

W. B. Kristensen's "On Herman Bavinck's Scientific Work"

Laurence O'Donnell

Translator's Introduction¹

William Brede Kristensen (1867–1953) was a Norwegian scholar of classical languages and ancient Mesopotamian religions. In 1896 he completed a doctorate at the University of Oslo on ancient Egyptian views of the afterlife.² He lectured at the university from 1897–1901 before emigrating to the Netherlands. From 1901–1937 he held the chair of the history and phenomenology of religion at Leiden University, where he taught up-and-coming leaders of the *religionswissenschaftliche* school such as Gerardus van der Leeuw, Hendrik Kraemer, and C. J. Bleeker.³ Though he and Bavinck did not cross paths at Leiden (Bavinck had completed his doctoral studies there two decades earlier), they did find a point of contact when Bavinck was inducted into the Royal Netherlands Academy

¹This translation, with the translator's introduction, was previously published in *Reformed Faith and Practice: The Journal of Reformed Theological Seminary* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 38–49. It appears here with permission, for which we are thankful. The original Dutch text of Kristensen's article was published as: W. B. Kristensen, "Over den wetenschappelijken arbeid van Herman Bavinck" in *Jaarboek der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, 1921–1922* (Amsterdam: 1923), 1–12. The original pagination is included in brackets in the text of the English translation below.

²*Ægypternes forestillinger om livet efter døden i forbindelse med guderne Ra og Osiris* [Egyptian ideas about life after death in connection with the gods Ra and Osiris] (Kristiania: Det Kongelige Frederiks Universitet, 1896).

³H. J. Ponsteen, "William Brede Kristensen," in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme* (Kampen: Kok, 1998), 4:266–69; "William Brede Kristensen," in Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods and Theories of Research; Introduction and Anthology* (New York: De Gruyter, 1999), ch. 25; Richard J. Plantinga, "W. B. Kristensen and the Study of Religion," *Numen* 36, no. 2 (1989): 173–88.

of Arts and Sciences, as Kristensen notes in his eulogy. Additionally, that Bavinck read and appreciated Kristensen's scholarship is evident from the references to his works that appear in Bavinck's writings.⁴

When a member of the Academy passed away, it was customary for a current member to deliver a eulogy and for the eulogy to appear in the Academy's yearbook. Kristensen fills this role for Bavinck. Bavinck's widow and close relatives were in attendance when Kristensen read the eulogy at the Academy.⁵

R. H. Bremmer ranks Kristensen's eulogy among the more important early studies of Bavinck's thought and provides a concise summary: "Kristensen gave a short survey of the main features in Bavinck's thoughts on the foundations of science."⁶ For contemporary readers who come to Bavinck largely by way of the *Reformed Dogmatics* and know him primarily as a theologian, the choice to focus on the "man of science," as Kristensen describes him, might come as a surprise. Yet the choice is fitting when one considers the significant works that Bavinck produced during the time period that Kristensen knew him such as *Christelijke wetenschap* (1904), an essay on the implications of a Christian conception of science for a Christian university;⁷ *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing* (1904), a Christian theistic formulation of the relations between thought and being, being and becoming, and becoming and acting;⁸ his 1908 Princeton Stone Lectures

⁴Herman Bavinck, *De zekerheid des geloofs*, 1st ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1901), 15; *Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:30n3 (subpara. 307). In the notes below, references to the subparagraph (abbrev. "subpara.") are provided to assist readers in comparing the second and subsequent Dutch editions of *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*.

⁵"Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen," in *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, no. 224, 17 November 1921, p. 2. Also, a summation of the eulogy was reported in "Kon. Akademie van Wetenschappen," in *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 14 November 1921, evening edition, third sheet, p. 9. Thanks to Prof. Van den Belt for these references.

⁶Rolf Hendrik Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus* (Kampen: Kok, 1961), 5; cf. 2.

⁷Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1904).

