

Review Essay
Bavinckian
Ressourcement and
*Aggiornamento**

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A church *semper reformanda* is enjoying both continuity and change.

~ Paul Helm¹

[I]ntegrity and truth compel the church, [Bavinck] said, to give an account to those outside the church as candidly as possible. *Continuity of faith within all the changes of time*—this is what Bavinck was concerned to express.... [This] was a common problem that Catholics and Protestants shared as they sought the right way for the church to travel “between the times.” In all this, it is no wonder that Bavinck became a model of how theology could be done with commitment to the truth combined with openness to problems, and carefulness to judgments against others. And we understand that this posture had nothing to do with relativism.

~ G. C. Berkhower²

* Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020); James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

Introduction

The two epigraphs to this article make clear the central question that must be faced by proponents of Bavinckian *ressourcement*, namely, how does Herman Bavinck theologially reconcile both tradition and novelty, continuity and change in the new articulation of Reformed orthodoxy in modernity, relating itself to the “mind and spirit of the era in which it speaks.”³ Two recent books complicate and contribute to this task, which, I argue, is best resolved through ecumenical dialogue with the broader intellectual marketplace of theology, the Roman Catholic tradition in particular. Genuine *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento* for Bavinck studies ought to affirm that the substance of dogma is always and everywhere true and that different articulations over time reflect the changing vocabulary of history, not a change or invalidation of the dogmatic propositions communicated.

Reinterpreting the Affirmations of the Church’s Orthodoxy

In the first of these books, Cory C. Brock correctly states in his recent study of Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), *Orthodox yet Modern*, “Bavinck is orthodox yet modern insofar as he subsumes the philosophical-theological questions and concepts of theological modernity under the conditions of his orthodox, confessional tradition.”⁴ In particular, Bavinck was unquestionably committed to orthodox Calvinism. By orthodoxy, then, is meant a set of intellectual, theological, and ecclesiastical commitments reflected in the historic ecumenical texts, creeds, and confessions, as well as the Three Forms of Unity of the historic Dutch Reformed tradition, namely, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. In the same vein, according to the second of these two books, James Eglinton’s *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, Eglinton insists that for Bavinck “the orthodox solution [to meet the needs of the day] could not simply be a restatement of the theology of a bygone era.... Reformed theology needed progress more than it needed to be repristinated. A new age required a new articulation of dogmatics and ethics.”⁵ On Bavinck’s view, according to Eglinton, “modernity had [not] superseded orthodoxy, arguing instead that the development of both ‘modernity’ and ‘orthodoxy’ through history is more complicated than this.”⁶ In other words, explains Eglinton,

In Christian history, he [Bavinck] argued “orthodox” had never functioned as a static concept that was hermetically sealed from the host cultures in which it was invoked. Rather, it put down roots in diverse historical locations, just as it was now doing in the twentieth-century Dutch culture. Far from being like oil and water—a portrayal of these terms that Bavinck

deemed ‘petty and narrow-minded’—neither ‘modernity’ nor ‘orthodox’ precluded the other.”⁷

I will consider below how Bavinck avoids doctrinal relativism, according to Eglinton and Brock, in order to account for the “continuity of faith through all the changes of time,” as the second epigraph puts it.

Still, Bavinck’s theology “never cries *ad fontes*, without inciting development.”⁸ As Nathaniel Gray Sutanto puts it, “It was of critical importance to [Bavinck] that dogmatics seeks development from generation to generation.”⁹ Rather than a mere repristination of classical orthodoxy, which is confessionalism, Bavinck’s reappropriation of the latter involved more than just a return to the authoritative sources of the faith (*ad fontes*). “[T]o cherish the ancient simply because it is ancient,” Bavinck writes, “is neither Reformed nor Christian. A work of dogmatic theology should not simply describe what was true and valid but what abides as true and valid. It is rooted in the past but labors for the future.”¹⁰

Brock adds that Bavinck sought to subject the “demands of the modern theological intellect to the boundaries of his confessional Reformed heritage.”¹¹ Still, while providing “a fence of freedom within which to work. His use of Schleiermacher did not tear down that fence but sought to make the most use of its territory.”¹² In other words, “[Bavinck’s] Reformed orthodox identity does not preclude the adoption of a particularly modern philosophical grammar used for the expression of his confessional theological rationality.”¹³

Bavinck, then, engages in a form of retrieval theology, meaning thereby *ressourcement*,¹⁴ which is a “mode or style of theological discernment that looks back [to authoritative sources of faith] in order to move forward.”¹⁵ As Kevin Vanhoozer correctly states, “*Ressourcement* describes a return to authoritative sources for the sake of revitalizing the present.”¹⁶ Indeed, adds Vanhoozer, on the one hand, “we ought not to confuse retrieval with either retrenchment or repristination.” Rather, “the main purpose of retrieval is the revitalization of biblical interpretation, theology, and the church today. *To retrieve is to look back creatively in order to move forward faithfully.*”¹⁷

On the other hand, moving faithfully forward involves “*aggiornamento*,” the meaning of which is best captured in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4:

To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.

Ressourcement, then, involves a “return to the sources” of Christian faith, for the purpose of rediscovering their truth and meaning in order to meet the critical challenges of our time. If *ressourcement* is about revitalization, then the oftmentioned *aggiornamento* is a question of finding new ways to rethink and reformulate the fundamental affirmations of the Christian faith in light of today’s questions. Brock elaborates, “[I]n every generation attention must be paid to the philosophical milieu, to the needs of the time, to the precise nature of the modernity of today, to write dogmatics that is indeed for the church in a given time.”¹⁸ Significantly, as Oscar Cullman rightly stressed, “*aggiornamento* should be a consequence, not a starting point,”¹⁹ of renewal, of *ressourcement*. Indeed, he adds, *aggiornamento* should not be understood as an “*isolated motive for renewal*.”²⁰ Therefore, in the interplay between *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, the former has normative priority.

The central question of continuity and change in the interface of orthodoxy and modernity, of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, is the overarching dynamic of James Eglinton’s study, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, the second recent contribution here considered. Eglinton is a leading voice in Bavinck studies, and this study is a uniquely important account of the development of the single rather than divided theological vision between the orthodox and the modern in the thought of Herman Bavinck. Eglinton gives detailed accounts of Bavinck’s family roots, his life and work, and his changing historical context, especially as it pertains to his academic studies, professorships in Kampen and Amsterdam, and his relationship to Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920), in order to show how all this pertains to his theological development.

