveals an important aspect of his view of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation and human freedom. This is because, for Bavinck, conversion is connected not only to the work of the Holy Spirit, but also to human freedom in terms of human will.

According to Bavinck, conversion is especially connected to human will.⁹⁸ This indicates that Bavinck’s view of conversion discloses his thoughts on human free choice

⁹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:108.

⁹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:108.

⁹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:108.

⁹⁸ In this regard, Bavinck says: “Just as the spiritual life implanted in regeneration develops, in relation to the intellect, under the influence of God’s Word and Spirit into faith, knowledge,

in detail. First of all, he talks about human free choice that applies to everyone in terms of conversion in its broadest sense. He argues that although it is really difficult for a person to change his or her mind, everyone has not only the power and the option to be able to change one's own mind in doing moral conduct, but also the power and the option to be able to either take one direction or another at the crossroads of life.⁹⁹ And "it is never too late to choose the path of virtue," according to Bavinck.¹⁰⁰

As to this nature of human free choice, Bavinck gives examples of such conversion events by leaders of various world religions and thinkers in non-Christian worlds.¹⁰¹ Here we should note: the fact that this nature of human free choice applies to all persons implies that this essential nature applies equally to Christian believers who are under the special influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit and his salvation ministry. We should also note this: given Bavinck's understanding of divine decree, of the covenant of grace in a broad sense (distinct from the covenant of grace in the narrow sense), of common grace, and of the general ministry of the Holy Spirit (distinguished from the salvific ministry of the Holy Spirit), it can be said that the preservation of this nature of human free choice is

and wisdom, so in relation to the will, it manifests itself under that same illumination and guidance in conversion." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:132.

⁹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:133.

¹⁰⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:133. Bavinck says: "If one takes this word (conversion) in its broadest sense and designates as such every religious change by which a human breaks with one's sinful past and enters upon the path of virtue, one can also speak of conversion in the case of many who have never heard of Christianity or have only undergone an external and superficial effect of it. God, after all, has not left himself without a witness to any person, but through nature and history, heart and conscience, effects a "real" [mediated through things] call that keeps alive religious and moral consciousness among all peoples. All humans have a more or less acute consciousness of sin, guilt, and punishment and at the same time also of the moral law and of the good they are obligated to do.... It is difficult indeed to change one's mind. But everyone has the power and the option to do it. Virtue is a person's own work. At the crossroads of life a person can either take one direction or another, and it is never too late to choose the path of virtue."

¹⁰¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:133–34.

based on the eternal will of God for all human beings after the fall and on his act upon this will, and thus on the character of the general ministry of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰²

But here we must also pay attention to the fact that Bavinck distinguishes conversion in a narrow sense that relates only to Christian-believers from conversion in a broad sense that relates to everyone. And this distinction leads us to look at Bavinck's view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human nature and freedom especially with regard to his work in conversion in a narrow sense.

For Bavinck, conversion in a narrow sense consists not only of the first conversion but also of a second conversion. "The first and fundamental conversion," says Bavinck, "must be continued in an ongoing conversion that embraces the whole of life and never stops until life on earth is over."¹⁰³ Bavinck gives the following reasons for why conversion should have this nature: "Believers, as we know, do not attain perfection here on earth. In many things they still stumble (James 3:2), and when they say that they have no sin, they deceive themselves (1 John 1:8). They must therefore continue the struggle against sin till the day they die and bring forth fruit that is worthy of and corresponds to that conversion (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20)."¹⁰⁴ But this is not all. According to Bavinck, for believers, "as it were, a second conversion is needed" since they "may err, fall into gross sin, and even remain in it for a long period."¹⁰⁵ Here Bavinck addresses David of the Old Testament and Peter of the New Testament as examples of this second

¹⁰² To understand Bavinck's view of the covenant of grace (in a broad sense), general grace, and the general work of the Holy Spirit, which applies to all mankind, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:216–19.

¹⁰³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140.

¹⁰⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140.

¹⁰⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140.

conversion. Bavinck specifically explains Peter’s example, saying that it is typical of conversion as follows:

In the Old Testament, David is an example of this (2 Sam. 12:13), as is Peter in the New (Matt. 26:75). Jesus had warned Peter in advance (Luke 22:32) and, through John, Jesus similarly exhorts the—in many ways aberrant—churches in Asia Minor to repent and do their first works (Rev. 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19). This second conversion, too, is God’s work. Peter owed his restitution to Christ, to his faithfulness and intercession (Luke 22:32), even though Christ used means (Ps. 19:7; James 5:19–20). And so it is with conversion from beginning to end.¹⁰⁶

In this respect, Bavinck argues that since this second conversion is also a divine work, conversion in a narrow sense is always “the work of God (Jer. 31:18; Lam. 5:21) and his gifts (Acts 5:31; 11:18).” But this conversion “is realized through a person’s own intellect and will,” Bavinck says.¹⁰⁷ So in conversion, when God’s side and humans’ side are treated together, it is as follows: “When God converts someone, that person is converted (Lam. 5:21), and that person then converts him- or herself (2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chron. 15:4; Pss. 22:27; 51:13; Isa. 19:22; Matt. 11:21; Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 9:35; 11:21; etc.).”¹⁰⁸ These arguments imply that the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in conversion harmonizes with human activity.

This harmony between the divine side and the human side in conversion becomes clearer in what Bavinck explains about the nature of the first actual conversion especially with respect to the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life. Bavinck compares the difference between understanding the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life as aspects

¹⁰⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140.

¹⁰⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140.

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:140–41.

of regeneration and understanding them as aspects of actual conversion. He states that “even if one continues to view the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life as aspects of actual conversion, one always ascribes to them a different meaning than when they occur as aspects of regeneration.”¹⁰⁹ “In the latter case,” says Bavinck, “they are exclusively acts of God in which a human is passive; but if the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life are aspects of actual conversion (*resipiscentia*), they are *activities of the person* who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God and endowed with the virtues of faith and love.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, according to Bavinck, “conversion as the ‘first actual conversion’ (as it is considered here [in order] after regeneration in a restricted sense, alongside of and in connection with faith, and [in order] before Justification) is *the activity of the regenerate person by which one learns to know, hate, and flee sin in its true nature, returns with a humble confession of sin to God as Father in Christ, and proceeds with a joyful heart to walk in his ways.*”¹¹¹ In sum, for Bavinck, when we understand conversion in terms of the putting-to-death and the bringing-to-life, conversion as the first actual conversion refers to human activity by which one fundamentally turns from sin and turns to God with humility and joy.

Now Bavinck explains in more detail the nature of true conversion, which provides a particularly good clue to understanding his view of the relationship and harmony between the ministry of the Holy Spirit in conversion and human nature. For Bavinck, conversion “can only be [true] conversion when it bears a primarily religious character; that is, when we have learned to know sin – as God views it – in the light of his holy law, as it

¹⁰⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152. (my emphasis added)

¹¹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152. (my emphasis added)

dishonors him and makes him angry.”¹¹² Then we see the ethical nature of conversion that flows naturally from this religious nature of conversion, Bavinck says.¹¹³ “For those who have thus learned to know sin as sin in the sight of God, cannot love it, but hate and flee it, separate themselves from it by a humble confession of guilt, and receive an inward desire and love for the good, that is, a life in harmony with God’s will.”¹¹⁴ In this respect, for Bavinck, true conversion “encompasses the whole person, including one’s intellect, heart, will, soul, and body.”¹¹⁵ And it “makes one break with sin across the board and devote one’s entire person and life to God’s way and God’s service.”¹¹⁶ Although these diverse human faculties are involved in conversion, the focus in conversion “is especially on the will,” according to Bavinck.¹¹⁷ On this relationship between conversion and the will, Bavinck explains in more detail, in terms of the similarities and differences between faith and conversion: “Faith and repentance both arise from regeneration. They are both rooted in the heart. But whereas faith tends to work from there to the side of consciousness and appropriates the forgiving grace of God in Christ, conversion exercises its activity more in the sphere of the will and turns it away from evil and toward the good.”¹¹⁸

¹¹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹¹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152–53.

But here Bavinck reminds us of the inseparable relationship between faith and conversion: “Just as the intellect and the will share a common root in the heart of a person, are never separated, and continually impact each other, so also it is with faith and conversion. They are consistently interconnected and reciprocally support and promote each other.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Bavinck explains how the focus of conversion on the will has a specific meaning in relation to the life of the believer. He states that when considering the relationship between faith and conversion, and the relationship between conversion and the will, true conversion is a serious and firm will to do God’s commandments in a way that comes from love for God and love for people rather than from fear or bitter emotions.¹²⁰ Here we should also pay attention to the fact that Bavinck says that the elements of conversion also include emotional aspects as follows:

[T]here [in conversion] are several elements . . . : the illumination of the intellect by which a person learns to know sin in its true character, that is, as sin in the sight of God; grief, sorrow, regret, and shame over sin because we have displeased God with it; a humble confession made in secret before God or privately before another person, or in special cases in public before the council of the church or the whole congregation; hatred of sin and a conscious and firm

¹¹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:153.

¹²⁰ Bavinck says: But if by faith in the forgiveness of our sins, we have been given assurance beforehand, we are also heartily willing to walk as children according to all God’s commandments. Therein, then, we see the evidence of the genuineness of our faith and repentance. For “*the fruits of true repentance are the duties of piety toward God, of charity toward men, and in the whole of life, holiness, and piety.*” And the more earnestly any persons measure their lives by the standard of God’s law, the surer are the signs of true repentance they show. So then *the first and continuing conversion does not consist exclusively, nor even primarily, in painful sensations of the heart but – though such feelings are not totally ruled out – in walking in God’s commandments and doing everywhere and always what is pleasing to him.* The coming-to-life of the new self, the second part of true repentance, is not even limited to “the happiness that the mind receives after its disturbance and fear have been quieted,” but rather means “the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth; as if it were said that humans die to themselves that they may begin to live to God.” And if believers sometimes through weakness fall into sins, they must not for that reason despair of God’s mercy, nor continue in sin. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:174. (my emphasis added)

decision to flee it; the act of standing up and returning to God as a gracious Father in Christ, hence in the confidence that he can and will forgive the sins; a heartfelt joy in God through Christ inasmuch as he has forgiven the sin and is a gracious Father; a sincere desire and love to live in keeping with the will of God, in all good works.¹²¹

But even in this statement of Bavinck, we can once again confirm that although conversion is related to the intellect and the emotion, its focus is on the will.

Regarding the main thesis of this dissertation, Bavinck's statements imply that in conversion the Holy Spirit works in and through human faculties, especially in and through the human will, without overriding (them or) it, which means that the ministry of the Holy Spirit in conversion entirely harmonizes with human nature, activity, freedom, and duty.

JUSTIFICATION IS BOTH FORENSIC AND COMMUNICATIVE

So far we have probed Bavinck's view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom in the first group of the order of salvation, that is, in calling (with regeneration in a restricted sense, faith, and conversion).¹²² Now let's examine Bavinck's view of it in the second and third groups of the order of salvation, namely, in justification and sanctification.

¹²¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:152.

¹²² What we need to be careful here to understand in the big picture of the order of salvation and to deeply understand in the work of the Holy Spirit in it is that Bavinck regards the first group of the order of salvation as the conditions of the remaining groups as follows: "Rebirth, faith, and conversion are the conditions for the following benefits of the covenant of grace: they are the only way by which humans can receive and enjoy the forgiveness of sins and adoption as children of God, peace and joy, sanctification and glorification." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:179.

For Bavinck, justification “is not an ethical but a juridical (forensic) act.”¹²³ This is because justification in itself “cannot consist in anything other than a judgment, in our terms, a changed disposition and mood [of God] toward us.”¹²⁴ In this regard, Bavinck gives an example: “[W]hen people are legitimately angry with another person, the former cannot begin a sincere and intimate relationship with the latter unless they start by putting aside their anger and again become favorably disposed toward the other. And so it is also with the Lord our God.”¹²⁵ “In Christ,” says Bavinck, “he [God] loved the world and reconciled it to himself, not counting their sins against them (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19).”¹²⁶ Bavinck also states that although divine wrath “was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of humans, yet in the gospel God brought to light a righteousness apart from the law (Rom. 1:17–18; 3:20ff.).”¹²⁷ Therefore, for Bavinck, this righteousness “is not opposed to his grace, but includes it as it were and paves the way for it.”¹²⁸ “It brings out that God, though according to the law he had to condemn us, yet in Christ has had different thoughts about us, generously forgives all our sins without charging us with anything, and accords to us divine compassion and fatherly sympathy in place of wrath and punishment,” according to Bavinck.¹²⁹ In this sense, for Bavinck,

¹²³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹²⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

justification is a forensic act, and it cannot “be anything other than that because all evidence of favor presupposes favor, and every benefit of grace presupposes grace.”¹³⁰

To illustrate the harmony between God’s sovereign ministry in this forensic justification and a living and active faith, Bavinck uses the distinction between active and passive justification of Reformed theologians. He uses this distinction as a theological tool to avoid and correct “both the nomistic and antinomian errors,” just as the Reformed theologians did.¹³¹ The distinction and relationship between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit is a major clue to understanding this distinction between active and passive justification, according to Bavinck. “The application of redemption by the Holy Spirit,” says Bavinck, “may in no respect be turned into the acquisition of redemption, for while the Holy Spirit takes everything from Christ, the application in its field of operation is as necessary and of equally great importance as the acquisition.”¹³² This implies that passive justification as a subjective justification in God’s personally imparting “it to us in the internal call by faith” is importantly distinguished from active justification as an objective justification “in the eternal decree, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the proclamation of the gospel” and

¹³⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:206.