⁸Herman Bavinck, *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 1st ed. (Kampen: Bos, 1904); 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1913); 3rd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1929).

on the philosophy of revelation;⁹ and his studies of contemporary religious psychology (1912–1920).¹⁰ The “short survey” to which Bremmer refers applies largely to these works.

Along with the “man of science,” Kristensen highlights the “modern man.” He presents Bavinck as fully immersed in the intellectual currents of his day—so much so that Jan Veenhof cites Kristensen to support his characterization of Bavinck as “a thoroughly modern man” whose “writings form valuable news reports in which the life and strife of the former days is reflected in a very lively way.”¹¹ Yet at the same time Kristensen touches on the fundamental difference from modern thought that is all-controlling in Bavinck’s conception of science, one that he attributes to the strong influence that the classical Western theological tradition exerted upon his thought: in the end all human knowledge rests on faith. Hence he does not refrain from bringing the convictions of the Christian faith fully to bear upon scientific work. “In the great systems of Plato, Augustine, and Thomas,” remarks Bremmer, “Bavinck found answers to the questions that modern times and modern thought posed.”¹² In the eyes of first-generation Bavinck scholars such as these, the modern Bavinck, though “thoroughly

⁹ Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation: The Stone Lectures for 1908–1909*, Princeton Theological Seminary (New York: Longmans, 1908).

¹⁰ Herman Bavinck, *Bijbelsche en religieuze psychologie* (Kampen: Kok, 1920), which is a collection of articles published in *Orgaan van het Gereformeerd Schoolverband* from 1912–1920. In 1910 Bavinck added new material on religious psychology into the revised edition of *RD* starting at subparagraph 427a, which addition made good on a remark he had made in the 1908 Stone Lectures: “Dogmatics, especially in the doctrine of the *ordo salutis*, must become more psychological, and must reckon more fully with religious experience.” *Philosophy of Revelation*, 209. See also Bavinck’s correspondence with Abraham Kuyper regarding the doctrine of man in *RD* being “incomplete” and thus in need of being supplemented with Bavinck’s *Beginselen der Psychologie* in the Translator’s Introduction to Bavinck, *Foundations of Psychology*, trans. Jack Vanden Born, Nelson D. Kloosterman, and John Bolt, ed. John Bolt, *Bavinck Review* 9 (2018): xvi. In the eulogy Kristensen references Bavinck’s 1907 lecture at the Academy on the “Psychology of Religion.”

¹¹ Jan Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1968), 107–8.

¹² Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck als dogmaticus*, 331.

modern,” is not exclusively modern. He joined the modern fray armed with classical Christian wisdom.

All of the footnotes below are my additions. They indicate, albeit selectively, that Kristensen wove together many passages from Bavinck’s writings, often lifting phrases and sentences verbatim. The artfulness of his weaving can be seen by comparing his terse conclusion with the passage from which it derives.¹³ Those familiar with Bavinck’s corpus will recognize his voice throughout, which surely was Kristensen’s way of honoring his esteemed colleague.

I wish to thank Professor Henk van den Belt for his helpful feedback on the translation.

On Herman Bavinck’s Scientific Work¹⁴

[1] The man to whose memory we dedicate these moments has taken the place of a leader in the spiritual life of our generation. So great was the measure of his work and so penetrating its influence that an overview of Bavinck’s entire lifework would have to cover subject matter and activities that are only remotely related to the work of our Academy.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Bavinck was first and foremost a man of science. It is certainly not the type of science that we normally term “contemporary,” but precisely for this reason it bears ideas that can lead to renewed research on the foundations of science.

A rare unity of demeanor and orientation characterizes his whole career. The young student who arrived in Leiden had already taken the direction that was decisive for his life. During his activity at the Theological School at Kampen and later at the Free University in Amsterdam, we see

¹³ See note 29 below.

¹⁴ Kristensen, “Over den wetenschappelijken arbeid van Herman Bavinck,” 1–12.