In his earlier 2014 study, *Trinity and Organism*, Eglinton rebutted the so-called “two Bavincks” hermeneutics in which Bavinck is described as something Janus-like, a two-faced figure showing irreconcilable positions between being “orthodox” and yet “modern.” In this study, Eglinton provides a narrative of Bavinck’s life, charting the development of Bavinck’s one, consistent theological vision, orthodox yet modern. Bavinck’s single theological vision is that of “a creative thinker whose theological imagination allowed him to envision a distinctive articulation of the historic Christian faith within his own modern milieu.”²¹ This vision can be seen in, for example, Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics*,²² *Philosophy of Revelation*,²³ *Christian Worldview*,²⁴ *Essays in Religion, Science, and Society*,²⁵ *The Christian Family*,²⁶ and Bavinck’s unfinished *Reformed Ethics*.²⁷

The particular importance of this question of continuity and change, of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, is underscored by the Dutch Reformed master of dogmatic and ecumenical theology, G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996). Berkouwer is Bavinck’s successor once removed to the chair of dogmatics at the Vrije

Universiteit, Amsterdam (1940–1975). Berkouwer writes, “That harmony [between various dogmatic formulations] had always been presumed, virtually self-evidently, to be an implication of the mystery of the truth “*eodem sensu eademque sententia*.” Now, however, attention is captivated primarily by the historical-factual process that does not transcend the times, but is entangled with them in all sorts of ways. It cannot be denied that one encounters the undeniable fact of the situated setting of the various pronouncements made by the Church in any given era.”²⁸

He adds, “of time-conditioning, one can even say: of historicity” of the Church’s various dogmatic pronouncements. Berkouwer insightfully states, “All the problems of more recent interpretation of dogma are connected very closely to this search for continuity.... Thus, the question of the nature of continuity has to be faced.”²⁹ According to Berkouwer in the epigraph above, Bavinck was concerned to express the “continuity of faith within all the changes of time.”

Berkouwer correctly states in the epigraph that “[This] was a common problem that Catholics and Protestants shared as they sought the right way for the church to travel ‘between the times.’” Indeed, John XXIII in his opening address to Vatican II, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, argues that there is a historical dimension to the explication of unchangeable doctrinal truth. John follows the fifth-century monk, Vincent of Lérins,³⁰ as well as the First Vatican Council, by implicitly distinguishing between propositional truths of faith and their formulations in reflecting on the sense in which a doctrine, already confirmed and defined, is more fully known and deeply understood: “For the deposit of faith, the truths contained in our venerable doctrine, are one thing; the fashion in which they are expressed, but with the same meaning and the same judgment [*eodem sensu eademque sententia*], is another thing.”³¹

The subordinate clause, which I have cited in its Latin original, is part of a larger passage from the First Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Faith and Reason, *Dei Filius* (1869–1870), which is earlier invoked by Pope Pius IX in the bull of 1854, *Ineffabilis Deus*, also cited by Pope Leo XIII in his 1899 encyclical letter, *Testem benevolentiae Nostrae*. And this formula in *Dei Filius* is itself taken from the *Commonitorium* of Vincent of Lérins, “Therefore, let there be growth and abundant progress in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, in each and all, in individuals and in the whole Church, at all times and in the progress of ages, but only within the proper limits, i.e., within the same dogma, the same meaning, the same judgment” [*in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia*].³²

Yves Congar,³³ for one, has argued that this distinction between the permanence of meaning and truth of dogmas, on the one hand, and their historically

conditioned formulations, with the possibility of the latter's correction, modification, and complementation summarizes the meaning of the entire council. Although the propositional truths of the faith may be expressed differently, however, we must always determine whether those new re-formulations are preserving the same meaning and judgment (*eodem sensu eademque sententia*), and hence the material continuity, identity, and universality of those doctrinal truths.

Bavinck, too, was sensitive to the historicity of dogmatic formulations, the difference of language and concepts used in these formulations, in the "lengthy tomes produced by theologians in previous generations." Unavoidably, adds Bavinck, "We are children of a new time and in a new era," and hence the dogmatic formulae of these tomes reflect a historical and cultural conditioning. "Therefore, there is an urgent need for a work that can take the place of [these tomes however worthy their dogmatic content might be] and can carry forward the old truth in a form that responds to the demands of this time."³⁴

In the *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, Bavinck wrote, "Now one of the greatest difficulties inherent in the dogmatician's task lies in determining the relation between divine truth and the church's confession. No one claims that content and expression, essence and form, are in complete correspondence and coincide. The dogma that the church confesses and the dogmatician develops is not identical with the absolute truth of God itself." He explains, "it is to some extent acknowledged by all that there is in dogma both a permanent and a variable element." Bavinck underscores that "it is enough to point out that ultimately no one can deny to dogma an invariable, permanent element."³⁵

With this distinction between the invariable truth and the variable formulations, we find in Bavinck's thought, in Berkouwer's words, "the kernel of the problem." Berkouwer has a penetrating grasp of this problem: "We come to the real question when we ask whether the dogma of the Church is also subject to the influence of historical variation. Does dogma stand alone as the one unchangeable and untouchable rock within the waves of history, transcending the law of changeability? Or does dogma participate in the law of historical change?"³⁶ Berkouwer elaborates on this "[perennial] problem of the relationship between truth and its human expression.... This is the problem of variable, historically defined thought forms in different eras when all kinds of philosophical notions have played a definite role." This raises the crucial question, "What is the relationship between unchanging truth and theological formulations and doctrinal choices?"³⁷ Indeed, according to Berkouwer, this means taking up the "challenge ... of finding a *hermeneutics* for reinterpreting the affirmations of the Church."³⁸ This is a hermeneutics that involves explaining the continuity, or

material identity, of Christian truth, despite the profound effects of historicity, according to Berkouwer.

Dogmatic statements are formulations of an unchanging and ultimate truth. Bavinck states that the science of dogmatics “aims at truth.” He explains, “If dogmatics aims to be real science, it cannot be content with the description of what is but must demonstrate what has to be considered truth.”³⁹ What does Bavinck mean by truth?

Bavinck is a realist about truth but also an epistemic realist about the truth-attaining capacity of the human mind. For a realist about truth this means that a statement is true if and only if what it asserts is in fact the case about objective reality; otherwise, it is false. Indeed, one of the concepts of truth that Bavinck attends to is what he refers to as “truth or veracity in knowing (in the intellect).”⁴⁰ He explains, “This truth consists in correspondence between thought and reality, the conformity or adequation of the intellect to the [real] thing.”⁴¹ Bavinck presupposes the distinction between the conditions under which I know that something is true, and the conditions that make something true. Regarding the former he states that “there is room for belief in the progress of science and the realization of the ideal of truth. There is some degree of warrant for the assertion that the truth *is* not but *becomes*.” Given Bavinck’s realism, he can only mean when he says that truth becomes to refer to the epistemic conditions under which I come to know that something is true. This is clear from Bavinck’s point that we cannot “find the truth apart from the reality.”⁴² Hence, Bavinck adds, “We do not create the truth, and we do not spin it out of our brain; but, in order to find it, we must get back to the facts, to reality, to the sources [of reality].” Thus, “truth is bound to reality and finds its criterion in correspondence with reality.”⁴³ Furthermore, the condition under which I come to know that something is true is not merely the intellectual assent to propositional truth, but also truth as it is experienced. “Reality is intended to become truth in our consciousness and in our experience.”⁴⁴ Bavinck extends epistemic realism over all the domains of thought, including religion and morality. “Man does not produce truth by thought (*denkende*) in any domain, and certainly not in religion, but by inquiry and study he learns to know the truth, which exists independently of and before him. Therefore, religious experience is neither the source nor the foundation of religious truth; it only brings us into union with the existing truth.”⁴⁵

In this connection, it is important to note that Bavinck “upholds the truth of religion or the dogmas of the church,” and rejects the modernist claim that dogmas are “nothing more than representations of symbolic value.”⁴⁶ He adds, “For if dogma is only a symbolic representation, presupposed therein is that the core of it is something different than what is expressed in the representation.” The crux

of Bavinck's objection is that "religious representations cannot survive without faith in their truth."⁴⁷ Elsewhere Bavinck gives a critique of the pan-symbolic character of religious representations.