¹³¹ Park, “Driven by God,” 143–45; Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:202–3, 220–22. Park briefly summarizes Bavinck’s view of how the distinction and relationship between active and passive justification correct the nomistic and antinomian errors: “Against the nomistic belief that the ground of justification has shifted from God to the human agent, from Christ’s righteousness to the activities of faith, from the gospel to the law, the distinction and inseparability of active from passive justification move the center of gravity toward God who is the ultimate consummator of justification. Against the antinomian precept that overlooks the subjective aspect of justification by wrongly overemphasizing the dimension of objective justification, the distinction and inseparability of active and passive justification move the center of gravity of justification back toward the human who by faith is the secondary agent of justification.” Park, “Driven by God,” 144.

¹³² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

has the same importance as that active justification.¹³³ This is further clarified by Bavinck's statement: "How could a benefit of Christ be to our advantage if it did not enter into our possession? How could a prison inmate benefit from his acquittal if he was not informed of it and the prison doors were not opened for him? And what advantage would there be for us in a Justification in the eternal decree, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the proclamation of the gospel, if God did not personally impart it to us in the internal call by faith?"¹³⁴ Interestingly, this statement not only explains the distinction between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, but also the close relationship between the two. About the intimate relationship between the two, Bavinck says that "the acquisition and the application are so tightly connected that the former cannot be conceived or exist apart from the latter and vice versa."¹³⁵ He also argues that "the acquisition necessarily entails the application."¹³⁶ For "Christ, by his suffering and death, also acquired the astonishing blessing that all his benefits, hence also the forgiveness of sins, would be applied personally and individually to all his own."¹³⁷ And "as Savior, Christ not only aims at objective satisfaction but also at the subjective redemption of his own from sin."¹³⁸ Bavinck's arguments have the following implication with respect to active and passive justification: "objective [or active] justification is actualized and terminated in the sphere of subjective [or passive]

¹³³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:220.

¹³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:219–20.

¹³⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

¹³⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

¹³⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

¹³⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

justification, and the two dimensions are never disconnected or detached from each other.”¹³⁹ Specifically, for Bavinck, these two aspects of justification are “coupled with simultaneity in time,” and these two concretely “coincide and always go together,”¹⁴⁰ though there remain large differences between the two, as mentioned above.

In this respect, for Bavinck, the fact that active justification logically precedes faith¹⁴¹ is not troublesome.¹⁴² And the objection “can be readily refuted” that active justification that precedes faith is not supported by Scripture which affirms only justification *sola fide* as a justification “from” (*uit*) or “by” (*door*) faith.¹⁴³ For “if justification were terminated in active justification, it would certainly violate the biblical principle of justification *sola fide*; but if justification is actualized in passive justification through and by faith, which is brought about on the objective foundation of active justification (viz., God objectively justifies sinners solely on the basis of Christ’s death and resurrection), justification *sola fide* and active justification are compatible, not contradictory.”¹⁴⁴ In other words, “active justification does not in fact neglect faith; rather, it grounds what occurs in justification on account of faith or on the basis of faith. For

¹³⁹ Park, “Driven by God,” 147.

¹⁴⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:219.

¹⁴¹ “That is, justification does not occur as a result of or by faith *per se*, but with a view to faith, that is counted or reckoned as righteousness to the believer solely by virtue of Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness as the content or object of faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3, 5, 6, 22; Gal 3:6).” Park, “Driven by God,” 155; cf. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:220.

¹⁴² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:219.

¹⁴³ Park, “Driven by God,” 155–56.

¹⁴⁴ Park, “Driven by God,” 156.

Christ and only Christ is all the benefit and righteousness that allows sinners to be justified, and this is what active justification clearly states.”¹⁴⁵

Now here we should note that Bavinck emphasizes the importance of passive justification in terms of how the full fulfillment of salvation is accomplished: “this redemption is fully achieved, not by an objective [active] Justification in the divine decree or in the resurrection of Christ, but only when, both in terms of reality and of the consciousness of that reality, human beings are freed from sin and hence regenerated and justified.”¹⁴⁶ In this respect, he argues that “it is of *this* [passive] Justification that Scripture continually speaks, and it is *this* [passive] Justification, as Comrie acknowledges, that is ‘the communication and actual impartation.’”¹⁴⁷

For Bavinck, the distinction between active and passive justification “makes it possible for us to regard faith as simultaneously a receptive organ and an active power.”¹⁴⁸ This means that because in this view of justification “Christ and Christ alone” is the ground or cause of justification and thus faith is never any basis of justification “even in the slightest degree,” faith can be “purely receptive” and can be “the very act of accepting Christ and all his benefits” or “a sure knowledge and firm confidence that the Holy Spirit works in one’s heart.”¹⁴⁹ In this sense, faith is not antithetical to any work in any respect. However, the moment the works of faith “are in even the slightest degree regarded as a ground for Justification, as constituting in part or in whole the

¹⁴⁵ Park, “Driven by God,” 156–57.

¹⁴⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218.

¹⁴⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:218–19.

¹⁴⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:221.

¹⁴⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:221–22.

righteousness on the basis of which God justifies us,” faith becomes antithetical to these works.¹⁵⁰ Bavinck also argues, with respect to the nature of faith under the distinction between active and passive justification, that insofar as the works of faith, “as the fruits of faith, are used by the Holy Spirit to assure believers of the genuineness of their faith and thus of their salvation,” faith is not opposed to these works.¹⁵¹ For Bavinck, this saving faith “cannot be a ‘knowledge of history’ or a ‘bare assent’ to certain truths; ... it is by its very nature a living and active faith, and it is not in every respect antithetical to all work.”¹⁵² In this sense, “faith itself is even a work (John 6:29), the best work and the principle of all good works.”¹⁵³

In this respect, for Bavinck, “Paul and James are ... in agreement ... both deny that the ground of our Justification consists in the works of the law, and both acknowledge that faith, that is, living faith, the faith that includes and produces good works, is the means by which the Holy Spirit assures us of our righteousness in Christ.”¹⁵⁴ The only difference in this connection “is that Paul fights against dead works while James wages a campaign against a dead faith.”¹⁵⁵ In this vein, Bavinck contends that “the faith that justifies is the certainty – produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit – of our righteousness in Christ.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, not the more passive, but the more vigorous and powerful the

¹⁵⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:222.

¹⁵¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:222.

¹⁵² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:222.

¹⁵³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:222.

¹⁵⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:222–23.

¹⁵⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:223.

¹⁵⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:223.

faith is, “the more it justifies us.”¹⁵⁷ Accordingly, faith “is active along with works and is ‘brought to completion by the works’ (James 2:22).”¹⁵⁸

Understanding Bavinck’s view of the elements of justification also helps to understand his view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human nature and freedom. He states that justification consists not only in forgiveness, but also in “the attribution of the right to eternal life” or “adoption as children.”¹⁵⁹ For although the “benefit of the forgiveness of sins is so great and so prominent in Scripture that it sometimes seems to be all there is to Justification,” “linked with it ... is another benefit that is equally rich and glorious and that, though it cannot be separated from forgiveness, is nevertheless distinct from it.”¹⁶⁰ Specifically, Bavinck explains, in terms of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the adoption of believers, with their justification as follows: “just as at his resurrection Christ was declared to be Son of God *according to the Spirit of holiness* (1:3), and believers are justified *in the Spirit of our God* (1 Cor. 6:11), so by *the Spirit of adoption* they are made the sons of God (Rom. 8:14–16) and are subsequently assured of their sonship by the same Spirit (Gal. 4:6).”¹⁶¹ “As children, then, they are also heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29; 4:7; Rom. 8:17), and since this inheritance still awaits them in the future, also their adoption in its totality is still an object of hope (Rom. 8:23).”¹⁶² However,

¹⁵⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:223.

¹⁵⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:223.

¹⁵⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:226.

¹⁶⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:226.

¹⁶¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:227.

¹⁶² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:227.

by the Spirit as pledge and guarantee, they are sealed for the day of their redemption (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30) and kept for their heavenly inheritance as this is kept for them (1 Pet. 1:4–5). By that Spirit, they are continually led (*ἄγονται*, *agontai*, as in Rom. 8:14; not *φέρονται*, *pherontai*, as in 2 Pet. 1:21), assured of the love that God has for them (Rom. 5:5; cf. 5:8) and of their adoption (8:15–16; Gal. 4:6), and are now already the beneficiaries of peace (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7, 9; 1 Thess. 5:23), joy (Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thess. 1:6), and eternal life (John 3:16).¹⁶³

This understanding of justification by Bavinck is closely related to his understanding of sanctification and is also an important clue to understanding his view of the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and human nature and freedom in sanctification. For “the connectedness between Justification and sanctification is also firmly grounded in the Spirit.”¹⁶⁴ And for “the Spirit whom Jesus promised to his disciples and poured out in the church is not only a Spirit of adoption, who assures believers of their status as children, but also the Spirit of renewal and sanctification.”¹⁶⁵

*SANCTIFICATION IS THE ONGOING JOURNEY OF THE FREE BELIEVER
TOWARD HOLINESS*

Then, what is Bavinck’s view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom in relation to sanctification?

With respect to sanctification, Bavinck also inherits the distinction between active and passive sanctification of Reformed theologians just as he used their distinction between active and passive justification.¹⁶⁶ Bavinck, as in the case of justification, uses

¹⁶³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:227.

¹⁶⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251.

¹⁶⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251.

¹⁶⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255. Here we should keep in mind that “unlike the distinction of active/passive justification that is viewed from God’s side, Bavinck’s distinction of passive/active sanctification is observed from the human side.” Park, “Driven by God,” 136.

this distinction as a theological device to avert and amend both the nomistic and antinomian mistakes.¹⁶⁷

For Bavinck, the distinction and relationship between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, like the case of justification, is a key clue to understanding this distinction between active and passive sanctification. He states that “believers are being sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2); and Jesus sanctifies his people by the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11), who as such is now called the Holy Spirit and is the prime agent in sanctification.”¹⁶⁸ And this “Holy Spirit dwells in them and they live and walk in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1, 4, 9–11; 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 4:6; and so forth).”¹⁶⁹ These arguments imply that although in the first place sanctification “is a work and gift of God (Phil. 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:23), a process in which humans are passive just as they are in regeneration, of which it is the continuation,” “based on this work of God in humans, it acquires, in the second place, an active meaning, and people themselves are called and equipped to sanctify themselves and devote their whole life to God (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; and so forth).”¹⁷⁰ This active meaning or aspect of sanctification is the active sanctification where humans’ responsibility and participation are emphasized. For Bavinck, the Scripture “definitely insists on sanctification, both its passive and active aspects, and proclaims both the one and the other with equal emphasis.”¹⁷¹ And “it sees no contradiction or conflict between both” passive and active

¹⁶⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:254–55.

¹⁶⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:252.

¹⁶⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251–52.

¹⁷⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:253.

¹⁷¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

aspects of sanctification “but rather knits them together as tightly as possible as when it says that, precisely because God works in them both to will and to do, believers must work out their own salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12–13).”¹⁷² Here dependence “coincides with freedom,” under this principle of organic life applying to believers: “Become what you are!”¹⁷³ In this respect, Bavinck states that “those who are born of God increasingly *become* the children of God and bear his image and likeness, because in principle they already *are* his children.”¹⁷⁴ He also contends that “Jesus and the apostles derive the most compelling reasons for spurring them [believers] on to a holy life from what believers now already *are* by grace through faith in Christ.”¹⁷⁵ This implies that “not law but gospel, the salvation granted and received in Christ, is the one mighty motive for a holy walk of life.”¹⁷⁶ For believers “are not under the law but under grace, and sin therefore may not have dominion over them (6:14)”; that is, they “stand in the freedom with which Christ has made them free; and in Christ, nothing has any power, except faith working through love (Gal. 5:1, 6).”¹⁷⁷ For believers “are not in the flesh but in the Spirit and must therefore walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:5).”¹⁷⁸

In this context, Bavinck, in relation to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, explains that active sanctification in fact “coincides with what is called ‘continued repentance,’ which,

¹⁷² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

¹⁷³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

¹⁷⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

¹⁷⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

¹⁷⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:256.

¹⁷⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:256.

¹⁷⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:255.

according to the Heidelberg Catechism, consists in the dying-away of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new self.”¹⁷⁹ But there is a difference between continued repentance and active sanctification. While in the former “it is the negative side of the process that stands out,” in the latter “it is the positive side that comes to the fore.”¹⁸⁰ However, believers “themselves are active in both and can be active” because they by regeneration at the start and by positive sanctification later on “receive the power of the Holy Spirit to present all their members as instruments of righteousness.”¹⁸¹ Here we can see that for Bavinck the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in the believers is in perfect harmony with their activeness (or freedom) and responsibility. And Bavinck himself in this regard concludes, “Scripture always holds on to both facets: God’s all-encompassing activity and our responsibility.”¹⁸²

With regard to sanctification, we also need to look at Bavinck’s view of the imitation of Christ from a pneumatological point of view, which was mentioned briefly in the first section of chapter 3.¹⁸³ Bavinck states that the Holy Spirit “equipped Christ himself for his work, leading him from his conception to his ascension.”¹⁸⁴ “By this Spirit,” says Bavinck, “he [the exalted Christ as the acquirer and dispenser of the Spirit] now also

¹⁷⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:253.

¹⁸⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:253.

¹⁸¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:253.

¹⁸² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:253.

¹⁸³ When Bavinck discusses the imitation of Christ, we must bear in mind that it is not about the divinity of Christ but about his humanity. Therefore, it has nothing to do with human divinization.