¹⁵ I.e., Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen (The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences). For Bavinck’s membership data, see www.dwc.knaw.nl/biografie/pmknaw/?pagetype=authorDetail&caId=PE00000987.

his development, always in living contact—at times in conflict—with the life of the church and society. But the line once drawn remains unchanged, unbroken, at least to the outsider's eye.

In 1906 Bavinck became a member of this Academy where he belonged among the most loyal visitors of the monthly meetings. [2] He participated repeatedly in the seminars and discussions. He spoke twice on topics of his own choosing: in 1907 on the “Psychology of Religion” in which he gave a description and assessment of the work of the American religious psychologists who were less known then than today,¹⁶ and in 1915 on “Ethics and Politics,” a subject that became especially pertinent due to the war.¹⁷ It speaks for itself that on both occasions Bavinck's personal posture toward questions of principle was clearly acknowledged. However, the hearers of these lectures likely received the impression that what they heard was to be considered largely an introduction to a more basic treatment of the subjects, a treatment that the speaker had in mind and which he also might have worked out completely but which he did not want to go into on the given occasion. A phrase in the first paper should confirm that impression. In the published version we read, “In determining the value of this religious psychology (i.e., of Stanley, Hall, Starbuck, James, et al.), I restrain myself from all theological objections in this sphere, and I confine myself to a few comments of a generally scientific nature.”¹⁸ Undoubtedly, it cost him a good bit of trouble to impose this restriction. His writings most clearly

¹⁶ Bavinck, “Psychologie der religie,” in *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling letterkunde*, 4e reeks, deel 9 (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1909), 147–78; republished in Herman Bavinck, *Verzamelde opstellen op het gebied van godsdienst en wetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1921), ch. 4; English trans., “Psychology of Religion,” in Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), ch. 4.

¹⁷ Bavinck, “Ethiek en politiek,” *Verslagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling letterkunde*, 5e reeks, deel 2, 1e stuk (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1916), 99–128; republished in *Stemmen des Tijds* 5, no. 2 (1916): 32–56; and in *Verzamelde opstellen*, ch. 15; English trans., “Ethics and Politics,” in *Essays*, ch. 15.

¹⁸ Amended by Kristensen. See Bavinck, *Verzamelde opstellen*, 72; Bavinck, *Essays*, 76.

demonstrate that the systematic-theological treatment of subjects as is mentioned here was the only method that fully satisfied him.

We may regret that he has deprived us of this, but we also acknowledge that his restraint was completely understandable. The name “science” includes a greater richness of types than those of which we are generally aware, and the diversity of types is connected with the deepest factors in our spiritual life. Bavinck’s science has allowed us to behold this richness with extraordinary lucidity. I believe that we can best show our gratitude towards him by paying attention to this merit.

[3] A peculiar contradiction characterizes Bavinck’s demeanor as a man of science: no one oriented his work more strongly to the questions and needs of our time, our civilization, our science, than did Bavinck; but also no one took as decisive a distance from the *zeitgeist* than did he. Regarding the former, timeliness has always characterized his work. Science for him was not an aristocratic pursuit that gives some satisfaction and enjoyment to our intellectuals and to those who are aesthetically inclined; not a work that goes its own way, unconcerned with the strife on every side, the clashes between worldviews—not the least in the classrooms—the battle over humanity’s spiritual direction. It is precisely this battle that drove him onward, not as a spectator but as a contestant. With intense interest he steeped himself in the questions, immersing himself in very diverse areas of research. He concentrated his effort on the leading ideas, the principles, not only in the theological and philosophical area in a narrow sense but also in the literary and social sciences; even in the realm of the natural sciences he was no stranger. Above all, there is no separation to make between his theoretical and practical interests. He felt himself driven to the research by the gravity of life itself and by the longing for personal truth, motives of an eminently practical nature. Still, he never forgot—quite the opposite, he repeatedly and emphatically maintained—that especially the purely intellectual faculties have no less right to speak than the emotional faculties. For him science was always about life’s fundamental questions, but he knew that these questions come to

bear no less in the mechanical and biological sciences than in the historical and social. He stood dead center in the spiritual current of our time, and he never lost touch with it.