"Mystery is the lifeblood of dogmatics," says Bavinck in his opening line to *Reformed Dogmatics*, II.⁴⁸ Christian theology regards God as a mystery worthy of adoration. Man does not and cannot possess comprehensive knowledge of God. "It is completely incomprehensible to us how God can reveal himself and to some extent make himself known in created beings: eternity in time, immensity in space, infinity in the finite, immutability in change, being in becoming, the all, as it were, in that which is nothing. This mystery cannot be comprehended: it can only be gratefully acknowledged."⁴⁹ Does the inexpressibility of the mystery necessarily imply its negative indeterminacy in every respect? If not, can we say something determinate and true about God, even though he is inexhaustibly beyond us?⁵⁰

Yes, states Bavinck, because inadequacy of expression is one thing, total inexpressibility is another. In other words, "Absolute, full adequate [exhaustive] knowledge of God is therefore impossible.... It is in every respect finite and limited, but not for that reason, impure or untrue."⁵¹ If inadequacy of expression means total inexpressibility, then none of what is said affirmatively of God is true of him—as Bavinck argues—not even true of God that he reveals, or that he is one or many, person or thing, substance or process, good or evil, purposive or nonpurposive.

Bavinck argues that we can in fact formulate true affirmative assertions about God and so talk to and about God cannot be considered merely symbolic. "A symbol is always a sensible object or action to denote a spiritual truth, while theology as such has to do not with such symbols but with spiritual realities. When consciousness, will, holiness, and so forth are ascribed to God, no one takes this in a 'symbolic' sense." "On the contrary," adds Bavinck,

religious persons view such religious representations as being objectively true, and their religion languishes and dies the moment they begin to doubt this fact. If, accordingly, they were products of the imagination, their objective truth could not be maintained.... This "symbolic" character of theology turns the names of God into a reflex of one's own inner life, deprives them of all objective reality, and looks for their ground in ever-changing subjective reason. Humanity then becomes the standard of religion: as humans are, so is their God.⁵²

Bavinck's objection to this anthropological reduction is that revelation's forms of expression would thus fluctuate with the historical transformations of religious

subjectivity, which stems from the initial anthropological determination of the criterion of revelation.⁵³

He alludes here to a distinction between unchangeable truth and its formulations, the latter being historically conditioned but nonetheless able to give truth a meaningful expression fitting the times. The question arises here, as John Paul II correctly notes, “How one can reconcile the absoluteness and the universality of truth with the unavoidable historical and cultural conditioning of the [dogmatic] formulas which express that truth.”⁵⁴ I shall return to this question in the concluding section of this article.

Principle of Reformed Catholicity

Cory Brock states that Bavinck’s theology “never cries *ad fontes* [back to the sources], without inciting development.”⁵⁵ In other words, Reformed Catholicity is about theological development rather than just a “principle of *ressourcement* or retrieval.”⁵⁶ Brock elaborates, “The catholic theologian listens to those who have come before but for the sake of the future and with an open mind to clarification and expansion.”⁵⁷ Catholicity comprises three elements, according to Brock, universal communion, ecumenical polemics, and the search for truth.⁵⁸

Catholicity expresses itself in the task to reach universal communion by intellectual engagement, not only with saints and theologians of the past and present, but also with philosophers, indeed with all those who belong to the community of Western thought, in order to see whose thought can be of service to the gospel—“the truth, Jesus Christ, and the *telos* of the pilgrimage of faith.”⁵⁹ Hence, in this light we can see why Brock claims, “Dogmatics as a task embraces a universal communion of both the past and present, which is reflected in Bavinck’s method: eclecticism.”⁶⁰ But what is eclecticism, and is Bavinck an eclectic in a methodological sense, in particular, with respect to philosophy?

Neither Brock nor Eglinton define eclecticism, though they do stress that Bavinck’s eclecticism is a principled eclecticism. Now, John Paul II does define eclecticism and in what sense it is principled:

By *eclecticism* is meant the approach of those who, in research, teaching and argumentation, even in theology, tend to use individual ideas drawn from different philosophies, without concern for their internal coherence, their place within a system or their historical context. They therefore run the risk of being unable to distinguish the part of truth of a given doctrine from elements of it which may be erroneous or ill-suited to the task at hand.⁶¹

Thus, an eclectic fails not only to consider the internal coherence of an idea within a system, for example, the “turn to the subject”⁶² in Schleiermacher’s theology, but also doesn’t distinguish the truth and falsity of a given doctrine. Rather, adds John Paul, The rigorous and far-reaching study of philosophical doctrines, their particular terminology and the context in which they arose, helps to overcome the danger of eclecticism and makes it possible to integrate them into theological discourse in a way appropriate to the task.⁶³

In fact, Bavinck is not an eclectic in the sense defined by John Paul II. Bavinck states, “[Theology] is not *per se* hostile to any philosophical system and does not, *a priori* and without criticism, give priority to the philosophy of Plato or of Kant, or vice versa. But it brings along its own criteria, tests all philosophy by them, and takes over what it deems true and useful.”⁶⁴ Thus, on the one hand, Brock echoes Bavinck’s openness to more than one philosophical tradition as an aspect of his catholicity: “Theology is not in need of a specific philosophy” by urging that “Catholicity demands that no single [philosophical] grammar monopolize theological discourse.”⁶⁵ Indeed, Brock adds, according to Bavinck, “dogmatics must make use of an array of philosophical grammars that matter for today.”⁶⁶ On the other hand, there are limits to Bavinck’s openness. Bavinck does affirm that theology is in need of metaphysics, for without the latter theological inquiry would not be able to mediate the totality of the Christian faith. Thus, says Bavinck, “[T]he split between the Christian religion on the one hand and metaphysics (etc.) on the other can neither be clearly conceived nor practically executed. History has repeatedly demonstrated this fact in the past and again shows it today. For to make such a split somewhat possible, [one is] compelled to form a one-sided and incomplete picture of the gospel of Christ.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, Bavinck is not an experiential expressivist in his view of revelation held by many modernist schools of theology.⁶⁸ This view “replaced all transcendent-metaphysical statements about God, his essence and attributes, his words and works, with descriptions of Christian experience its content.”⁶⁹ The experience of faith (*fides qua*) cannot bear the burden laid upon it by an experiential model of revelation. According to Bavinck, “the truth of historic Christianity cannot rest on experience as its ultimate ground.”⁷⁰ The experiential expressivist view of revelation merges revelation and experience in such a way that it unduly subordinates the content of revelation, the objective content of faith (*fides quae*) to that experience, as though the former is always derived from the latter. On experiential expressivism, the *experience* is revelatory, and not the content of faith, doctrines, creeds, confessions of faith, catechisms, and the like. All these are theological expressions arising from revelatory experience, later reflections drawn from men’s experience. According to Bavinck, experience is

not revelatory, as if experience comes first, after which experience is appropriated, interpreted, and transmitted, but revelation precedes, and is experienced in faith. Brock affirms this point that distinguishes him from Schleiermacher. He says, “the contents of faith must be derived from the ground of faith, objective revelation, and not from the self that has faith.”⁷¹