¹⁸⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:250.

shapes and equips his church.”¹⁸⁵ In other words, by his Spirit Christ himself “comes to dwell in us ... and renews us after his image.”¹⁸⁶ Bavinck states this again about God the Father, that “by the regenerating and renewing working of the Holy Spirit” God inwardly imparts holiness [to us] “until we have been fully conformed to the image of his Son.”¹⁸⁷ This *imago Christi* specifically refers to the life of Christ (from his conception to his ascension led by the Holy Spirit), which we have to follow as an example of our lives. In this respect, Bavinck expresses the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit in believers as follows: sanctification “is continued throughout the whole of life and, by the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit, [and] gradually makes the righteousness of Christ our personal ethical possession.”¹⁸⁸ For this sanctification, the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and “they live and walk in the Holy Spirit” toward full conformity to the image of Christ.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, “believers,” says Bavinck, “must follow Christ, who committed no sin (1 Pet. 2:21ff.; Eph. 5:1–2), and in the day of Christ they must be blameless, pure, without blemish, irreproachable (1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:10; 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23).”¹⁹⁰

PERSEVERANCE IS ALSO NOT COERSIVE BUT PERSUASIVE

What then is Bavinck’s view of the relation between the work of the Spirit in perseverance (a doctrine often criticized as an important factor in promoting fatalism in Reformed soteriology) and human nature and freedom? First of all, Bavinck makes clear

¹⁸⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251.

¹⁸⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:249.

¹⁸⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:248.

¹⁸⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:249.

¹⁸⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:251–52.

¹⁹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:263.

that “perseverance is not an activity of the human person but a gift from God.”¹⁹¹ For God “grants a grace that ... bears an inamissible character” in regeneration and faith; “he grants a life that is by nature eternal; he bestows the benefits of calling, Justification, and glorification that are mutually and unbreakably interconnected.”¹⁹² God “watches over it and sees to it that the work of grace is continued and completed.”¹⁹³ However, God “does not ... do this apart from believers but through them,” Bavinck says.¹⁹⁴ This implies that, for Bavinck, “perseverance is ... not coercive but, as a gift of God, impacts humans in a spiritual manner.”¹⁹⁵ The influence through this spiritual way means to lead believers to the heavenly blessing in a moral way by admonition and warning. It also means “by the grace of the Holy Spirit to prompt them willingly to persevere in faith and love.”¹⁹⁶ This way of perseverance “is precisely God’s will,” according to Bavinck.¹⁹⁷ These statements imply that the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in perseverance, based on God’s will, is in perfect harmony with human freedom, as in the other phases of the order of salvation discussed earlier.

4.2 Summary

¹⁹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

¹⁹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:267.

In order to respond to the criticism against Reformed soteriology (fatalism), we have analyzed in this chapter Bavinck's view of human freedom from the perspective of his pneumatology in particular, as an example to refute this critique.

Throughout this chapter, Bavinck shows that divine grace, whether it is the providential grace given to all people, or the salvific grace given only to the elect, does not in any way repress or alter human nature and freedom. But, providential grace preserves the human nature and freedom that belong to the image of God in a broader sense, for all people; salvific grace frees human nature from sin and restores human nature, which belongs to the image of God in a narrower sense, to believers. And whatever kind it is, grace is always applied through the Holy Spirit, who works in and through human nature. For Bavinck, the way of the application of grace by the Holy Spirit is never coercive, but always persuasive.

To put it another way, for Bavinck, the application of God's providential grace of creation and preservation, by the Holy Spirit, before and after the fall, never infringes on human freedom, but rather establishes and preserves human freedom. And this characteristic of the work of the Holy Spirit persists in the application of salvific grace by the Holy Spirit, because the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit does not oppose human freedom, but opposes sin, and restores and flowers human freedom. This is supported by Bavinck's understanding of God's image and his understanding of the reciprocity and distinctiveness between the primary cause and the secondary cause.

Furthermore, in opposition to Pelagian criticism that Reformed pneumatology results in the denial of human freedom and responsibility, Bavinck points to the Reformed view concerning the whole way of salvation that the applicational grace of the

Holy Spirit never conflicts with human nature, freedom, and responsibility. This is because this ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation is never coercive but always persuasive and because it does not destroy any of the faculties and powers in the human soul and body and does not bring humans into a supernatural order by adding to them supernatural qualities, but deprives them of their impotence, or their spiritual powerlessness. The saving grace of the Holy Spirit does not oppose the nature of humans but opposes sin and frees them from sin. To the extent that the power of sin is broken by the saving ministry or grace of the Holy Spirit, human nature and freedom correspond to God's will and ministry. This saving grace of the Holy Spirit restores human nature and leads it to its highest pinnacle without adding any new or heterogeneous elements to it. The Reformed view of this working of the Holy Spirit overcomes the Pelagian critique that Reformed pneumatology destroys human nature, freedom, and responsibility, according to Bavinck.

Specifically, Bavinck explains how God's sovereignty and human freedom are fully harmonized in each aspect that makes up the *ordo salutis* from the perspective of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This can be summarized in the following six points.

First, for Bavinck, the Holy Spirit works directly and immediately, yet always persuasively in the human heart in performing the work of regeneration by binding himself as a rule to the Word. The fact that the immediateness and sovereignty of the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit are in harmony with the free and responsible response of humans, is well explained in the nature of the distinction and connection between active and passive regeneration. According to Bavinck, the nature of this distinction and connection between internal calling (active regeneration) and regeneration

in the passive sense is the same as that between God's speaking and our learning from him, between his drawing and our following, between his granting and our accepting. Even in the case of a figurative explanation of the meaning of the word regeneration itself, the nature of regeneration can be stated as follows: just as our physical birth by our parents is entirely the work of our parents, but it never annuls our freedom, so our regeneration by the ministry of the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment of God's election can never be regarded as a violation of human freedom, although it is not the product of our efforts or merit but of God's work entirely. Additionally, for Bavinck, the ministry of the Holy Spirit that regenerates us in a spiritual and personal way, not in a magical or natural way, does not repress human nature, nor does it change human nature or add any new substance to it. Rather, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit frees us from sin and restores our nature so that we can freely do good works. Furthermore, says Bavinck, even if people would desire a coercive work of God in their calling and regeneration, the work of God's grace cannot be so because the acts of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of grace are inherently not oppressive but persuasive, and the application of salvation in this way is based on the eternal will of God.

Second, according to Bavinck, (saving) faith is the natural (or restored-natural) capacity to believe as well as a gift of God, not as something heterogeneous or added to human nature. This natural capacity to believe applies in common to regenerated believers as well as to Adam before the fall and to Christ in his state of humiliation. In other words, this natural capacity to believe, along with all human capacities and powers, which was possessed by Adam before the fall and Christ in his state of humiliation, is restored in regeneration. This implies that believing in God or Christ is natural for the

regenerate just as believing in a world of senses is natural to everyone. For Bavinck, this natural capacity to believe restored by regeneration becomes an act of faith only in response to the continuous internal calling, not apart from the Word but by being added to external calling, or to the Word. This is because the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers binds them to Scripture with the same degree and strength as tying them to Christ and because the new life in believers is always drawn to the Word as their spiritual food. God strengthens and nourishes the spiritual life of his children from moment to moment by the power of his grace and the blessings of his Word in diverse ways. The soul of God's child in childlike faith accepts the Word, thankfully and with joy, without coercion. A person with this faith also freely and voluntarily confesses Christ as the Son of God with deep trust under the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ and the Bible's guidance to Christ. With regard to our primary issue of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human nature and freedom, Bavinck's arguments show how the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation with the Word is in perfect harmony with the subjectivity of those who believe and confess Christ in their hearts as the Son of God.

Third, according to Bavinck, everyone has freedom of choice especially with respect to conversion in the broad sense. That is, everyone has the power and the option to be able to change one's own mind in doing moral conduct as well as the power and the option to be able to take one direction or another at the crossroads of life. Bavinck even argues that it is never too late to choose the way of virtue. To Bavinck, the origin and preservation of human free choice with these characteristics can be said to be grounded on the eternal will of God, on his act upon his eternal will, and thus on the universal

ministry of the Holy Spirit when considering his view of divine decree, the covenant of grace (in a broad sense), common grace, and the general work of the Holy Spirit.

Bavinck's view of human free choice is closely related to his view of conversion – both in the broad sense (including non-Christians) and in the narrow sense (Christian only) – because although conversion encompasses the whole person including one's intellect, heart and will, soul and body, its focus is especially on the will. According to Bavinck, the narrow sense of conversion consists of a first (and fundamental) conversion – in logical order, after regeneration in a restricted sense, alongside and in connection with faith, and before justification – and a second (ongoing) conversion, and the former must be followed by the latter, which encompasses the whole of life and never stops until life on earth is done. This is because believers do not achieve perfection here on earth and because they may err, fall into gross sin, or even stay in it for a long time.

For Bavinck, since the second conversion as well as the first conversion is God's work, conversion in the narrow sense is always the work or gift of God, while this narrow sense of conversion is realized through a person's own intellect and will. Bavinck says that God's side and the human side in this conversion are in perfect harmony with one another: When God converts someone, that person is converted, and that person then converts him- or herself. Bavinck makes it clear that the first conversion, as well as the second conversion, is the free and active act of humans, who under the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit turn away from sin and turn to God with humility and joy.

Fourth, for Bavinck, justification is a forensic act because it in itself consists in God's judgment; in our terms, a changed inclination and mood of God toward us based on his judgment. However, justification is communicative as well as juristic, which is

evident in his description of the distinction between active and passive justification. For him, as the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit in its field of operation is necessary and cannot be changed or replaced by the acquisition of salvation by Christ, and has the same great importance as the acquisition, passive justification (as a subjective justification in God's personally imparting it to us in the internal call by faith) is also significantly distinguished from active justification (as an objective justification in the divine decree, in the resurrection of Christ, and in the proclamation of the gospel) and is as equally important as active justification. But Bavinck also emphasizes the inseparable close relationship between active and passive justification as follows: Active justification is actualized and terminated in the sphere of passive justification without active and passive justification being disconnected or detached from each other. These two aspects of justification, says Bavinck, are coupled with simultaneity in time and coincide and always go together, although there remains a clear distinction between the two. Specifically, for Bavinck, since active justification (as the ground of passive justification) is actualized and terminated in passive justification through or by faith, active justification (which occurs with a *view* to faith) and the biblical principle of (passive) justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) are not contradictory, but compatible. Furthermore, Bavinck once again accentuates the significance of passive justification through his explanation of how the full fulfillment of salvation is accomplished: salvation is fully achieved only when, both in reality and in the consciousness of that reality, humans are freed from sin and hence regenerated and justified, not by an active (objective) justification in the divine decree or in the resurrection of Christ. In this respect, says

Bavinck, it is of *this* (passive) justification that the Scripture regularly speaks, and it is *this* (passive) justification that is the communication and actual bestowment.

For Bavinck, this distinction between active and passive justification allows us to simultaneously view faith as a passive organ, and as an active potency or act. More specifically, because in this view of justification, only Christ is the ground or cause of justification and thus faith is never any basis of justification even in the slightest sense, faith can be purely receptive but at the same time it can be the very act of accepting Christ and his benefits, or a conviction of the Holy Spirit working in one's heart without being regarded as a ground for justification in even the slightest degree. In this sense, faith is by its nature a living and active faith that is not antithetical to any work in any respect. Faith itself, says Bavinck, is even a work, the best work and the principle of every good work. This view shows us not only that Paul's statements and James's statements are not contrary to each other, rather they correspond to each other, but also that faith "is active along with works and is brought to completion by the works" (James 2:22).

Fifth, with regard to sanctification, Bavinck also inherits the Reformed distinction between passive and active sanctification on the basis of the distinction between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit and uses it to avoid and amend both the nomistic and antinomian errors, as in the case of justification. For Bavinck, the distinction and relationship between passive and active sanctification are as follows: sanctification is primarily a work and gift of God, a continuous process where humans are passive; on this basis it secondarily acquires an active meaning that people themselves are called and armed, sanctifying themselves and

offering their whole lives to God. This active meaning or aspect of sanctification is active sanctification in which human freedom and responsibility are emphasized. The Scripture, says Bavinck, emphasizes these two aspects of sanctification equally, and it knits them together as closely as it can. These two aspects of sanctification also occur simultaneously in time. In the nature of this sanctification, dependence on God or the Holy Spirit who sanctifies and human freedom are in accord with each other.

Sixth, perseverance is also primarily a gift from God or the Holy Spirit who grants the benefits of Christ and constantly keeps us and leads us toward completion, according to Bavinck. However, this perseverance is done in a spiritual and moral way by admonition and warning, not in a coercive way since the grace and care of the Holy Spirit spur us voluntarily to persevere in faith, love, and hope. This way of perseverance is precisely based on divine decree. Bavinck's contentions imply that the nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in perseverance is fully harmonized with human nature, freedom, and duty.

Given these statements related to Bavinck's view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom especially in soteriology, it can be argued that, for Bavinck, the question of the relationship between God's sovereignty and human freedom in salvation concerns significantly the characteristics of the ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation distinct from the ministry of Christ who obtained salvation. It can also be argued that in Bavinck's discussions of the relationship between the Spirit's work and human freedom, his Reformed soteriology does not lead to fatalism. Rather, he teaches that the Reformed conviction of divine initiatives in the special (saving) ministry of the Spirit that applies only to Christian believers as well as in the general ministry of the

Spirit applied to all people including Adam before the fall and believers, does not rule out but establishes human freedom and duty. These conclusions of this research reveal not only that the traditional criticism of Reformed soteriology (fatalism) does not apply to the case of Bavinck especially from a pneumatological viewpoint, but these conclusions also show that Bavinck's pneumatology serves as an example of how a pneumatological response can make an important contribution in rebutting the criticism that Reformed soteriology's emphasis on predestination, election, and effectual grace inevitably leads to fatalism that deprives humans of freedom.