Timeliness in the noble sense of the word marks all his research. And yet in another way Bavinck was not at all a child [4] of his time. The type of scientific thinking that was dominant ever since the seventeenth-century, that was undermined by Kant's critiques, and that upon which a type was built up later that brought about a separation between experiential science and metaphysics, knowledge and belief, relative and absolute reality—this type Bavinck found bizarre. He fights it deliberately and repeatedly. And he chose to do so by utilizing the method of his opponents. He himself walks criticism's way to provide proof that the foundations of our knowledge, of our ethical and aesthetic judgment, and above all of our religious faith are of a wholly other nature than Kant and his followers in philosophy and theology have assumed. The manner in which he applied the critical method derives from the philosophy that he is fighting against. In this way he has come under its influence. He has not completely severed ties with the leading intellectual powers on this important point at any rate. Nevertheless, he diverged from them in principle. His epistemological standpoint signifies a break with the dominant type of scientific research. Neither Descartes, Kant, nor Schleiermacher were his intellectual ancestors; rather, his worldview was formed under the powerful influence of the faith, Augustine's speculation, and Calvin's ideals.

What that means for the conception of the epistemological question is evident. Bavinck's stance is this: in the final analysis knowledge and science rest on faith. Actually, faith is the objective existence of the truth that we attempt to approach by means of our capacity for knowledge. Truth exists independently of our science; it is not from ourselves but from God.

That knowledge rests on faith is, according to Bavinck, an axiom that is in fact accepted by every human being even when he or she is not aware of it. Every person proceeds spontaneously upon the conviction that the external world exists objectively and [5] thus exists when a person comes

to know it through pure perception. But the conviction is a conviction of faith; the sharpest reflection fails to demonstrate its scientific character. Whoever eschews proceeding by faith here and instead expects conclusive evidence bars the road to science and does not escape from illusionism and skepticism. The notion that our observations are reliable and that our categories possess objective validity presupposes faith in the harmony of subject and object, of thinking and being. The world can be our spiritual possession only on the condition of the belief that its spiritual, logical [order] exists and rests in thought. In other words it is presupposed that objective truth exists along with the world. The truth is displayed for us in all the works of God's hands, in nature and history, in creation and re-creation; not in the pantheistic sense of this thought, for the ideas that are in the world can never obtain the explanation of their own origin from the world; but in the sense that Christian theism gives to it. The doctrine of the creation of all things through God's Word, through the absolute Wisdom, is the explanation of all human knowing. In Augustine's words, "We know things because they are, but they are because God has known them."¹⁹ This removes all autonomy from the human spirit, all presumption that the truth could be produced from its own reason and by its own means. Humanity is neither the creator nor shaper of the world. The human intellect does not dictate its laws to nature, and humanity has not arranged things into their categories by its scientific research. Rather, human beings must conform their perceptions and thoughts to God's revelation in nature and grace.

Now one might say that this conception of the epistemological question is largely Augustinian and thus that it belongs to the heritage of Christian thought. That is so. But saying this indicates only part of Bavinck's relationship with his predecessors. For the problem of [6] knowledge has

¹⁹Augustine, *Confessions* XIII.38. Bavinck refers to this passage in *Christelijke wereldbeschouwing*, 1st ed. (Kampen: Bos, 1904), 22f., which Kristensen appropriates throughout this paragraph.

not always remained the same. It comes to be known again and again from new angles with the changing currents of thought, and it sets new requirements for critical research. A time such as ours that is predominantly oriented toward the natural sciences sees itself as confronting difficulties and dangers that were hardly known before. Bavinck has undertaken his research precisely in view of this situation. He certainly makes use of traditional views. He sees the tradition not as a dead meaning but rather as a living significance, which continued in its own spirit and should be cultivated. Thus no attempt is made to revive theories from the past—even if it is a classical past—but there is an attempt to demonstrate the value of the Christian faith for scientific thinking in our time.