Put differently, according to Bavinck experience is not a source of knowledge, but an organ of knowledge. “For though the eye may be the indispensable organ for the perception of light, it is not its source. . . . Similarly, faith, regeneration, or experience cannot be the source of our religious knowledge, or the first principle of our theology.”⁷² Moreover, as argued above, Bavinck excludes a philosophy that is not realist about truth and hence does not distinguish the conditions under which I come to know that something is true from the conditions that make it true.

The second aspect of catholicity engenders the task of pursuing the possibility of ecumenicity and the unity in diversity of the church catholic.⁷³ For Brock ecumenicism involves polemical engagement in order to pursue “the purity of the church catholic.” Although I too affirm the necessity of ecumenical apologetics and polemics, it is not clear how this is connected with ecumenism and ecclesial unity and diversity. Ecumenism is about the restoration of Christian unity—visible unity between divided Christians. Brock deflects attention away from this task of restoration to his understanding that catholicity entails a wide-ranging ecclesiology that transcends the institutional church and is concerned with the “application of the power of the gospel, the authority of Christ that authorizes, as a leaven that does the work of renewal and reformation by the Spirit and, eschatologically upon the whole cosmos.”⁷⁴ I have argued elsewhere that this understanding of renewal, of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation is compatible with a Catholic theology of nature and grace.⁷⁵ Regardless, this understanding of catholicity is not the source of ecumenicity.

According to Brock, “Bavinck emphasizes the commonality that Protestantism shares with Rome.” But common denominator ecumenicity is a dead end for attaining visible unity. Perhaps sensing that dead end, Brock then jumps immediately to polemics. Regardless, Brock’s understanding of ecumenism helps us neither to pursue ecumenicity nor give a perspective on ecclesial unity and diversity.⁷⁶

What then is a Roman Catholic view of ecumenism and the corresponding understanding of ecclesial unity and diversity?⁷⁷ The Roman Catholic Church, according to John Paul II, holds that “full [visible] communion of course [would] have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ’s disciples.” Thus, the Church’s vision of visible unity “takes account of all the demands of revealed truth.” Therefore, she seeks to avoid all

forms of reductionism or facile agreement, false irenicism, indifference to the Church's teaching, and common-denominator ecumenicity.

John Paul II correctly writes, "Love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians." In other words, he adds, "The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (John 14:6), who would consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth? ... A 'being together' which betrayed the truth would thus be opposed both to the nature of God who offers his communion and to the need for truth found in the depths of every human heart." In short, "Authentic ecumenism is a gift at the service of truth."⁷⁸

Sometimes ecumenical dialogue is made more difficult, indeed, impossible, when our words, judgments, and actions manifest a failure to deal with each other with understanding, truthfully and fairly. "When undertaking dialogue, *each side must presuppose in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth.*"⁷⁹ Furthermore, dialogue must be deepened in order to engage the other person in a relationship of mutual trust and acceptance as a fellow Christian, responsive to him in Christian love. A necessary sign of this response is that we have passed from "antagonism and conflict to a situation where each party recognizes the other as a *partner.*"⁸⁰ "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal. 5:14; Lev. 19:18), and in St. Paul's words, "especially those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Clearly, the Church regards non-Catholic Christians as belonging, however imperfectly, to the household of faith, and hence she speaks of them as "separated brethren." Notwithstanding their separation, they are still brethren, brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, we must speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). "With non-Catholic Christians," the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith adds, "Catholics must enter into a respectful dialogue of charity and truth, a dialogue which is not only an exchange of ideas, but also of gifts, in order that the fullness of the means of salvation can be offered to one's partners in dialogue. In this way, they are led to an ever deeper conversion in Christ."⁸¹ In short, the ecumenism of conversion embodies the conviction that "dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some way it is always an 'exchange of gifts,'"⁸² indeed a "dialogue of love."⁸³ It is a form of receptive ecumenism.

What is receptive ecumenism? A receptive ecumenist listens attentively to the writings of fellow Christian theologians from other traditions of reflection and argument. Essential to this approach is distinguishing unity from uniformity, division from diversity, and conflicting from complementary formulations of the

truths of faith. Briefly, the receptive ecumenist distinguishes the unity of meaning and truth in dogma from its diverse linguistic and conceptual formulations. John XXIII suggests this distinction between propositional truth and its formulations in dogma in his opening address to Vatican II, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, as cited above.

Unity here is at the level of meaning and truth but not necessarily at the level of formulations. There may be legitimate diversity at the level of formulations. This distinction has ecumenical significance, as argued in *Unitatis Redintegratio*.⁸⁴ The following passage also touches upon the mutually complementary rather than conflicting formulations of the meaning and truth of dogma,

All in the Church must preserve unity in essentials. But let all, according to the gifts they have received, enjoy a proper freedom, in their various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in their different liturgical rites, and *even in their theological elaborations of revealed truth*.... What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine.... It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting.... Thus they promote the right ordering of Christian life and, indeed, pave the way to a full vision of Christian truth.⁸⁵

Regarding the distinction between division and diversity, Catholic ecumenism is predicated upon the presuppositions, as *Unitatis Redintegratio* holds,⁸⁶ that “the Church established by Christ the Lord is, indeed, one and unique,” and that Christ himself is not divided. Furthermore, “Discord [division] openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world [John 17:21], and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature.” But ecclesial division is not the same as theological diversity. As the quote above makes clear, *Unitatis Redintegratio* distinguishes between propositional truth and its formulations, and this distinction has ecumenical significance. Hence, diversity pertains to theological elaborations of revealed truth from various traditions, and in some instances, one tradition or another has a deeper appreciation of some aspect of the revealed mystery of the Christian faith. The idea and practice of receptive ecumenism may give “ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.”⁸⁷ For example, the Reformed tradition has a deeper appreciation than Catholicism of the revealed mystery shared by both traditions of the Lordship of Christ, as Kuyper demonstrates in his three-volume

work, *Pro Rege: Living under Christ's Kingship* (1911–1912). Kuyper's theology of Christ's Lordship complements rather than conflicts with Roman Catholic theology. Kuyper's vision promotes "the right ordering of Christian life and, indeed, paves the way to a full vision of Christian truth."