4.3 Resummary of Bavinck's Pneumatology Using Van Ruler's Distinction between the Christological and the Pneumatological

Now let us resummarize the contents of this chapter using Van Ruler's distinction between the christological and the pneumatological and his notion of theonomous reciprocity in order to grasp the structure, principles, and key concepts of Bavinck's pneumatology with regard to the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom. This resummary can be stated in four ways.

First, Bavinck's view that the work of the Holy Spirit applying salvation restores our human nature without adding new elements to it parallels Van Ruler's point that in the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit no new substance is added to human nature but there is a restoration of human nature. To both Bavinck and Van Ruler, this applies even to the character of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration since for them regeneration by the grace of the Holy Spirit is a renewal of creation, not a new creation. This pneumatological emphasis on the restoration of human nature leads to a pneumatological emphasis on individual freedom and subjectivity in participation in

salvation. For a main characteristic of the (saving) work of the Holy Spirit is to restore our human nature and set us to work, according to both Bavinck and Van Ruler.

Second, for Bavinck, the subjective application of salvation by the Holy Spirit as distinct from the objective acquisition of salvation by Christ also relates especially to how a believer really can participate in the salvation that Christ earned. This corresponds to Van Ruler's view that the subjectivity of the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit distinct from the objectivity of the acquisition of salvation by Christ relates especially to how a believer becomes an actual participant in the salvation earned by Christ. This pneumatological understanding of the believer's participation in salvation is evident in their views on active and passive justification. Specifically, for both Bavinck and Van Ruler, active justification is an effective declaration of the Holy Spirit that our sins are forgiven, and passive justification is a reaction of faith on our part that accepts and trusts divine judgment of forgiveness of sins.

Third, in Bavinck and Van Ruler's idea of this genuine reciprocal relationship between God and humans in the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, there is also a decisive priority given to God. In this respect, this reciprocity is a theonomous reciprocity, and it is always truly reciprocal, even though the initiative obviously belongs to God. For both Bavinck and Van Ruler, such God-initiated reciprocal relationships between God and humans become clearer in their view of the nature of faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit especially in relation to active and passive justification. Active justification as an effective declaration of the Holy Spirit that our sins are forgiven on the ground of the objective salvation obtained by Christ, and passive justification as an active perception or trust of God's judgment that he does not condemn us in Christ and regards us as righteous,

constitute both aspects of justification. The point is that to Bavinck and Van Ruler, the term “passive” in passive justification implies the fact that a human is never a provider or meritor or cause of justification but a receiver, and does not mean that a human is passive in recognizing and receiving the grace of justification.

Fourth, Bavinck’s view of sanctification can be said to correspond to Van Ruler’s view of it in terms of rejecting the doctrine of perfectionist sanctification and believing that the believers freely participate in the process of lifelong sanctification following the guidance of the Holy Spirit indwelling them.

CHAPTER 5

BAVINCK ON THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

This chapter will respond to the second criticism generally leveled against Reformed theology (a sort of Platonic dualism in ecclesiology) by using Bavinck's pneumatology and ecclesiology as an example study. In other words, it will show another significant role of Bavinck's clear distinction between Christology and pneumatology with regard to his ecclesiology, namely, a realistic conception of the invisible church, the spiritual essence of the church, etc. from a pneumatological point of view. Through this, a credible refutation will be given to the criticism that Reformed ecclesiology, especially in its distinction between the invisible and the visible church, reflects a Platonic dualism and justifies church splits by using this distinction.

5.1 The Holy Spirit and the Invisible and the Visible Church

The fact that there is a close connection between the previous chapter, which has a soteriological dimension, and this chapter, which has an ecclesiological dimension, can be explained in two aspects: (1) For Bavinck, the theme that the essential nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the application of salvation is not coercive but always persuasive and harmoniously compatible with human nature and freedom is revealed not only individually, but also collectively. This implies that Bavinck's understanding of human freedom from a pneumatological perspective serves as a key motive not only in his soteriology but also in his ecclesiology. (2) Just as Bavinck's view of the relation between divine sovereignty and human freedom in soteriology is realistic and practical especially from the viewpoint of his pneumatology, his view of the relationship and distinction between the invisible and the visible church also has such a characteristic

especially from his pneumatological perspective. These two points will be seen throughout this chapter, especially in explaining Bavinck's view of the invisible church and its implications.

Let us first look at Bavinck's view of the identity and essence of the church, which is an important clue to understanding his view of the distinction and relationship between the invisible and the visible church, in order to effectively achieve the aim of this chapter.

For Bavinck, the identity of the church (ἐκκλησία) was and is "created by the Holy Spirit."¹ Bavinck states that "on the day of Pentecost" the disciples of Christ "received a life principle of their own in the Holy Spirit, which made them independent vis-à-vis the people of the Jews and united them most intimately among themselves."² "At that point," says Bavinck, "the church of Christ was in principle detached from Israel's national existence, from the priests and the law, the temple and the altar."³ In this sense, for Bavinck, Christ's church "became an independent religious assembly in its own right" and "now acts in the place of ancient Israel as the people, indeed the church, of God."⁴

To Bavinck, the identity of the church as the recipient of this principle of life given by the Holy Spirit becomes more evident in the connection with the nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit applying salvation to each individual chosen. Specifically, for Bavinck,

¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:297.

² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:279. As to the community of the disciples of Jesus before Jesus Christ ascended, Bavinck says: "Present in the disciples whom Jesus gathered around himself are the beginnings of the New Testament community that will emerge later. But as long as Jesus was on earth, he himself remained the personal center, and the community of his disciples stood in the background. They were not yet able to stand on their own feet and daily had to be taught and guided by him. For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39)."

³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:279.

⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:279.

the church is “a realization of election” by the Holy Spirit and the Word, that is, “election in Christ to calling, Justification, and glorification (Rom. 8:28), to being conformed to the image of God’s Son (8:29), to holiness and blessedness (Eph. 1:4ff.)”⁵ These “blessings granted to the church are primarily internal and spiritual in character and consist in calling and regeneration, in faith and Justification, in sanctification and glorification,” Bavinck states.⁶ Believers share these spiritual and essential benefits by the saving work of the Holy Spirit all together. In this sense, for Bavinck, the essence of the church is spiritual.⁷ Bavinck’s arguments imply that “in its essence the church is a gathering of true believers.”⁸ In other words, for Bavinck, the essence of the church is the communion of the saints, which does not include those who do not have an authentic faith (although non-Christians may still externally belong to the church).⁹ Therefore, when the church is called “the church,” “the whole [the church] is called after the part [true believers],”

⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:298.

⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:298.

⁷ “Not until the sixteenth century was a fundamentally different concept of the church posited by the Reformation as an alternative to that of Rome.” Luther and Calvin commonly distinguished between an invisible church and a visible church in order to talk about the church’s spiritual characteristics against Roman Catholics, that the essence of the church is invisible things, namely, fellowship with Christ and his benefits through the Holy Spirit and faith. And the Reformed “identified the essence of the church much less with its institutional aspects than the Lutherans.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287, 291. Also, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 2:1015.

⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:298.

⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:298.

Bavinck says.¹⁰ In any case, the church is, and unchangeably remains, “the gathered company of true Christ-believers,” according to Bavinck.¹¹

For Bavinck, the church is also a fellowship or communion of saints in which the saints should serve one another with charismata (in a restricted sense)¹² given by the Holy Spirit to the church.¹³ Here Bavinck’s view of the church as a fellowship of saints serving each other with the charismata, that is, with special gifts “granted to believers in a variable measure and degree for each other’s benefit,” indicates that, for Bavinck, the Holy Spirit does not eliminate the diversity existing among the believers in the unity of the church, rather it maintains and affirms this diversity.¹⁴ As to the diversity of the church of the New Testament by the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit, Bavinck compares it with the diversity and preservation of creation by the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit: “Just as in creation and providence the Spirit adorned and completed all things in their way and in Israel granted an array of natural and spiritual gifts, so on the day of Pentecost he communicated himself with all his charismata to the church of Christ.”¹⁵ Bavinck also says about the principle that the Holy Spirit gives these special gifts: “He apportions to

¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303. In other words, “the body as a whole [the church] is named after its most important component [true believers].” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:297.

¹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

¹² As for the broad meaning and narrow meaning of the charismata that the Holy Spirit distributes to the church, Bavinck says as follows: “In a broad sense these charismata also include the benefits of grace imparted to all believers (Rom. 5:15–16; 6:23), but in a more restricted sense denote those special gifts that are granted to believers in a variable measure and degree for each other’s benefit (Rom. 1:11; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:11; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; and particularly Rom. 12:6–9 and 1 Cor. 12:12ff.)” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:299.

¹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:300.

¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:299.

¹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:299.

each one individually as he wills, not arbitrarily but in connection with a person's measure of faith, with the position a person occupies in the church and the task to which that person is called (Rom. 12:3, 6; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10), so that every gift is 'a manifestation of the Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:7)."¹⁶ Furthermore, Bavinck clarifies the purpose of the Holy Spirit in distributing the various gifts, the nature of the relationship of the saints, and the manner in which the fellowship of the saints should be based on that purpose and that relationship: since "the Holy Spirit does not distribute the charismata to the members of the church for their own benefit but for the benefit of others" and as "the members of Jesus's church are mutually brothers and sisters," "they must serve each other" with all their spiritual and natural gifts" "readily and cheerfully."¹⁷ In this respect, for Bavinck, the church is the fellowship of saints, which completely corresponds to the concept of the church as a gathered company of true Christ-believers.

Here we need to note that, for Bavinck, this fellowship of the saints directly connected with the identity of the church is essentially a horizontal relationship, not a vertical (or hierarchical) relationship since, for him, the essence of the church is spiritual rather than institutional. The nature of this fellowship is evident in Bavinck's view of "Christ's anointing with the Holy Spirit,"¹⁸ or the "anointing of the Spirit from the Holy

¹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:299. On the other hand, Bavinck says that classifying these gifts is difficult because "these gifts are very numerous" and several gifts can be added. He also states: "Some [gifts] clearly bear a supernatural character or are given only at the time of or after a person's conversion; others tend to be more like natural gifts that have been heightened and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The former were more prominent in the early days of the church; the latter are more characteristic of the church in its normal historical development." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:299.

¹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:300.

¹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:309.

One, namely, Christ.”¹⁹ Bavinck says that since Christ’s anointing of believers with the Holy Spirit means his teaching them by his Spirit and Word and their becoming prophets, priests, and kings, there is no need for any kind of hierarchical relationship among believers nor any kind of pagan mysticism. He also states that “Christ’s anointing on them with His Spirit,” with his Word, leads them all to become one in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.²⁰

Bavinck’s pneumatological understanding of the identity and essence of the church as a gathering of true believers and as the fellowship of saints, is an important clue to his positive succession and development of the distinction between the visible and the invisible church of the Reformation and Reformed tradition. Specifically, his view of the invisible but actual and ongoing application of salvation to the church by the Holy Spirit plays a key role in his realistic understanding of the invisible church by which he means the spiritual essence of the church as well as the spiritual character of the attributes of the church.

According to Bavinck, the distinction between the visible and the invisible church “was made not by Zwingli but by Luther.”²¹ And this distinction, says Bavinck, is deeply related to Luther’s own religious experience: “Luther found peace for his soul” “in the

¹⁹ Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 431.

²⁰ Bavinck says: “They [the disciples of Jesus, or the saints] have no other teacher (Matt. 23:8, 10), nor do they need one. They have received the anointing of the Holy One, that is, Christ, and know all things (1 John 2:20), so that among them there is no need for pagan divination and sorcery, spiritism or occultism, for hierarchical guardianship or an infallible papacy. Christ himself teaches them by his Word and Spirit, so that, being taught by God, they would all be prophets and proclaim the marvelous works of God (Num. 11:29; Jer. 31:33–34; Matt. 11:25–27; John 6:45; Heb. 8:10; 1 John 2:20). And he continues this instruction until they have all attained to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13; 3:18f.)” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:475–76.

²¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

forgiveness of sins by faith alone,” “not in the sacrament, which worked *ex opere operato*, nor in good works.”²² Luther’s awakening to justification by faith and the freedom of the Christian allowed him to view “the church as a gathering of believers, a ‘communion of saints’ as it is confessed as an object of faith in the Apostles’ Creed.”²³ More specifically, for Luther, the church is “a congregation of believers, of people who through faith had received the forgiveness of sins and hence were all children of God, prophets, and priests,” according to Bavinck.²⁴ For this reason, to Luther, the church “naturally had an invisible and a visible side.”²⁵ This is the view Luther “found in Scripture,” Bavinck states.²⁶

Here Bavinck makes clear that by this distinction between the invisible and the visible church Luther “did not mean two churches but two sides of one and the same church.”²⁷ Bavinck also explains what invisibility and visibility mean to Luther when the church has the invisible and the visible sides, as follows: “On the one hand, *it [the church] is invisible*, an object of faith, *for what one believes is not visible*; on the other hand, it is visible, for it becomes manifest and can be known, not by the presence of a pope, bishops, vestments, and other external things, but by the pure administration of the Word and sacraments.”²⁸ Bavinck is saying that, for Luther, the reason why the church has an invisible side is because what one believes, especially “faith” and “the Holy Spirit in the

²² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

²⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287. (my emphasis added)

hearts” is not seen.²⁹ Bavinck also argues that, for Luther, “the essence of the church consists in that which is invisible, in faith, in communion with Christ and his benefits by the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ Bavinck’s arguments imply that, for Luther, the invisible church indicates the essence of the church as true believers who have faith and commune with Christ and his benefits through the Holy Spirit. For “the body as a whole is named after its most important component,” which means, ecclesialogically, that “though there are unbelievers in a church, just as alien constituents can enter a body, the essence of the church is determined by the presence of believers.”³¹

Furthermore, Bavinck is arguing, with respect to the visible side of the church, that, for Luther, the church is visible since it becomes manifest and can be known by the pure administration of the Word and sacraments. Here we see, according to Bavinck’s understanding of Luther, that, for Luther, the distinction and relationship between the invisible and the visible church is based on the distinction and relationship between the invisible but actual and effective work of the Holy Spirit, and the visible Word and sacraments as a means of his ministry, and thus that, for him, the visible side and the invisible side of the church are importantly distinct, while both are tightly connected without being separated. This means, as Bavinck says, that Luther’s distinction between the invisible and the visible church serves “absolutely not to detract in any way from the visibility or the reality of the church.”³² Rather, it serves “only to assert against Rome that the essence of the church consists in that which is invisible, in faith, in communion

²⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:288.

³⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:288.

³¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

³² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:288.

with Christ and his benefits by the Holy Spirit.”³³ In this respect, “for Luther the church is not a platonic ideal, not an idea without a corresponding reality, but consists concretely in people who are alive and have by faith obtained the forgiveness of sins,” Bavinck says.³⁴

According to Bavinck, “Calvin aligns himself with this usage” of a distinction between the visible and the invisible church.³⁵ Bavinck states: “When in the *Institutes* of 1543 he [Calvin] for the first time uses the term ‘invisible church’, he means by it all the elect collectively who are known only to God; subsequently he characterizes the church as ‘the whole multitude of humans spread over the earth’, a multitude that is visible and also includes hypocrites, yet is also invisible and an object of faith to the extent that we cannot know who in it are the true believers.”³⁶ According to Calvin’s usage of the term “invisible church,” says Bavinck, the church could already be called invisible in three senses: “(1) as *the universal church* because a given individual cannot observe the church in other places and other times; (2) as *the gathered company of the elect*, which will not be completed and visible until Christ’s return; (3) as *the gathered company of the elect and called*, because in the church on earth we cannot distinguish the true believers.”³⁷ “Later on still other viewpoints were added in terms of which the church could be called

³³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:288.

³⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:287.

³⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:289.

³⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:289–90.

³⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:290. (my emphasis added)

invisible,”³⁸ and “among the Reformed, the confessions and the study of dogmatics proceeded now from one view and then again from another,” Bavinck also states.³⁹

Bavinck embraces these three meanings given to the invisible church by Calvin in a different way than Calvin, that is, in terms of the broader and narrower definition of the church: the definition of the church in the broad sense includes both the victorious and the militant church in heaven and on earth; the definition of the church in the narrow sense refers only to the militant church on earth. According to Bavinck, the invisible church as well as the visible church corresponds only to the definition of the church in a narrow sense and thus belongs only to the militant church which is present on earth.⁴⁰ Then, we can see that the second meaning of the invisible church encompassing all past, present, and future believers as elected – the gathered company of the elect – mentioned above in Calvin’s usage of the term, does not fit with the invisible church that Bavinck envisions: only the present militant church on earth.

But, as briefly mentioned above, Bavinck affirms this second meaning in a different category than Calvin, namely, in terms of the definition of the church in its broadest sense.

³⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:290. Bavinck summarizes these additional points of view as to why the church could be called invisible and why it could be called visible, with reference to A. Polanus’s point of view: the church was called invisible “because it is not of this world; because Christ as its head, and hence also the church itself as his body, is invisible; because the major part of it is in heaven; because temporally and locally it may at times be deprived of the administration of the means of grace; because in times of persecution it goes into hiding in deserts and caves; because while it is observable in its external confession, it cannot be observed in the internal faith of the heart; finally, because the church is never just present at one place or time but spread out throughout the ages and nations. And by contrast, the church was called ‘visible’ because it manifests itself in its confession and conduct, or acts institutionally with its offices and ministries, or because it not only contains true believers but also hypocrites.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:290; cf. A. Polanus, *Syntagma theologiae christianae* (Hanover, 1609; Geneva, 1617), 531.

³⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:290.

⁴⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

For Bavinck, in relation to the meaning of the church as a gathering of the elect or a gathering of the elect and called, “the church can always be defined in a broader or stricter sense as the gathered company of believers.”⁴¹ On the one hand, “in its broadest sense,” says Bavinck, the church “embraces all who have been saved by faith in Christ or will be saved.”⁴² And thus belonging to the church in the broadest sense are “all the believers who lived on earth from the time of the paradisaal promise to this very moment and were taken up ... into heaven ([Heb.] 12:23),” “all the believers who still live on earth now,” and “those who will later, even to the end of the ages, believe in Christ.”⁴³ On the other hand, in relation to the meanings of the universal and the local church, Bavinck says: “If we further limit ourselves to the part of the church that is now on earth (the church militant), then it can again be taken more broadly or more narrowly. We can associate it with all the believers who are now present in all the churches, among all nations, and in all countries (the church universal), with the believers in one country or in a given province of that country ..., or with all the believers living in a certain place – city, town, or village (the particular or local church).”⁴⁴

Specifically stating the definition of the church in the broadest sense mentioned above, Bavinck argues that such a definition of the church in its broadest sense never reflects Platonic dualism: “The church, even taken in its broadest sense, is not a Platonic state that exists only in the imagination and never becomes a reality, but is a company of

⁴¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:300.

⁴² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:300.

⁴³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

⁴⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301. For Bavinck, “in this connection it must be noted that the universal church is antecedent to the particular or local church. The church of Christ is an organism in which the whole is prior to the parts.”

people that has the guarantee of its existence, now and in the future, in God's decree, in the firm security of the covenant of grace, the mediatorship of Christ, and the promise of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵ What we should note here is that, for Bavinck, the definition of the church confined to the militant church on earth now, including the visible and the invisible church, does never, of course, reflect Platonic dualism, unless the definition of the church in its broadest sense reflects such dualism. And particularly important in our study of the invisible church in the paragraph cited above is that, for Bavinck, the universal church as well as the gathered company of the elect and called (the invisible church) applies only to the church militant.⁴⁶ What this implies is that Bavinck's view of the universal church as a present and terrestrial church corresponds to his view of the invisible church as a present and earthly church.

Now Bavinck in more detail explains *why* the Reformation distinguishes between the invisible and the visible church, and then reveals his specific views of this distinction.

According to Bavinck, the church of Christ "has its origin in paradise (Gen. 3:15), or, as it concerns the time of the New Testament, in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8)."⁴⁷ And he says that when the church of Jerusalem was alone it was the universal church of Christ, and that the churches arising alongside it before long "were not autochthonous but came into

⁴⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301. Bavinck also refers to two benefits of this definition: "Still it is well, and also necessary, to hold on to the connectedness between the church on earth now and that of the past and the future. For it is one single gathering, one ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*), composed of those who are enrolled in heaven and who will one day stand before God as a bride without spot or wrinkle. And the maintenance of this unity of the whole church heightens the sense of community, steels one's nerve, and stirs a person to fight for it." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

⁴⁶ As mentioned earlier, regarding the extent of the invisible church, Bavinck's view differs from Calvin's view.

⁴⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

being from action taken in Jerusalem through the preaching of the apostles and evangelists.”⁴⁸ Bavinck goes on to state that “up to this point the meaning of the term ‘church’ is plain and clear,”⁴⁹ but now we are confronted with the following difficulty:⁵⁰ “[T]his scriptural concept of the church is applied to concrete, historically existing distinct groups of persons, in which there are always unbelievers as well.”⁵¹

This difficulty is especially associated with the presence of unbelievers in the church. According to Bavinck, the key issue in this difficulty is whether unbelievers can be theoretically or practically considered to constitute the essence of the church by being external members, having historical faith, or observing the church’s commandments.⁵² In this vein, Bavinck critically describes the idea of the church of the Roman Catholic Church at the end of Middle Ages and later. He states, although the Roman Catechism theoretically says that there are unbelievers in the church militant not very different from the doctrine of the Reformation, “but practically, things in the church looked very different toward the end of the Middle Ages.”⁵³ He further argues that “Rome also consistently fosters the idea that external membership, a historical faith, observance of the commandments of the church, and submission to the pope constitute the essence of the church.”⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

⁴⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

⁵⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301.

⁵¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:301–2.

⁵² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

⁵³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

⁵⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

According to Bavinck, this idea of the church in the late Middle Ages is contrary to theology which, like Scripture, not only always acknowledged the presence of unbelievers in the church, but also, “following Scripture, consistently stated that the basic nature [essence] of the church was determined by believers, not unbelievers.”⁵⁵ Bavinck argues that rising up against this idea of the church of Roman Catholicism in the late Middle Ages, the Reformation “posited the distinction between the visible and invisible church.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, Bavinck states that, in fact, even the Roman Catholic Church itself cannot oppose this distinction between the invisible and the visible church, because not only Augustine but also Rome itself says that there are two kinds of people in a church, divided into two parties.⁵⁷ In this context, Bavinck makes clear his view of why the church is called invisible. Bavinck states that the church is invisible in relation to its spiritual dimension and its true members. For him, the meaning of the invisible church as the spiritual side of the church is that spiritual goods, which consist of inner faith, regeneration, true conversion, hidden fellowship with Christ, etc., are not observable by our natural eyes. In other words, the application of salvation to the believers by the Holy Spirit is invisible to the natural eye.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

⁵⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

⁵⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:302.

⁵⁸ Bavinck says: “But the distinction between the visible and the invisible church can be variously construed. The majority of these views, however, are to be rejected or at least do not come up for discussion in dogmatics. The church cannot be called invisible because Christ, the church triumphant, and the church that will be completed at the end of the ages cannot now be observed; nor can the church be called invisible because the church on earth cannot be seen by us in many places and countries, or goes into hiding in times of persecution, or is sometimes deprived of the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The distinction between the visible and invisible church can only be applied to the church militant and then means that the church is invisible with respect to its spiritual dimension and its true members. In the case of Lutherans and

Bavinck's arguments imply that although the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit is invisible to our natural eyes, it is an actual and effective ministry of the Holy Spirit that gives its true character to the church. Interestingly and importantly, this understanding is consistent with Bavinck's epistemological realism where the invisible is as real as (the visible) sense, and the invisible things have more importance than the visible things.⁵⁹ In this respect, it can be said that, for Bavinck, the invisible church as the spiritual side that includes only the true members of the church, which is invisible to our natural eyes, but actual and truly important, is as real as the visible church (the visible side of the church) and moreover has a greater influence on the life of the church and each believer.

According to Bavinck, this distinction between the invisible and the visible church leads us to face the following tangible reality: "It is possible – and in the Christian church

the Reformed, these two meanings have fused and cannot be separated from each other. The church is an object of faith. The internal faith of the heart, regeneration, true conversion, hidden communion with Christ (and so forth) are spiritual goods that cannot be observed by the natural eye and nevertheless give to the church its true character (*forma*). No human being has received from God the infallible standard by which one can judge someone else's spiritual life. The church makes no judgment concerning the most private things. The Lord alone knows those who are his." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁵⁹ Regarding Bavinck's view of invisible things with respect to his epistemology, David Sytsma correctly says: For Bavinck, "the restriction of science to the so-called empirical exact sciences runs contrary to the universal knowledge that is of greatest importance for humanity. 'Scientific knowledge exists only when we see the cause and essence, the purpose and destiny of things, when we know not only the *that* (οτι) but also the *wherefore* (διοτι) and thus discern the causes of things (*rerum dignoscimus causas*) (*RD*, 1:221).' Contrary to empiricism, the world of nonmaterial and invisible things, including 'good and evil, law and custom, religion and morality', is just as real as sensation, and moreover has a greater impact on human life and history (*RD*, 1:221-22). With this attack on empiricism, Bavinck appears to argue for an expanded account of first principles of knowledge that includes a basic awareness not only of efficient and material causality, but also formal and final causality (essence and purpose), morality (good and evil), and God (religion) ... [T]hese first principles fall under the category of common notions." David Sytsma, "Herman Bavinck's Thomistic Epistemology: The Argument and Sources of His *Principia* of Science," in John Bolt, ed., *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck, A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011), 32.

has always been a fact – that there was chaff amid the wheat and there were hypocrites hidden among true believers.”⁶⁰ Therefore, “the word ‘church,’ used with reference to the militant church, the gathering of believers on earth ... always and among all Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, has a metaphorical sense” such as the wheat distinguished from chaff.⁶¹ In this sense, the church “is so called, not in terms of the unbelievers who exist in it, but in terms of the believers, who constitute the essential component of it and determine its nature.”⁶² “The whole is called after the part. A church is and remains the gathered company of true Christ-believers,” according to Bavinck.⁶³ When we understand the term “church” as such, says Bavinck, nobody can object to the distinction between the visible and the invisible church; rather “it should be generally acknowledged.”⁶⁴

5.2 Visible/Invisible Distinction Is Not Same as Organism/Institution

Distinction

Now Bavinck emphasizes that this distinction between the invisible and the visible church is very different from the distinction between the church as organism and the church as institution.⁶⁵ This is because both institution and organism are named for

⁶⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁶¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁶² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁶³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁶⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:303.