Faith bridges the gap between thinking and being and allows us to know objective reality. But to this reality belongs not merely what falls to the senses and the intellect to acknowledge. Our ideal norms of goodness and beauty also must possess objective reality. Whenever the absolute validity of ethical and aesthetic values are accepted, one actually presupposes their objective existence; but it still applies that this presupposition—this immediate conviction—is not accessible by scientific proof. It is an act of faith. Each ethical and aesthetic judgment rests on the faith that goodness and beauty belong to the knowledge of things, that the Creator of the world has willed the good and the harmonious. The norms do not owe thanks for their origin to humanity for whom they were laid down as laws. They are not abstract concepts that exist only in theory but are aspects of reality itself, and they would lose their absolute character if they did not have their origin and explanation in God.

Faith, in the Christian-theistic sense of the word, is thus the foundation of the spiritual life. Only the religious person can be fully aware of this. [7] To such a person religion and understanding go hand in hand. It thus needs no proof that one's religious life, even more than one's intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic endowments, bears witness to the being of objective, transcendent reality and brings one into contact with God. From religious certainty it follows first of all that this reality does not originate

from humanity. Certainly no psychological or historical theory has been able to explain religion's origin or grasp its essence. Religion presupposes the existence, revelation, and knowability of God.²⁰

With this thought the line is extended. The intuitive knowledge of truth, goodness, or beauty is not a creative activity of the human spirit. Intellect and heart, reason and conscience, feeling and fancy are not sources of the knowledge of reality but are only organs whereby we take possession of reality within and unto ourselves. The autonomy of the human spirit is radically abolished; the spiritual origin of being alone is autonomous.

This view must lead to a fundamental reconsideration of the contemporary idea of science—a point to which Bavinck returns again and again. Faith is the foundation of science, and the foundation must, it goes without saying, determine the whole edifice. In its attempt to trace the ideal unity of things, every science proceeds upon the belief that this unity really exists, that an idea underlies things and comprises their essence. The character of the ideal unity is most clearly seen in the core sciences, the ones which examine the most complex phenomena: the biological, the historical, and above all the philosophical sciences. The wisdom of philosophy is the reflection of the wisdom that is present in the world and in all of its parts, the divine wisdom that binds the world into an organic whole. The organic is the hallmark of this universal unity. Each science, and [8] especially each core science, presupposes that the world is an organism and that it is thus to be thought of first of all as such.

The idea of the universal organism has given a remarkable breadth and depth to Bavinck's conception of the task and method of science. At the same time the organic structure connects diverse elements to a substantial extent, and the organic function means harmonious cooperation among diverse factors—although the manner of this cooperation is often hidden from us. All of this reveals that God, in connection with and guided by a unity of construction, of idea, of purpose, created the world with

²⁰Cf. Bavinck, *RD*, 1:505 (subpara. 131).

the richest variety of elements, factors, substances, and forces. But contemporary science disregards repeatedly both the unity and the diversity. Each mechanical or dynamic worldview is a premature generalization that destroys diversity, constrains the concept of nature, and forces the psychological phenomena into the shackles of a predetermined system. Each time the spiritual is explained by means of the sensual, the psychological from the animal, the religious from the ethical, the wealth of types is devalued, and an artificial, imaginary unity is constructed. According to the organic worldview, there is an abundance of powers, substances, and laws. The laws all differ for inorganic and organic nature, for the psychological and the physical, for nature and history, for the head and for the heart of human beings, for the intellectual and the ethical. In a physical sense giving makes one poorer, but in an ethical sense it makes one richer.²¹ Nothing is lawless any more than something ever happens without a cause; the causality of a lower or higher order is always present.