Turning briefly to Eglinton's reflections on Bavinck's perspective of Christ and culture, Eglinton shows that promoting the right ordering of the Christian life involves, as Bavinck puts it, "bringing the truth of God, revealed in Christ, to mastery over every domain of the human life."⁸⁸ Bavinck rejected the choice between restricting the exercise of religious freedom to worship services and evangelistic outreach, on the one hand, and, given a liberal notion like religious pluralism, the abandonment of involvement in cultural development on the other.⁸⁹ Eglinton argues that Bavinck saw that the "emergence of a secularizing, post-Christian Europe was good for a Christian theology. Christianity had never before been challenged to account positively for its ongoing existence or faced to call to justify its contribution to every sphere of life."⁹⁰ In this light, Eglinton shows that throughout Bavinck's life the latter aspired in a wide range of ways "to think Christianly about all life,"⁹¹ and at the core of this aspiration regarding the right ordering of human life is the Lordship of Christ.

As Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, OP, states, "The Lordship of Christ over the world is exercised within the creational structures of the world."⁹² Indeed, Kuyper similarly holds that "[W]e must always go back to the ordinance of creation, even when we explore what Christ's kingship means for civil life. This is the very same thing Christ himself has taught us.... In what God had done, Jesus [Matt 19:3-6; Mark 10:2-9] points to creation as the starting point that determines everything."⁹³ Most significantly for our purpose here, this, too, is Bavinck's position. In his reflections on Christian principles and social relationships, Bavinck wrote, "Scripture's point of departure is creation, because essentially all relationships are connected with it, and thus can only be known from it."⁹⁴ For example, marriage and family "are founded in creation, called into being by God's will. Therefore they have to be acknowledge and honored as unchangeable ordinances."⁹⁵ Bavinck then reflects on these ordinances in the light of creation, fall, and redemption:

The intent of grace, which entered immediately after the fall, always and everywhere has been to maintain and restore these original relationships.... While the gospel that Christ brings us in his person and work is not the abolition but the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, it presupposes creation, honors the work of the Father, and concurs with all natural relationships in human life that exist by virtue of God's will. In itself the gospel, the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven and his [God's] righteousness, is the good news of

reconciliation and redemption from sin through the blood of the cross. This is the gospel that must remain, first in church and missions, but also beyond it, *everywhere*.⁹⁶

In short, according to Bavinck, the opposition in all of life is between sin and grace, not nature and grace. Indeed, he explains, “Precisely because the gospel only opposes sin, it opposes it always and everywhere in the heart and the head, in the eye and in the hand, in family and society, in science and art, in government and subjects, and corruption of nature. But by liberating all social circumstances and relationships from sin, the gospel tries to restore them all according to the will of God and make them fulfill their own nature.”⁹⁷ Thus, Bavinck concludes, “Christian principles are to be applied in the practice of everyday life, not by way of a radical revolution, but in that of a reformation that retains all that is good.”⁹⁸

The third aspect of catholicity is the search for truth. “One must search for what is true and valid no matter where it is found.”⁹⁹ Both St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and, centuries later, the Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) held similar views on this score. Aquinas wrote, “Although some minds are enwrapped in darkness, that is, deprived of clear and meaningful knowledge, yet there is no human mind in such darkness as not to participate in some of the divine light ... because all that is true by whomsoever it is uttered, comes from the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Calvin wrote, “If we regard the Spirit of God as the sole fountain of truth, we shall neither reject the truth itself, nor despise it wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to dishonor the Spirit of God.”¹⁰¹

The Dutch neo-Calvinist philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd once wrote that authentic Christian philosophizing does not cut itself off from the historical development of philosophical thought. For, he explains, “no philosophy can prosper in isolation.”¹⁰² Dooyeweerd adds, “a reformation of philosophical thought from the Christian point of view ... is not creation out of nothing.” Indeed, he acknowledges that his own systematic philosophy is wedded to that development “with a thousand ties, so far as its immanent philosophic content is concerned, even though we can nowhere *follow* the immanence philosophy.”¹⁰³ Thus, Dooyeweerd’s own philosophical work found wisdom and truth in the philosophical writings of Kant, neo-Kantians, Husserl, Heidegger, and phenomenologists. Bavinck drew on the philosophical work of, for example, Aristotle, Aquinas, Eduard von Hartmann, and Schleiermacher. Indeed, Dooyeweerd appeals to common grace as the justification for the discovery of “relative truths ... in every philosophy.” This, too, is the view of Bavinck on common grace and the discovery of truths.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, adds Dooyeweerd, there exists “structural data ... facts of a transcendental significance, which should be acknowledged

irrespective of their philosophical interpretation.”¹⁰⁵ Dooyeweerd urges us to consider that “the interpretation of such truths may appear to be unacceptable from the biblical standpoint insofar as the philosophical interpretation turns out to be ruled by a dialectical and apostate basic motive.”¹⁰⁶

Now, in this light, we can understand why Dooyeweerd cuts through the question as to whether he engages in “a weak and strong conceptual appropriation”¹⁰⁷ of ideas, concepts, and arguments of thinkers like Kant and Heidegger.¹⁰⁸ Dooyeweerd cuts through the choice here by working with the Augustinian “spoils from Egypt” trope dealing with the wisdom found in immanence philosophy, like so many other Christians throughout the ages. As Thomas Guarino rightly explains, “All such wisdom, however, the traditional spoils metaphor insists, must ultimately be disciplined by, and incorporated into, the revelatory narrative. Athens, whatever its own insights into truth, must ultimately be chastened by Jerusalem.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, by saying that he cannot follow “immanence philosophy” Dooyeweerd is suggesting that the philosophies he learned from may not be simply externally adopted because they may wrongly “shape the gospel to their own ends.”¹¹⁰ Thus, the relevance of Aquinas: “So those who use the works of the philosophers in sacred doctrine, by bringing them into the service of faith, do not mix water with wine, but rather change water into wine.”¹¹¹ Bringing philosophical forms into the service of the gospel is a transformative practice of bringing “every thought captive” to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).¹¹²

Moreover, the idea that the structural data of creation is valid irrespective of philosophical interpretations does not rest on the mistaken rationalistic interpretation of human reason that “truth or reality ought to be accessible irrespective of the character and state of mind of the aspirant to truth.”¹¹³ In other words, “that is an assumption of modern scientific inquiry—that the truth is simply available for discovery, given sufficient ingenuity and the careful application of the appropriate techniques, and that the dispositions and moral character of the inquirer are entirely irrelevant.”¹¹⁴ This, too, was Pius XII’s view in his 1950 Encyclical *Humani Generis*. He does not leave the knowing subject out of account in arriving at the knowledge of God. He states that the aspirant to truth must exercise self-surrender and self-abnegation because the human intellect is hampered by, for example, evil passions arising from original sin, prejudice or passion or bad faith that fuels the resistance against the evidence. In particular, Pius also rejects the charge of intellectualism against catholic philosophy “for regarding only the intellect in the process of cognition, while neglecting the function of the will and the emotions.” He dismisses this charge: “never has Christian philosophy denied the usefulness and efficacy of good dispositions of the soul for perceiving and embracing moral and religious truths. In fact, it has always taught that

the lack of these dispositions of good will can be the reason why the intellect, influenced by the passions and evil inclinations, can be so obscured that it cannot see clearly.” Furthermore, Pius adds, looking back to Aquinas, “that the intellect can in some way perceive higher goods of the moral order, whether natural or supernatural, inasmuch as it experiences a certain ‘connaturality’ with those goods, whether this ‘connaturality’ be purely natural, or the result of grace; and it is clear how much even this somewhat obscure perception can help the reason in its investigations.”¹¹⁵