⁶⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

visible aspects of the church.⁶⁶ And because the former distinction teaches that visible phenomena have an invisible spiritual side that only God knows; the latter distinction tells us how the church can be known to us visibly.⁶⁷ In this context, Bavinck argues that one must not forget that the visible institution and organism of the church have an invisible spiritual background. The reason is that offices and gifts, the execution of the Word, the service and the sacrament, and the brotherly love and the fellowship of saints, “are all grounded in the operations of the glorified head of the church through the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁸

According to Bavinck, overlooking the difference between these two distinctions leads to a big misunderstanding of the essence of the church. This is because, as many theologians have done, associating the distinction between the church as organism and the church as institution with the distinction between the invisible and the visible church, gives to the latter distinction a meaning not belonging to it.⁶⁹ Specifically, attributing the

⁶⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305. As to the nature of the church as institution and the nature of the church as organism, Bavinck says that “the believers, who make up the essence of the church, are manifest in two ways: in the administration of Word and sacrament that takes place among them, and in the witness and walk by which they distinguish themselves from the world as well as from other churches.” Here, the former refers to the church as institution, and the latter refers to the church as organism. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:314. In the same vein, as to how the church as organism is distinguished from the institutional church in the visible church, Bavinck explains in detail: “[T]he view that the church only becomes visible in the institution, the offices and ministries, the Word and the sacraments, and in some form of church government is [in]correct [(*onjuist*)]. Even when all these things are removed from the screen of our mind, the church is still visible. For every believer manifests his or her faith in witness and walk in every sphere of life, and all believers together, with their faith and lives, distinguish themselves from the world. In heaven there will no longer be ecclesiastical offices and ministries, preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, yet the church will be fully visible.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305; *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4:331. Please note that there is an error in the English translation of *Reformed Dogmatics*, which translated *onjuist* as “correct” here.

⁶⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁶⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁶⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

nature of the invisible church to the church as organism or to the church as institution, or substituting the nature of the invisible church with the nature of the church as institution, not only confuses the distinction between visible and invisible, but also leads to a serious misunderstanding about the essence of the church. Bavinck categorizes the following examples of such confusion and misunderstanding into two broad groups: (1) those who see the church militant on earth as a gathering of the elect or a gathering of the perfect and (2) those who place the center of gravity of the church in the visible institutional side of the church.⁷⁰

The views of these two groups are “one-sided” and do not fairly treat the essence of the church, according to Bavinck.⁷¹ In the first position, “the church becomes totally invisible, remains an idea and has no corresponding reality,” Bavinck says.⁷² For “election by itself does not make a person yet a member of the church on earth.”⁷³ In other words, even though the elect, who have not yet reached faith, may be said to belong

⁷⁰ A detailed description of Bavinck for these two groups is as follows: “On the one side are those who not only describe the church in terms of its [normative] idea, or its spiritual essence (the church triumphant), but also describe the church militant on earth as the gathering of the predestined or elect (Wycliffe); or of the perfected (thus Pelagius, according to Augustine; and the Anabaptists, according to Calvin; and numerous others). Others include those who have never fallen (Novatian), or those members of the church who participate in the Lord’s Supper (communicants, as many people in North America mark the boundary of the church). On the other side are the Roman Catholics, who shift the church’s center of gravity from the gathering of believers to the hierarchical institution, to ‘the external and supreme monarchy of the whole world,’ and look for its characteristic essence in the ‘teaching church’ (*ecclesia docens*) rather than in the ‘listening church’ (*ecclesia audiens*). And this is the direction taken by all those who, in order to hold on to unbelievers and hypocrites at least to some degree as true members, describe the church as the gathering of those who are called (Melanchthon, Löhe, Kliefoth, and so forth) or of the baptized (Münchmeyer, Delitzsch, Vilmar, and so forth).” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

potentially to the church, they are not yet members of the church in reality.⁷⁴ And, for Bavinck, the church can also not be described as the gathering of the perfected, or of the nonfallen, or participants in the eucharist. This is because believers cannot reach perfection in the life of this world, are not protected by God's promise from all corruption, and their number is not limited to the number of those participating in the Lord's Supper.⁷⁵ According to Bavinck, the second description mentioned above is also inconsistent with the basic nature of the church, because the qualifications of external members, calling, and baptism are not evidence of true faith. Many have been called who are not elected, and many have been baptized who do not believe.⁷⁶ "Not all are Israel who are of Israel."⁷⁷ In this respect, Bavinck argues that the position of the former does not reach the visible church, and the latter ignores the invisible church.⁷⁸ For Bavinck, the two positions can only be modified properly when one perceives the church as a gathering of believers through a correct understanding of the invisible church and its relationship to the visible church. A correct understanding of the invisible church is based on the following fact that "it is genuine faith that saves persons and receives the forgiveness of sins and eternal life," and that genuine faith cannot be seen by human eyes, but is seen only by God.⁷⁹ This understanding makes the church recognized as a gathering of believers. In addition, for Bavinck, a correct understanding of the

⁷⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304.

⁷⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:304–5.

relationship between the invisible and the visible church is based on the fact that that faith “does not remain within a person but manifests itself outwardly in a person’s witness and walk (Rom. 10:10), and witness and walk are the signs of the internal faith of the heart (Matt. 7:17; 10:32; 1 John 4:2).”⁸⁰

Here Bavinck reminds us of the fact that “a person’s faith and witness are also often far from always in agreement.”⁸¹ He gives an example of this: “In the case of the children of believers, ... there is faith that is not manifested in deeds, a confession that consists in saying ‘Lord, Lord’ and is not born of true faith.”⁸² This argument indicates that “defining the church as the gathering of believers” has the advantage “over its description as the gathering of the called and the baptized” since “it maintains precisely that on which everything depends, both for the individual and the whole church.”⁸³ This argument also shows that it is not decisive for someone to be called and baptized because “those who believe and are baptized will be saved, and, conversely, those who do not believe, even though they were called and baptized, will be condemned (Mark 16:16).”⁸⁴

Bavinck’s statements imply not only that “the distinction between the church as institution and the church as organism [in the visible church] is very different from that between the visible and the invisible church and may not be equated with it,”⁸⁵ but also that “the institution and the organism of the church, when they assert themselves in the

⁸⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

visible realm, have an invisible spiritual background.”⁸⁶ In other words, the distinction between the church as organism and the church as institution “tells us in what ways the church becomes visible and knowable to us;” the distinction between the visible and the invisible church “teaches us that this visible manifestation has an invisible spiritual aspect to it, which is known only to God.”⁸⁷

According to Bavinck, this analysis implies that the invisible and the visible church are not two distinct churches.⁸⁸ In other words, the visible and the invisible church are by no means terms collectively describing the unbelievers and believers in the church.⁸⁹ Rather, for Bavinck, the invisible and the visible church “are two sides of one and the same church.”⁹⁰ That is, the same believers, on the one hand, are viewed in terms of the belief which dwells in their heart and is only known to God with certainty; on the other hand they are viewed in terms of their testimony and life, and this side of the church is turned toward us and can be observed by us.⁹¹ However, for Bavinck, these two sides are never identical, even in the purest church.⁹² This is because the church on earth is in the process of becoming and has not been completed, so there are always unbelievers within

⁸⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:305.

⁸⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

the church and believers outside the church.⁹³ “Many wolves are within and many sheep are outside the sheepfold,” according to Bavinck.⁹⁴

These statements show that, for Bavinck, the invisible church as an invisible side of the church is not like the Platonic idea that we can hardly reach. Rather it is as practical as the work of the Holy Spirit applying salvation to the church is practical. These assertions also show that, for Bavinck, the visible church has a close relationship that cannot be separated from the invisible church, although it is distinct from the invisible church. Furthermore, it is shown that the visible church is of considerable importance as a visible manifestation of the spiritual side of the church by witness and life of believers. This view of the relationship between the visible and the invisible church is unlike Platonic dualism, which segregates the world of idea from the world of phenomena and regards the phenomenal world as negligible or negative.

5.3 The Invisible Church in Relation to the Unity and Division of the Church

Now let us look at how Bavinck’s view of the distinction between the invisible and the visible church relates to his view of the unity and division of the church.

First of all, Bavinck’s view of the distinction between the visible and the invisible church is far from rationalizing schism. As mentioned above, according to Bavinck, the invisible and the visible church are by no means the names of a group of unbelievers and a group of believers in the church. Moreover, for Bavinck, although in the church there should be discipline related to doctrine and life according to the Lord’s command,

⁹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

“every attempt to split believers from unbelievers and vice versa and to create a little church (*ecclesiola*) within the *ecclesia* is in conflict with the Lord’s command.”⁹⁵

Above all, such an attempt can never succeed since “we are limited to noting people’s witness and walk, and we neither can nor may judge their hearts,” according to Bavinck.⁹⁶

Rather, Bavinck’s view of the invisible and the visible church is in harmony with his view of the unity of the church. For Bavinck, following the nature of the invisible church, the existence of the spiritual unity of the church is not abstract, but objective and actual. Furthermore, like the nature of the invisible church, this spiritual unity of the church does not remain completely invisible. Just as the invisible church manifests itself as the visible church, this spiritual unity of the church manifests itself externally – at least to some extent, in terms of what all Christian churches have in common – even though in a very incomplete way. In other words, although Christianity exists in denominational differences, there is truly a Christianity that exists amid denominational differences. This reminds us that we must always pay attention to this unity that is indeed real though we are constantly in danger of ignoring this unity because we are so familiar with the differences and schisms in Christianity. Our efforts to pay attention to the unity of the church can never be vague or inconceivable because there is always more to bind all true Christians than to separate them.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:306.

⁹⁷ Bavinck states: “Protestantism, on the other hand, associates the unity of the church first of all with the oneness of the head of the church (Eph. 1:10; 5:23), with the communion of all believers through one and the same Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17, 19; 12:13; 2 Cor. 12:18; Eph. 4:4), with Christ and with each other (John 10:16; 15:1; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–13; Eph. 1:22), and further, with the unity of faith, hope, and love, and of baptism, and so forth (Eph. 4:3–5). This unity,

In this respect, for Bavinck, the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical error in relation to the unity and catholicity of the church, is to ignore the fact that millions of Christians live outside of Rome. This is because “there is not just one church but many churches, not one of which embraces all believers.”⁹⁸ In this context Bavinck compares the attitude that the Roman Catholic Church adopted toward Protestant churches with that which Protestant churches adopted toward it: “Rome can recognize sects alongside itself but not churches. The Protestants, though firmly rejecting the church hierarchy of Rome, continued to fully recognize the Christian elements in the church of Rome. However corrupted Rome might be, there were still left in it ‘vestiges of the church,’ ‘ruins of a disordered church’; there was still ‘some kind of church, be it half-demolished,’ left in papacy.”⁹⁹ In this sense, “the Reformation was a separation from the ‘Roman and papal church,’ not from ‘the true church,’” according to Bavinck.¹⁰⁰

Based on this historical lesson, Bavinck is alert to the pursuit of the unity of the church in an artificial, mixed manner. He, on the one hand, says that the segregation and discord that have been in Christ’s church throughout the centuries is a sin against God, contradicted by Christ’s high priestly prayer for unity, and is caused by the darkness of

though primarily spiritual in character, nevertheless exists objectively and really, and it does not remain completely invisible. It manifests itself outwardly – albeit in a very imperfect way – and at least to some degree comes to light in that which all Christian churches have in common. No Christianity exists above or beneath religious differences, but there is indeed a Christianity present amid religious differences. Because we tend to be most aware of the differences and schisms in Christianity, we constantly run the danger of disregarding this – nevertheless truly existing – unity. That which unites all true Christians is always more than that which separates them.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:321.

⁹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:309.

⁹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:314–15.

¹⁰⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:315.

our intellect and the lack of love in our hearts.¹⁰¹ So “it is understandable that repeatedly many Christians have allowed themselves to be led astray by the attempt to bring about or to maintain this fervently desired unity of the church of Christ, either by violent means – especially by the strong arm of the state – or artificially by syncretism and fusion,” according to Bavinck.¹⁰² But on the other hand, Bavinck argues that the failure of all these attempts for unity should not be forgotten, for it does teach us an important lesson: the true unity of the church as a response to Christ’s prayer for the unity of the church can only be realized and has been realized by Christ even in divisions and segregations, and will be fully fulfilled when the time comes. Bavinck also argues that this true unity of the church that Jesus Christ understands and the way in which he works through the Holy Spirit for this unity, excludes all violent means and artificial attempts.¹⁰³

Bavinck’s belief that only Christ brings about the true unity of the church through the Holy Spirit and not in a hierarchical, coercive way, but in a spiritual way, corresponds to his view of *how* believers can participate in the ministry of Christ for the unity of the church. The most important principle in this *how* is that the freedom Christ has given to each believer especially in relation to interpreting and practicing the Word, must be fully

¹⁰¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:316.

¹⁰² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:316.