The grand diversity answers to the sublime unity. The diverse laws, substances, causes, and powers that appear in creation have a common origin and thus cannot contradict each other. Creation displays the unity of [9] an ascending order wherein the lower serves the higher; even inorganic materials are incorporated as organic parts of the world's whole.²² We [thus] understand the emphasis with which Bavinck opposes all dualistic theories; namely, theories with a separation in principle between two supreme powers in the world: the knowable and the unknowable, science and faith, intellect and instinct or intuition; such theories are logical abstractions, human fables that deny reality's spirit and cannot satisfy the whole person. Reality in its organic development—the world as planned

²¹ In this paragraph Kristensen is appropriating from Bavinck, *RD* subpara. 101. This sentence is taken verbatim from 1:370.

²² The "ascending order" alludes to Bavinck, *RD*, 1:368 (subpara. 101); cf. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 10, 94.

and guided by God—removes the dualistic contradiction and instead makes it useful to the idea that realizes itself in the world.

The organic unity of things is God’s omnipresent, eternal power and wisdom that lead all things to a goal. Development and advancement, evolution and progress, truly are the law of being. The proponents of a mechanistic or dynamic worldview also speak of the development of the material and spiritual world, but they satisfy themselves with nothing but noise so long as the all-important starting point bound up with the goal of development remains disregarded. Where no guiding principle is known, development continues to occur in the nature of the case, even if only an accidental development. Organic development occurs only when things have a nature that controls them and leads them in a certain direction. The organic worldview is teleological. The world becomes a divine destiny in successive stages. Finality brings causality into its service. The final causes are the forming and guiding principles that guide creatures along the path of development and give direction to their movement. God is the last and highest intelligent and free causality of all things and at the same time their goal. All that exists through God and to his glory.

But now comes the question: What science is possible on this basis? [10] The answer: the science of divine revelation. This expression entails no contradiction. Science presupposes revelation, for the human intellect is not a source of truth. Humans stand on the foundation of creation and are established and sought after by God’s power and wisdom. Humanity is bound to laws that it did not contrive but which are prescribed by God to rule its life. Thinking not before but after [God] is humanity’s lot.²³ The

²³“*Niet vóór-, maar nadenken . . .*”; repeated below. Kristensen’s turn of phrase appropriates Bavinck’s play on the compound of “*na*” and “*denken*”: “The imperative task of the dogmatician is to think God’s thoughts after him [*die gedachten Gods na te denken*] and to trace their unity.” *RD*, 1:44 (subpara. 8). Bavinck recapitulates this thought several times. For instance, “We can only reflect (*re-flect*) [*nadenken*] on that which has been pre-conceived [*voorgedacht*] and comes to our consciousness through the world.” *RD* 1:521 (subpara. 136); cf. 83 (subpara. 22), 588 (subpara. 152); see also Bavinck’s terse

truth that one acknowledges stands independently as a divine thought, and one can acknowledge truths because they themselves are really revealed in the order of things. Revelation thus denotes the divine act that gives life to true science. This is only another formulation of the assertion that faith undergirds the foundation of all science.

The Christian faith is this: that God has revealed himself in the life of the visible and invisible world not only in deeds but also and especially in words; namely, in Holy Scripture. This special revelation by means of the word conflicts neither with the idea of science nor with revelation in the physical and psychological world; rather, the ambition to receive the Word of God must be the highest and most fundamental science. Theology's elevated task is to reproduce the content of divine thought not from the world or from humanity but from this Word. For Holy Scripture contains no elaborate system of truths that we only need to discuss and to write down afterward. God desires that we contemplate him and follow him into his workshop. He presents the Bible before the human race clearly and vividly in all its riches and splendid variety as an organism wherein we have to sort and record the phenomena and trace the spiritual life that connects all things. True theology is nothing but an imprint and reflection in our consciousness of the knowledge that God has from himself and that he has decided to share with his creatures. [11] Thinking not before but after [God] is the theologian's lot as well. Such thinking is carried out systematically in dogmatics. Dogma is not a description of a religious mental state such as Schleiermacher and many later theologians along with him understand it to be. Neither is it speculation over the data of religious experience, the form in which they have maintained it to be in recent times. Dogma is a form of faith that is grounded in the authority of revelation. When taken together, the dogmas form a unity. Actually, there is only one dogma that is born out of Scripture and has branched