Unchangeability and Changeability of Dogma: Truth and Its Formulations

The main question addressed by Eglinton and Brock concerns how Bavinck theologically reconciles both tradition and novelty, continuity and change, in short, as Berkouwer put it, accounting for the “*Continuity of faith within all the changes of time.*” The answer to this question is, in my judgment, necessary in order to defend their thesis that Bavinck has one, consistent theological vision, orthodox yet modern. In my judgment, Bavinck poses the solution to this question by distinguishing between unchangeable truth and its changeable formulations. I discussed this earlier. My conclusion is that neither Eglinton nor Brock gives an account of this solution, and hence something crucial is missing in explaining the material continuity, or material identity, of Christian truth, despite the profound effects of historicity.

Berkouwer, however, is helpful in articulating the ingredients of a solution. He gives an instructive analysis of salient points of the Catholic *ressourcement* movement, *Nouvelle Théologie* regarding unchangeability of dogma and changeability of formulations.¹¹⁶ After summarizing Berkouwer’s analysis, I shall conclude by explaining four theses that John Paul II states regarding the contemporary theological attempt to explain the relationship between unchangeable, dogmatic truth and its historically conditioned formulations.¹¹⁷

In response to the doctrinal relativism of modernism, the *nouveaux théologiens*, for example, Henri de Lubac, SJ, and Yves Congar, OP, emphasized not only the unchangeability of truth but also that dogmatic development involves “noetic progress,” meaning thereby not a progress of revelation, but rather progress in our understanding of revelation, of the revealed deposit. “Development is designated as ‘noetic,’ as an increasing ‘discovery’ of the gospel’s content.”¹¹⁸ As Berkouwer expresses this point later in his first book on Vatican II, “Evolution of dogma was not a development of truth, but a development of the Church’s *consciousness of the truth.*”¹¹⁹ That is, the *nouveaux théologiens* believe—and

Berkouwer agrees—that the evolution of dogma is a homogeneous development and a corresponding “noetic penetration and illumination of the unchangeable truth, as an increasing radiation of its light.”¹²⁰ Still, he adds elsewhere, “Whoever speaks of noetic progress, of a discovery of that which is given in the biblical canon and in ‘unchangeable’ truth, has merely framed the problem rather than solved it.”¹²¹ Berkouwer explains, “We come to the real question when we ask whether the dogma of the Church is also subject to the influence of historical variation. Does dogma stand alone as the one unchangeable and untouchable rock within the waves of history, transcending the law of changeability? Or does dogma participate in the law of historical change?”¹²²

Regarding Berkouwer’s two questions, we must answer him by distinguishing between the propositional truths of faith and their formulation in order to make clear that it is the latter that is subject to the influence of historical variation. Given that distinction, then, I would argue that the truth of dogma stands above the flow of history and hence is unchangeable. In that sense, we must say that the truth of dogma, and hence the propositional truths of faith do not participate in the law of historical change. But there still remains the critically important requirement of explaining how progressive knowledge (“noetic progress”) stands in *homogeneity* with the originally intended meaning and unchangeability of the propositional truths of faith. Indeed, Berkouwer stresses that the real problem that is present in an orthodox Christian account of dogmatic development arises from its starting-point “that does not deny the unchangeability of truth in dogma.”¹²³ The upshot of this point is that development over time must always be, as Vincent of Lérins rightly noted, *in eodem sensu eademque sententia*, according to the same meaning and judgment of truth.

This brings us back to the distinction between truth and its formulations. “Along with maintaining the unchangeability of dogma, one must simultaneously pay attention to the wording, to the expression and representation of that which is unchangeable and confessed as truth by the church.”¹²⁴ The import of this distinction between the unchangeable truth of the Church’s dogma and its formulations arises from the recognition that the former is expressed in “thought forms belonging *to a definite time*, thought forms that naturally bear a human, historically determined and therefore relative character.”¹²⁵ Berkouwer adds explanatorily,

Attention is urgently sought for the fact that the church, in formulating her dogmas, has often been served by philosophically expressed thought-forms belonging to a certain period.... These thought-forms are changeable, varying with the times and relative, so that it is thought to be possible to confess the same truth in other times using others ideas and categories. Concerning

dogma, we are dealing with two realities: the unchangeable *affirmation* and the changeable *representation*; or said differently: with the intended *content* and with the *form* in which that content is expressed.¹²⁶

This distinction between truth and its formulations, unchangeable affirmations and changeable representations, rests upon a more particular epistemological presupposition, namely, that all formulations of the truth are *inadequate*. Of course, Berkouwer assures us, inadequacy of expression doesn't mean that the unchangeable truth is inexpressible, or that the formulations or representations are untrue, and certainly this distinction doesn't reflect an "irrational doubt in the value of thought."¹²⁷ "The limitation of faith's answer does not mean that the answer is untrue."¹²⁸ Berkouwer elaborates elsewhere, "The incompleteness of our knowledge plays a large role *but not because of irrationalistic, skeptical or agnostic motives*, but rather as a consequence of the sense of the immeasurable terrain of truth on which men are privileged to set foot."¹²⁹ Similarly, Berkouwer writes in defense of the claim that the theologians of the *nouvelle théologie* reject relativism. He adds "Their rejection of relativism is connected with a related point, namely, that these theologians do not in an *irrationalistic manner deny the value of conceptual formulations*."¹³⁰ Rather, such formulations can never be adequate because they can never be exhaustive expressions of the truth. In other words, he adds, "The issue is not about challenging revealed truth, but about recognizing the 'limitation' or 'incompleteness' of our knowledge ... that is only sketched even in the most worthwhile formulation."¹³¹ There is always more to say about the reality of faith. In short, "This has everything to do with inexhaustibility of the truth of the gospel."¹³²

What, then, are the theological criteria, or ecclesial warrants, for determining whether we are faithful to the gospel and its development? Berkouwer does not explicitly say so, but I think we can surmise that the criteria he would employ would be something like the criteria Reformed theologian Michael Horton posits. "(1) the Scriptures as the infallible canon, qualitatively distinct from all other sources and authorities; (2) under this magisterial norm, the ministerial service of creeds and confessions; (3) contemporary proclamation of God's Word in the church around the world; (4) long-standing interpretations in the tradition; (5) the particular nuances of individual theologians."¹³³ Perhaps an even more important question arises from Berkouwer claim that Christ's church has a teaching office, that is, in Bavinck's words, the ministerial power in service to the Word of God "to preserve, explain, understand, and defend the truth of God entrusted to her."¹³⁴

But we are not forced to choose between the inexhaustibility of the truth of the gospel and the corresponding openness to the possibility that Christian teaching

about Christ may always receive further elucidation, on the one hand, and the stability, material continuity, and substantial identity of dogma over time, on the other. Yes, as Thomas Guarino rightly notes, “There is, then, always room for expansion and counterbalance, for clarifications, and for reformulation, even while maintaining the stable continuity of fundamental meaning (*idem sensus*).”