¹⁰³ Bavinck says: “History, like nature, is a work of God; it does not take shape apart from his providence. Christ, by his resurrection and ascension, became king at the right hand of God and will remain king until he has put all his enemies under his feet [1 Cor. 15:25]. He reigns also over the divisions and schisms of his church on earth. And his prayer for unity was not born of unfamiliarity with its history nor from his inability to govern it. In and through the discord and dissension, that prayer is daily heard and is led to its complete fulfillment. The profound spiritual sense in which the unity of his disciples was understood by Jesus necessarily excludes all violent and artificial attempts to introduce it. Christ, who prayed for it, is also the One – and he alone – who can bring it about. His prayer is the guarantee that it already exists in him and that in due time, accomplished by him, it will also be manifest in all believers.” Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:316–17.

respected.¹⁰⁴ Bavinck notes, “because the Word [Scripture] is the mark of the church and there exists no infallible interpretation of that Word, Christ himself gave to everyone the freedom to understand that Word personally as he or she interprets it.”¹⁰⁵ For Bavinck, this freedom, of course, comes with responsibility: “Morally ... we are bound in this connection to Christ, and we will all have to give an account of how we have understood the word of Christ and put it into practice.”¹⁰⁶ “But,” once again emphasizes Bavinck, “vis-à-vis our fellow humans and fellow Christians, we are completely free.”¹⁰⁷ This freedom includes even “the right to make judgments concerning the church and, if one sees fit, to separate from it” because Christ himself, not the creature, governs his church, and the Word is the mark of the church and given to everyone’s hands, according to Bavinck.¹⁰⁸ Such freedom, says Bavinck, must be entirely respected and cannot be blocked by the state or the church. Furthermore, Bavinck asserts that “even the horrendous misuse that can be made of it and has in fact been made of it may not even for a moment tempt us to abolish that freedom.”¹⁰⁹ Bavinck’s statement implies that this respect for the freedom of individuals given by Christ, despite the danger of such a terrible abuse, is an important principle of participation in the unity of the church. On the other hand, for Bavinck, if the church develops a hierarchy that causes coercion through fear of exploitation and side effects of such personal freedom, and if it regards this

¹⁰⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹⁰⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹⁰⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹⁰⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹⁰⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹⁰⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

hierarchy itself as essential, it is the driving force that truly leads to schism.¹¹⁰ This principle is very important to Bavinck because it tells each believer the key condition of the obligation to stay in his or her own church despite many impurities in his or her own church unless one's own church is a false church whose main feature is to suppress the conscience of its members by a hierarchy and coercion. In this regard, Bavinck states that "to stay in one's own church despite much impurity in doctrine and life is our duty as long as it does not prevent us from being faithful to our own confession and does not force us, even indirectly, to obey humans more than God."¹¹¹ "For a church that pressured its members to do that would, at that very moment and to the extent it did that, reveal itself to the conscience of its members as a false church, which accorded itself and its ordinances more power and authority than the Word of God," according to Bavinck.¹¹²

In this respect, for Bavinck, "to look for its [the church's] unity in the spiritual bond of faith rather than in the external form of its government" is biblical and worthy of the lesson of the Reformation.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:317–18.

¹¹¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:319.

¹¹² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:319.

¹¹³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:319. Bavinck provides biblical and church-historical examples for this point: "All the divisions and schisms that presently exist in the church of Christ basically already have their roots in the apostolic age.... The reason these divisions and schisms in the apostolic age do not leave such a deep impression is that in the New Testament we always have to deal primarily with local churches. At the time there was as yet nothing other than a spiritual bond that united all the churches. But when a hierarchy developed in the church of Christ and this hierarchy viewed itself as 'the essence' of the church, it was this mistaken, unchristian idea of the church that throughout the centuries provoked schisms and heresies and alienated many true believers. Wherever and to the degree that the hierarchy developed, whether in the Roman Catholic, the Greek Orthodox, or the Anglican Church, there the sects sprang up again and again and, if they were not violently oppressed and rooted out, pushed the official church back and not infrequently overshadowed it. It is precisely the hierarchical idea of the church, an idea first of all intent upon the unity of Christianity, that throughout the centuries fostered discord

Bavinck's view of this spiritual unity of the church, can be said to correspond to his view of the nature of the church as diversity in unity. Although Bavinck recognizes that "undoubtedly the divisions of the church of Christ are caused by sin" and "as a result of sin that diversity has been perverted and corrupted," he states that that diversity "is good and important also for the church" in terms of the following differences between individuals: "Difference in sex and age, in character and disposition, in mind and heart, in gifts and goods, in time and place."¹¹⁴ Christ, says Bavinck, "takes all these differences into his service and adorns his church with them."¹¹⁵ Even the division of humanity into peoples and languages "has something good in it, which is brought into the church and thus preserved for eternity," though it "was occasioned by sin."¹¹⁶ And "Christ gathers his church on earth," says Bavinck, "from many races and languages and peoples and nations."¹¹⁷ This view of Bavinck originates in his understanding of the attributes of God and the nature of creation as follows: "In unity God loves the diversity. Among all creatures there was diversity even when as yet there was no sin."¹¹⁸

Bavinck's understanding of the nature of the church as *diversity* in unity is directly linked to his view of the catholicity of the church. This catholicity of the church is based on the influence of the Word of God on various objects and circumstances, leading to diverse results. In this respect, Bavinck states that "if the Word of God is still somewhat

and caused schism. Protestantism denies its own first principle if it seeks to maintain the unity of Christianity by any form of hierarchical coercion." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:317–18.

¹¹⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹¹⁵ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹¹⁶ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹¹⁷ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹¹⁸ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

known at a given place, it will certainly have its effect, and there will be a church of Christ there, however impure and adulterated.”¹¹⁹ And such a church is one of “the local churches spread out over the globe” as a gathering of true believers in a particular area.¹²⁰ However, for Bavinck, this does not refer to “indifferentism and syncretism.”¹²¹ This is because, for him, the understanding of the universality of the church as diversity in unity is a facilitator, not a hindrance to seeking the purest, while acknowledging that there are no real and false churches in an absolute sense and there is a great difference in the purity of confessions and churches.¹²² In this vein, Bavinck expresses what he considers a desirable universal church that pursues purity in generosity. In expressing it, he first explains which church can be called most catholic: “Christianity is a world religion suited and intended for every people and age, for every class and rank, for every time and place. That church is most catholic that most clearly expresses in its confession and applies in its practice this international and cosmopolitan character of the Christian religion.”¹²³ Then he says that “the Reformed had an eye for it when in various countries and churches they confessed the truth in an indigenous, free, and independent manner and at the Synod of Dort invited delegates from all over Reformed Christianity.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹²⁰ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹²¹ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318.

¹²² Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:318–19.

¹²³ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:323. For Bavinck, the fact that the meaning of the catholicity of the church consists especially in this fact is proved by “the texts to which the church fathers appeal for the catholicity of the church (such as Gen. 12:3; Ps. 2:8; Isa. 2:2; Jer. 3:17; Mal. 1:11; Matt. 8:11; 28:19; John 10:16; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:6; Rev. 7:9; and so forth),” although “the word ‘catholic’ does not occur in Scripture.”

¹²⁴ Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4:323.

Here we need to keep in mind that Bavinck's understanding of the invisible church lies behind this view of the catholicity of the church. For he refuses to confine the invisible church to any single confession, but recognizes its presence wherever God works by his Spirit and Word in human hearts. In this sense, it can be argued that, for Bavinck, the doctrine of the Reformation and the Reformed on the invisible and the visible church does not rationalize schism and disunity; rather, this doctrine advocates unity, diversity, tolerance, and purity among all Christians and churches, while opposing sectarianism, hierarchism, and syncretism.

5.4 Summary

In order to respond to the criticism against Reformed ecclesiology (Platonic dualism) from the viewpoint of Bavinck's pneumatology, in this chapter we have looked at his view of the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and the church, focusing on the distinction between the invisible and the visible church. This study can be summarized in three points:

First, for Bavinck, in its essence the church as a realization of election by the Holy Spirit is the communion and fellowship of true Christ-believers serving each other with special gifts of the Holy Spirit as equal brothers and sisters anointed with the same Spirit. Bavinck's pneumatological understanding of the essential identity of the church and his view that the work of the Holy Spirit applying salvation to the church is invisible, but indeed actual, plays a key role in understanding his realistic view of the invisible church as the invisible side of the same militant church on earth as the visible church, seen only by God. Based on his realistic epistemology in which things that are not seen are as real as unseen ones and more important than them, Bavinck's realistic understanding of the

invisible church from his pneumatological perspective indicates not only that the church has a spiritual side that is visible only to God and invisible to our natural eyes, but also that the invisible but truly real spiritual side of the church has a greater impact on the life of the church and each believer than the visible side of the church, and is manifested in the visible side of the church, namely, in the visible church.

Second, according to Bavinck, the distinction between the invisible and the visible church is very different from the distinction between the church as institution and the church as organism, because the former distinction teaches that visible phenomena of the church have an invisible spiritual side that is known only to God; the latter distinction tells us how the church becomes visible and knowable to us. This implies that in the one case, the same church is viewed in terms of the faith which dwells in the hearts of believers and is known only to God; in the other case it is viewed in terms of the administration of Word and sacrament, the testimony and life of the believers, the side which can be observed by us. But these two sides of the church are never identical, even in the purest church because the militant church on earth is in the process of becoming, and thus there are always unbelievers within the church and believers outside the church. Nonetheless, not only the essence of the invisible church but also the essence of the visible church consists in believers alone because it is only true faith that saves and unifies us to Christ, so unbelievers are in no way the essence of the church nor can constitute it.

Finally, Bavinck's view of the distinction between the invisible and the visible church is connected to his view of the unity of the church. Following the nature of the invisible church, the spiritual unity of the church is indeed real, and it becomes visible

even though it is imperfect. For Bavinck, this reality of the spiritual unity of the church indicates that our efforts to pay attention to the unity of the church are never in vain because it reminds us that what unifies all true Christians is always more than what separates them. In this vein, Bavinck makes it clear that the true unity of the church is attained only by Christ through the Holy Spirit in a spiritual and horizontal way, not in a coercive and vertical way. This implies that every believer can participate by interpreting and practicing the Word on their own in the ministry of Christ for the unity of the church. For Christ gave everyone the freedom and responsibility to interpret and practice it. Although Bavinck mentions that such freedom can be terribly exploited, he argues that what really causes schism is developing a hierarchy and regarding it as essential to avoid the abuse of this freedom. In this respect, for Bavinck, we should pursue the unity of the church in the spiritual solidarity of faith, rather than in the external form of the church government.

Bavinck's view of this spiritual union of the church is consistent with his view of the nature of the church as diversity in unity: for his service, Christ takes not only the divergent differences among individuals such as differences in gender, age, and personality, which existed even when as yet there was no sin, but also the division of humanity into nations and languages, which was occasioned by sin, and he gathers and decorates his church on earth from and with all these differences. For "in unity God loves the diversity." All these kinds of differences and divisions, says Bavinck, are good and important for the church, although the divisions of Christ's church were undoubtedly caused by sin, and even as a result of sin, this diversity has been distorted and polluted. Bavinck's view of this nature of the church as diversity in unity, can be regarded as a

basis for his idea of the universality of the church since for him this universality is grounded on the impact of the Word on diverse objects and circumstances, leading to various results. Bavinck's statements cannot be attributed to indifferentism or syncretism. This is because Bavinck's understanding of the nature of the church as diversity in unity and the universality of the church is not an obstacle but a catalyst for pursuing the purest expression of the church, while embracing divergent differences. Behind Bavinck's thoughts lies his view of not limiting the invisible church to a certain sole confession, but acknowledging the presence of the invisible church wherever God works in human hearts through his Spirit and Word.

These statements show that the criticism that the Reformation and Reformed ecclesiology, which distinguishes between the invisible and the visible church, justifies schism and disunity does not apply to Bavinck. Rather they show that, for Bavinck, this distinction opposes separatism, hierarchism, and syncretism among all Christians and churches, and serves to support diversity in unity, purity with tolerance.

5.5 Resummary Using Van Ruler's Distinction

Now let us resummarize the contents of this chapter using Van Ruler's distinction between the christological and the pneumatological in order to grasp the structure, principles and key notions of Bavinck's pneumatology with regard to the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and the church. This resummary can be stated in three ways:

First, for Van Ruler, theonomous reciprocity, the essential character of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is revealed not only through the application of salvation to individual believers by the Holy Spirit, but also when salvation is applied to the church as

community. For the Holy Spirit restores our freedom and acts actively in us and together with us in the application of these two dimensions of salvation.

This characteristic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Van Ruler's ecclesiology is equally evident in Bavinck's ecclesiology. According to Bavinck, Christ gave all individual believers, not the church as institution, the freedom and duty to interpret and practice the Scripture personally and on a church level through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. He even gave each of the believers the freedom and responsibility to discern whether his or her church is a false church through the Bible and to decide whether to remain in that church. This is because the essential nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not coercive but always persuasive, does not ignore or weaken human freedom, but restores and causes it to bloom. This feature of the invisible but real and effective ministry of the Holy Spirit is revealed in the institutional and organic aspects of the visible church. The visible church also has the responsibility to demonstrate this spiritual and essential characteristic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Second, for Van Ruler, the structure of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a "mixture," as diversity in unity.¹²⁵ This is because the work of the Holy Spirit varies for each person,

¹²⁵ The concept of this pneumatological mixture by Van Ruler is already briefly summarized in chapter 2 of this dissertation, but here is a quote from Van Ruler's statements regarding this concept to help readers of this dissertation: "However, in pneumatology things are significantly different. Here everything must be seen in the background of the notion of indwelling (*inhabitatio*). If one speaks of mixing here, then it is a mixing of divine salvation in Jesus Christ with created and fallen existence. A genuine *applicatio* takes place, an *applicatio* that is not only directed toward us (*in nos*) but also in us (*in nobis*). Christ takes form (*gestalte*) in us. That also always means that Christ takes form through us, a form that varies in every person, in every nation, in every culture, in every age. This diversity occurs not only because of the multiform wisdom of God in Christ, but also because we in whom he takes form vary so greatly. All of this applies not only to individual Christians or to the church, but also to culture and the state in the process of christianizing. In this pneumatological concept of mixture, we are dealing with a synthesis of the particular and the general, in principle, a synthesis of redemption and creation. This gives the christological notion of *ex Maria* an enormous expansion, a greater breadth and depth. It also provides a principled, rather than merely practical-methodological basis for the

each country, each culture, each age. A pneumatological concept of this blend provides a basis for church tolerance and an element of integration in the catholicity of the church.