summary contra innate ideas at 565 (subpara. 147). Cf. Wolter Huttinga, *Participation and Communicability* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2014), 83n18.

out and arranged itself into several specialized dogmas.²⁴ From this point light shines on the riddles under which all special sciences labor: from the questions of physics and history to the goal and meaning of evolution, from the question of science to the essence of being.²⁵

This ideal of science leaves room for all forms of empirical research; it only sets itself against the exclusive empiricism that utilizes an inadequate theory of knowledge and thus is unable to penetrate to the essence of reality. Bavinck's relation with the new religious psychology is distinctive in this respect: the phenomena of the religious life can be considered and studied from the psychological angle. For instance, the elucidation of conversion by means of the widespread transformations of the consciousness [that occur] under the influence of subliminal forces enlarges one's view of and deepens one's insight into the religious life.²⁶ But it remains an explanation, as it were, from below or from the outside; the psychological viewpoint does not penetrate to the religious reality, to the substance of the religious consciousness of the believer. Whenever it thinks it does that, it has destroyed rather than explained the object of its research.²⁷ It is a fact that the faithful of all times and places have thought quite differently about religion than has been taught in the historical and psychological

²⁴ Here Kristensen is quoting Bavinck, *RD*, 1:94 (subpara. 26); cf. 2:29. The "one dogma" motif is rooted in the classical Western Christian and Reformed scholastic traditions. E.g., Aquinas, *Summae theologiae*, 1.1.4 sed contra; 1.2 div. text; F. Turretin, *Institutio theologiae elencticae* I.vi.i; English trans., Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), I.vi.i; *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, 6.1; English trans., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation*, vol. 1, Disputations 1–23, ed. Dolf te Velde, trans. Riemer A. Faber (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 6.1, 151. Similarly, Abraham Kuyper, Bavinck's predecessor in the chair of dogmatics at the Free University of Amsterdam, lectured on "whether the whole of dogmatics is the locus de Deo." *Dictaten Dogmatiek*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1910), 1.II, 7–10.

²⁵ Cf. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 94.

²⁶ This sentence is quoted from Bavinck, *RD*, 3:584 (subpara. 431).

²⁷ Cf. Bavinck, *RD*, 3:586 (subpara. 431).

schools [12] of science.²⁸ The method of the historical or psychological research of religious reality—when maintained unilaterally—faces a barrier to understanding genuine religion and the conviction of the believer; namely, that in his eyes he possesses objective truth. True science cannot withdraw itself from this most sacred task without denying the reality of the soul.

The foundation of all science is faith. But there is an ascending order of sciences, and the personal factor in research plays a greater role the higher we ascend, the more comprehensive the field, and the more the science ceases to be merely formal. Bavinck returns to this personal factor time and time again. None of our spiritual faculties come into their own in isolation. This is especially true in theology, the central science, which demands one's whole personality for itself. For theology is itself religion. It is not the science of Christianity but Christianity itself as science. And it is a general rule that when the richest thoughts, the boldest concepts, the most important discoveries of imagination, of intuition, derive from divination, then the true theologian holds that the Holy Spirit is leading in the truth.

Let not the man and the man of science be separated.²⁹ Many can parrot Bavinck. Few can prove the truth thereof as he did: through a life in the service of science.

²⁸Quoting Bavinck, *Godsdienst en Godgeleerdheid* (Wageningen: "Vada," 1902), 22.

²⁹Cf. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 83–84.