John Paul II is another crucial proponent of the *nouvelle théologie*. He gives the answer to the question Berkouwer poses: “What is the criterion for distinguishing between form and content, representation and affirmation? Where is the line beyond which the unchangeability of dogma is lost in relativism?”¹³⁵ Although the truths of the faith may be expressed differently, they must be kept within determinate bounds of propositional truth. That is, we must always determine whether those re-formulations preserve the same meaning and mediate the same judgment of truth, *in eodem sensu eademque sententia*. This italicized phrase means to say that the truth of a proposition is inextricably connected with its meaning. As to meaning, the way things are is what makes “meaning” true or false. Therefore, a proposition is true if what it says corresponds to the way objective reality is; otherwise, it is false. In the words of Bernard Lonergan, “Meaning of its nature is related to a ‘meant,’ and what is meant may or may not correspond to what is so. If it corresponds, the meaning is true. If it does not correspond, the meaning is false.”¹³⁶ Thus, a dogma’s meaning is unchangeable because that meaning is true. The truths of faith are, if true, always and everywhere true; the different way of expressing these truths may vary in our attempts to communicate revealed truths more clearly and accurately, but these various linguistic expressions do not affect the truth of the propositions.

Thus, revealed truth is, in essentials, unchangeably true and valid, and being true, corresponds to reality. This universal truth, even with all the limitations of language, expresses the divine and transcendent reality of God. Revealed truth is grasped through dogmatic statements, and such statements, being true, formulate an unchanging and ultimate truth. At the same time, these dogmatic statements reflect our language and culture, the mind-set of the time, and being conditioned by history. Still, while our knowledge of the truth is limited *by* history and constricted in other ways, it is not limited *to* these factors. To hold the latter would be cultural relativism, or historicism—as John Paul calls it, which he rejects because it “denies the enduring validity of truth.” In this connection, we can understand why John Paul II urges us to employ “a hermeneutic open to the appeal of metaphysics.” Only then would it be “possible to move from the historical and contingent circumstances in which the texts developed to the truth which they express, a truth transcending those circumstances.”¹³⁷

Furthermore, the pope thinks that the idea of truth is indissolubly linked to claims of universality, meaning thereby that truth is universal in that “if something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times.” In short, John Paul distinguishes between metaphysics and epistemology, truth itself from the conditions under which I know, or have reason to believe, that something to be true. Given this distinction, it makes no sense to claim that truth varies with epistemic context. In his own words, “Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history.” In short, truth is unchangeable. There are limits to conceptual pluralism given the enduring validity of the conceptual language used in conciliar definitions. Thus, validity attaches not merely to the meaning of the truth of faith revealed by God but also to the dogmatic formula.

Admittedly, John Paul and Berkouwer recognize the hermeneutical problem that the historical conditionedness of dogmatic formulas requires taking seriously the meaning which concepts assume in different times and cultures. Berkouwer is right that it is surely simplistic to ignore the context in understanding “the various terms, concepts, images, and propositions that the Church has used to confess its faith.” He is also surely right that the meaning of dogmas is not always immediately transparent. For example, there exists unclear terms “in the christological and trinitarian controversies, such words as consubstantial, hypostasis, person, nature, and many others. The terms often evoked misunderstandings, and different interpretations of them created conflict of opinion.”¹³⁸ But this hermeneutical problem is not insoluble since “certain basic concepts retain their universal epistemological value and thus retain the truth of the propositions in which they are expressed.”¹³⁹ Still, elsewhere I have proposed ways to grasp the relation between propositional truths of faith and their formulation, leading to a right understanding of relationship of truth and reality.¹⁴⁰

This is my Catholic contribution to the Bavincian *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*.

Notes

1. Paul Helm, “Does the Authority of a Tradition Exclude the Possibility of Change?” in *Identity and Change in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Marcel Sarot and Gijsbert van den Brink (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 122.
2. G. C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives*, trans. and ed. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 17–18, emphasis added.
3. Herman Bavinck, “Modernism and Orthodoxy,” in *On Theology: Herman Bavinck’s Academic Orations*, trans. and ed. Bruce Pass (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 146–81.
4. Cory Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck’s Use of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 267.
5. James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 144.
6. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 260.
7. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 260.
8. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 54.
9. Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, *God and Knowledge: Herman Bavinck’s Theological Epistemology* (London: T&T Clark: 2020), 6.
10. Herman Bavinck, “Foreword to the First Edition (volume 1) of the *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*,” trans. John Bolt, *Calvin Theological Journal* 45 (2010): 10. See also, Susanto, *God and Knowledge*, 4–7.
11. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 26.
12. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 32.
13. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 19.
14. On the Catholic origin of this term, see Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray, eds., *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
15. W. David Buschart and Kent D. Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 12.
16. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 23.
17. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 24, emphasis original.
18. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 269.

19. Oscar Cullman, "Have Expectations Been Fulfilled?" in James D. Hester, ed., *Vatican II: The New Direction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 57.
20. Cullman, "Have Expectations Been Fulfilled?" 58.
21. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, xix, see also, 11.
22. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008).
23. Herman Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, trans. Cory Brock and Nathaniel Grey Sutanto (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2018). See my review article in the *Bavinck Review* 10 (2019): 115–21.
24. Herman Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, trans. Cory Brock, Nathaniel Grey Sutanto, and James Eglinton (Crossway, 2019). See my review article in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (2019): 874–85.
25. Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).
26. *The Christian Family*, Introduction by James Eglinton (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2012). See my review article in the *Journal of Markets & Morality* 16, no. 1 (2013): 219–37.
27. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. John Bolt et al. (Baker Academic, 2019). See my review article in *Philosophia Reformata* (2020): 1–13.
28. G. C. Berkouwer, *Nabetrachting op het Concilie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1968), 52, my translation.
29. G. C. Berkouwer, *De Kerk*, vol. 1, *Eenheid en Katholiciteit* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1970), 236–37; idem, vol. 2, *Apostoliciet en Heiligheid* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1972). Both volumes are translated in one complete volume by James E. Davison as *The Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 190–91.
30. Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitories*, trans. Rudolph E. Morris (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1949). I give an account of Vincent's theory of dogmatic development in my forthcoming essay, "Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine," in *"Faith Once for All Delivered": Tradition and Doctrinal Authority in the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2021).
31. John XXIII, Allocution on the Occasion of the Solemn Inauguration of the Second Ecumenical Council *Gaudet mater ecclesia* (October 11, 1962), no. 14.
32. Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. Peter Hünermann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012).