Although Bavinck does not use the term “mixture,” the character of the Holy Spirit’s ministry that embodies diversity in unity, for him, reveals the nature and path of true unity of the church, similar to the ministry “mixture” that Van Ruler describes. The reason is that this character of the ministry of the Holy Spirit tells us that there is always more that unites all true Christians than separates them. Also, the true unity of the church is done in spiritual and horizontal ways, not in coercive and vertical ways, in this ministry of the Holy Spirit. The character of this ministry of the Holy Spirit is also the basis of Bavinck’s concept of the universality of the church. This is because the universality of the church is grounded on the influence of the Word on the various objects and circumstances through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly, for both Bavinck and Van Ruler, the nature of the church as diversity in unity is the basis for emphasizing the importance of tolerance in the church. But, to Bavinck, it is also the basis for emphasizing the importance of pursuing the purest expression of the church, not just tolerance.

toleration that must characterize the church’s place in the world. It provides an element of integration in the church’s catholicity.” Van Ruler, “Structural Differences,” 42–43.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation has tried to refute two criticisms of Reformed theology (inevitable fatalism in soteriology, Platonic dualism in ecclesiology) by using Bavinck's view of human freedom and of the invisible church from the perspective of his pneumatology as a sample. And we could see that Bavinck's pneumatological account of human freedom and the invisible church provides a credible refutation of these two criticisms in the following three respects.

First, Bavinck's covenantal theology distinguishes between the acquisition of salvation by Christ and the application of salvation by the Holy Spirit, and this distinctive ministry of the Holy Spirit serves as a basis for refuting both criticisms. In particular, Bavinck's account of the salvific ministry of the Holy Spirit shows that the issue of human freedom in salvation is, above all, a matter related to pneumatology. It also shows that the issue of the invisible church is a problem directly related to pneumatology. Bavinck's account of a notable and essential difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in the activity and bestowment of the Holy Spirit especially reveals a biblical basis for the work of the Holy Spirit distinct from the ministry of Christ. Specifically, Bavinck's filioque understanding of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost clearly shows that even though the Holy Spirit became the Spirit of Christ after the ascension of Christ, he was still also the Spirit of God the Father. It also tells us that the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the ascended Christ unites the saints with Christ, and applies the benefits of salvation that Christ earned to the saints; in this application, the subjectivity of the Holy Spirit and the distinctiveness of his ministry are clear. According

to Bavinck, this way of ministry of the Holy Spirit is based on the covenant of grace. Bavinck's understanding of the covenant of grace indicates that the relationship between the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit and human freedom can be expressed as divine initiative genuine reciprocity between God and humans. This is because, for Bavinck, the covenant of grace begins unilaterally on the part of God and is destined to be a bilateral relationship between God and humans, and the nature of this covenant of grace is realized by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. According to Bavinck, this covenant of grace is also based on the covenant of redemption. The covenant of redemption is an eternal covenant of salvation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct subjects. In this *pactum salutis* Christ was appointed as the mediator of salvation, and the Holy Spirit was appointed as the applicant of salvation. The execution of this covenant of redemption is the covenant of grace; so also in the covenant of grace, Christ is the Mediator and the Holy Spirit is the Applicant.

Second, on the basis of the distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, Bavinck explains more clearly through the concept of grace applied by the Holy Spirit as to how the work of the Holy Spirit harmonizes with human freedom, and thus refutes the criticism that Reformed pneumatology ignores or destroys human freedom. According to Bavinck, the providential ministry of the Holy Spirit of creation and preservation, which applies to all people, is conducted in and through human nature and is in harmony with human freedom. This is because this providential grace applied by the Holy Spirit creates and preserves human nature that includes human freedom, and because this principle of the work of the Holy Spirit is based on divine decree that never changes. This principle of the work of the Holy Spirit in harmony with human freedom

also applies to the salvific ministry of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit works in and through human nature, without suppressing or altering human nature that includes human freedom in applying salvation. Furthermore, the grace of salvation applied by the Holy Spirit restores human nature and freedom and causes them to blossom, for grace is not against nature, but against sin. Grace frees human nature and freedom from sin and leads them to their apex.

Bavinck also describes how the work of the Holy Spirit and human freedom are harmonized in each aspect of the *ordo salutis*. In Bavinck's account of regeneration, the ministry of the Holy Spirit that causes regeneration is as a rule associated with the Word of God, and that ministry is never coercive but persuasive. The regeneration by the Holy Spirit is said to restore human nature, not add something new to it. By distinguishing and linking active and passive regeneration, Bavinck shows that the Father's speaking and humans' learning from him, his drawing and their following, his granting and their receiving, the sowing and what is sown occur simultaneously in regeneration. This means that in regeneration the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit and human freedom are not in opposition but in perfect harmony. This is because the ministry of the Holy Spirit applying the grace of regeneration is not against human nature or freedom, but it is against sin, and because it frees human nature from sin so that regenerated people respond freely to that grace of the Holy Spirit. In this context, faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit is not something new added to human nature, but a recovery of humans' capacity to believe. Conversion is related to the whole human nature including intelligence, will, and emotion, but its focus is on will. Conversion also includes various characteristics of human free choice: the ability and the option to be able to change one's own mind in

doing moral conduct, the ability and the option to be able to either take one direction or another at the crossroads of life. Bavinck's description of the relationship between the work of the Spirit in conversion and human subjectivity and freedom is as follows: when the Holy Spirit converts someone, that person is converted, and that person then converts him- or herself. In this sense, conversion is the free and active act of humans who under the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit turn away from sin and go to God with joy and humility.

According to Bavinck, justification is not an ethical but a juridical act since it in itself consists in divine judgment – in our terms, a changed disposition and mood of God toward us. Justification is not only forensic but also communicative. This reciprocal feature of justification is evident in the distinction and relationship between active and passive justification. On the one hand, passive justification that occurs in God's personally granting it to humans in the inner call of the Holy Spirit by faith is importantly distinguished from active justification in the divine decree, in Christ's resurrection, and in the proclamation of the gospel. On the other hand, there is a close relationship between the two that cannot be separated. These two aspects of justification are joined with simultaneity in time and concur and always go together. Active justification as the ground of passive justification is actualized and terminated in passive justification through faith. In this respect, active justification that occurs with a view to faith and the passive justification by faith alone are compatible, not contradictory. This relation between active and passive justification allows faith to be simultaneously regarded as a passive organ, and as an active capacity or act. For this view of justification makes Christ the only ground or cause of justification and never makes faith a basis of justification even in the

lightest sense, so that faith can be purely receptive, and at the same time it can be the very act of accepting Christ and his benefits or can be the conviction of the Holy Spirit working in one's own heart. In this sense, faith is a living and active faith in its nature that is not antithetical to any deed in any respect. Even faith itself is an act and a principle of all good works. Here the views of Paul and James on faith and works are in accord. Sanctification is the free and active participation of humans in the initiative-taking ministry of the Holy Spirit that renews holiness in their heart.

For Bavinck, sanctification is primarily God's gift and ministry, a lifelong process in which humans are passive; on this basis, sanctification gains a secondary active meaning that humans are called and armed, sanctify themselves, and give their whole lives to God. The former is called passive sanctification, and the latter is called active sanctification. These two aspects of sanctification are simultaneous in time and blend together. In the nature of this sanctification, dependence on the Holy Spirit and human freedom are in perfect harmony with each other. Perseverance is also primarily a gift of God and the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit who gives Christ's benefits and continuously keeps us and leads us toward completion, while it is the process through which the exhortation of the Word and the obedience of humans are in accordance with this ministry of the Holy Spirit. Bavinck's account of how the work of the Holy Spirit harmonizes with human freedom in each aspect of the order of salvation shows that the criticism that Reformed theology leads to an inevitable fatalism in soteriology does not apply to Bavinck. It also gives a credible rebuttal to this critique of the Reformed theology.

Third, Bavinck's pneumatological understanding of the identity and essence of the church and his view that the work of the Holy Spirit applying salvation to the church is

invisible but actual and effective, play a key role in his realistic understanding of the invisible church. In his understanding of the invisible church from a pneumatological point of view, Bavinck also defines both the invisible church and the visible church as sides of the same militant church on the earth. That is, because the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not visible to the human eye but only to God, the militant church on earth has a spiritual side visible only to God along with a visible side seen to our human eyes. This invisible side of the church, the invisible church, is not like a Platonic idea that we can hardly reach. Rather it is as real as the ministry of the Holy Spirit is real, and it has a greater impact on the life of the church and each believer than the visible side of the church. This statement does not mean that the visible side of the church, the visible church, is not important. Unlike Platonic dualism, which segregates the world of ideas from the world of phenomena and regards the phenomenal world as neglectable or bad, the visible church, though distinct from the invisible church, has an inseparable and close relationship with it and is also very important as its actual manifestation through the means of grace, through the offices, and through the lives of Christians who live worthy of the Word of God. More specifically, on the one hand, the same church is regarded by faith dwelling in the hearts of believers by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and seen only by God; on the other hand, it is regarded by the proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the lives of believers as visible things. But these two sides of the church are never the same even in the purest church. This is because the militant church on earth is a church in the process of becoming, and therefore there are always unbelievers in the visible church, and there are believers outside the visible church. Bavinck's view of the distinction between the visible and the invisible church

provides a credible refutation to the criticism that regards Reformed ecclesiology as a kind of Platonic dualism due to its distinguishing between the two.

Furthermore, Bavinck's view of the invisible church and the unity of the church is a credible refutation of the criticism that Reformed ecclesiology justifies schism through its distinction between the invisible and the visible church. This is because, for Bavinck, the notion of the invisible church, concerning which the Reformation and the Reformed speak, implies an unseen but real spiritual unity that is driven by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And this spiritual unity of the church is manifested visibly, even if it is incomplete. Also, according to Bavinck, this reality of the spiritual unity of the church indicates that our efforts toward the unity of the church are never in vain, as there is always more that unites all true Christians than separates them. In this respect, Bavinck argues that the true unity of the church occurs in a spiritual and horizontal way, not in a coercive, hierarchical way. This spiritual unity of the church that Bavinck speaks of is supported by his view of the character of the church as diversity in unity, which is caused by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word producing various results in relation to various objects and circumstances. Bavinck's statements never contain indifference or syncretism. This is because, for Bavinck, the nature of the church as diversity in unity is a catalyst, not an obstacle, to seeking the purest expression of the church, but with tolerance. Behind these statements lies Bavinck's view of acknowledging that the invisible church is not confined to any particular confession or denomination, but there is the invisible church wherever God performs the ministry of salvation in the hearts of people through the Holy Spirit and the Word. In this respect we can assert that the criticism that Reformed ecclesiology in distinguishing between the visible and invisible church justifies schism does not apply to

Bavinck. It can also be said that Bavinck's description of the invisible and the visible church is a good sample that supports the assertion that the Reformation's and the Reformed distinction between the invisible and the visible church is what cultivates diversity in unity and purity with tolerance in opposition to schism, hierarchism, and syncretism among all Christians and churches.

APPENDIX: THESES FOR PUBLIC DEFENSE

Theses Pertaining to the Ph.D. Dissertation

1. In comparison with the pneumatologies of other Western theological traditions, Reformed pneumatology is relatively well-developed.
2. Two repeated challenges against Reformed theology – that its soteriology is fatalistic and that its ecclesiology (i.e., the distinction between the visible and the invisible church) is dualistic are pneumatological issues that must be addressed with pneumatological distinctions.
3. Arnold A. Van Ruler’s important distinction between the respective viewpoints of Christology and pneumatology is a valid heuristic device for understanding Herman Bavinck’s pneumatology and a key to a valid Reformed response to the two challenges mentioned in thesis # 2.
4. Although Bavinck emphasizes the close relationship between the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of Christ, he clearly distinguishes the former from the latter. And he uses this distinction 1) to demonstrate that in the sovereign salvation ministry of God, human freedom is restored and flourishes without being ignored or weakened, and 2) to show that the invisible church is not a Platonic idea but the invisible spiritual side of the church and is as real as the visible side of the church.
5. In his trinitarian covenant theology Bavinck clearly distinguishes the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.
6. For Bavinck, the nature of the covenant of grace can be called “divine initiative genuine reciprocity” and is realized by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
7. For Bavinck, the universal providential grace applied by the Holy Spirit creates and preserves human nature and freedom because it is conducted in and through human nature and thus is in harmony with human freedom. Similarly, the grace of salvation applied by the Holy Spirit restores human nature and freedom and makes it blossom because it opposes sin without opposing nature and thus frees human nature from sin and leads it to perfection.

Theses Pertaining to the Ph.D. Coursework

8. Aquinas’s exposition of divine immutability does not result in an image of God that is static, immobile, indifferent, and remote from creation, but displays a supremely active God.
9. In John Owen’s discussions of providence and human freedom, his Reformed theology does not lead to metaphysical or philosophical determinism.

10. Jonathan Edwards's notion of "the new sense of the heart" does not refer to new faculties of the soul but to a spiritual renewal of its natural faculties, to a new kind of exercise of a saint's ordinary faculties.

11. Kant's claim that an ontological proof for the existence of God is impossible does not play a role as a negative motif for theology, but as a positive motif for theology.

12. The contention that Barth avoided modalism when pursuing appropriate speech about God is a defensible claim.

Theses Pertaining to Personal Interest

13. The same Spirit who inspired the authors of the Bible illuminates those who read and study the Bible.

14. The heart of "the good" that in all things God fulfills for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose, is that they are imitating the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

15. The Christian family is beautiful and glorious when it blends well into the church as a larger family.

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