33. Yves Congar, OP, *A History of Theology*, trans. Hunter Guthrie (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 18–19.
34. Herman Bavinck, *Magnalia Dei* (Kampen: Kok, 1909), 2; ET: *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).
35. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, *Prolegomena*, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 31–33.
36. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 58.
37. G. C. Berkouwer, *Nieuwe Perspectieven in de Controvers: Rome-Reformatie*, Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 20, No. 1 (Amsterdam: N. V. Noord-Hollandsche UitgeversMaatschappij, 1957), 18.
38. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology*, 319.
39. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 37.
40. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, *God and Creation*, trans. John Vriend; ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 208.
41. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 209.
42. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 67.
43. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 68.
44. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 68.
45. Bavinck, *Philosophy of Revelation*, 189.
46. Bavinck's critique of pan-symbolism is similar to Pius X, Encyclical Letter *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, September 8, 1907. See, too, Abraham Kuyper, *The Antithesis Between Symbolism and Revelation*, 1880.
47. Bavinck, *Modernisme en Orthodoxie*, 98–99.
48. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 29.
49. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 49.
50. Kenneth L. Schmitz, "St. Thomas and the Appeal to Experience," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings*, 47 (1992): 17–18n46.
51. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 108, 106.
52. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, II, 109.

53. I develop Bavinck's view of language about God in my book, *Dialogue of Love: Confessions of an Evangelical Catholic Ecumenist* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 234–41.
54. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, September 14, 1998, no. 95.
55. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 54–55.
56. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 56.
57. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 66.
58. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 56.
59. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 56.
60. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 57.
61. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 86.
62. Brock insists repeatedly throughout *Orthodox yet Modern* that Bavinck “turned to the subject” (20, 51, 61, 267).
63. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 86.
64. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 609. See also, “Theology has its own epistemology and, though dependent on philosophy, it is not dependent on any particular philosophical system” (503).
65. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 268.
66. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 270.
67. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 605.
68. Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation*, 239. See also, Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, trans. Harry der Nederlanden (St. Catherine, Ontario: Paideia, 1980), 71–72.
69. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 48.
70. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 503–4.
71. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 159.
72. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 564–65.
73. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 57.
74. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 59.
75. Most recently, “Do You Have to be a Calvinist in Order to be a Kuyperian? In Memoriam John H. Kok,” *Pro Rege* 49, no. 3 (March 2021): 1–18.

76. See my article, “The One Church, the Many Churches: A Catholic Approach to Ecclesial Unity and Diversity—with Special Attention to Abraham Kuyper’s Ecclesiastical Epistemology,” *Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 239–64.
77. The following paragraphs on ecumenism are adapted from the second edition of my study, *Pope Francis: The Legacy of Vatican II* (Hobe Sound, FL: Lectio Publishing, 2019 [2015]), 245–97.
78. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 18, 36, 38, and 79.
79. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 29.
80. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 41.
81. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization,” December 3, 2007, § 4.
82. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 28,
83. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 47.
84. I show this point in my article, “Hierarchy of Truths Revisited,” *Acta Theologica*, 2015 (35) 2: 11–35, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v35i2.2>.
85. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, nos. 4 and 17.
86. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 1.
87. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 4
88. Quoted in Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 164.
89. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 13.
90. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 192.
91. Eglinton, *Bavinck*, 253.
92. Yves Congar, OP, *Jesus Christ*, trans. Luke O’Neil (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 197.
93. Abraham Kuyper, *Pro Rege*, vol. 2, *The Kingship of Christ in Its Operation*, ed. John Kok with Nelson D. Kloosterman, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids; Bellingham, WA: Acton Institute; Lexham Press, 2017), 305.
94. Herman Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationships,” in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 141.
95. Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationship,” 141.

96. Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationship,” 142, emphasis added to last word.
97. Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationship,” 143.
98. Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationship,” 143.
99. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 59.
100. I found this passage by Aquinas in John Paul II, “Method and Doctrine of St. Thomas in Dialogue with Modern Culture,” in *The Whole Truth about Man*, ed. James V. Schall, SJ (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1981), 268–69.
101. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2.2.15.273–74.
102. Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1968), 54.
103. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 1, *The Necessary Presuppositions of Philosophy*, trans. David H. Freeman and William S. Young (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 117–18.
104. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 318–19. Bavinck, “Christian Principles and Social Relationships,” 122–23.
105. Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 54.
106. Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 54.
107. Brock, *Orthodox yet Modern*, 62–63.
108. Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, *The General Theory of the Modal Spheres*, trans. David H. Freeman and H. de Jongste (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 520–36, ¶ 5—The Problem of the Inter-Modal Synthesis of Meaning in the First Edition of the “*Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*” according to Heidegger’s Interpretation [in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929)].
109. Thomas G. Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (New York; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 269.
110. Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology*, 303n27.
111. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, Reason and Theology*, Questions I–IV of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius, translated with Introduction and Notes by Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), q. 2, a. 3, reply to 5.
112. This paragraph is adapted from my article, “Relativism: *Ancilla Theologiae Fidei*—not so Fast!” *Calvin Theological Journal* 49 (2014): 258–82.

113. John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension, Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 139.
114. Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension*, 139.
115. All the quotes in this paragraph from Pius XII are from *Humani Generis*, no. 33.
116. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 57–88. I give an in-depth analysis of Berkouwer and the *nouvelle théologie* in my study, *Berkouwer and Catholicism: Disputed Questions* (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2013), 20–101. In the following, I adapt certain paragraphs from this study.
117. I am indebted to Msgr. Thomas Guarino’s summary for helping me to formulate these theses on “the question of maintaining the universal cognitive content of revelation while incorporating elements of otherness, difference, and diversity.” Thomas Guarino, *Revelation and Truth: Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Theology* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 37–39.
118. G. C. Berkouwer, “Vragen Rondom de Belijdenis,” in *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 63 (1963): 1.
119. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 59–60.
120. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 64.
121. Berkouwer, “Vragen Rondom de Belijdenis,” 2.
122. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 58.
123. This sentence is only present in the original Dutch edition, *Vatikaans Concile en Nieuwe Theologie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1964), 4.
124. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 64.
125. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 64.
126. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 64.
127. Berkouwer, “Vragen Rondom de Belijdenis,” 5.
128. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 68.
129. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 64.
130. This important sentence is, inexplicably, not in the English translation. Emphasis added. See Berkouwer, *Vatikaans Concile en Nieuwe Theologie*, 73.
131. Berkouwer, “Vragen Rondom De Belijdenis,” 6, and also 10, 22, 25–26, 35–36.
132. Berkouwer, “Vragen Rondom De Belijdenis,” 5.

133. Michael Horton, *Christian Faith, A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 218. Hutter gives a similar list of normative sources in “Relinquishing the Principle of Private Judgment in Matters of Divine Truth: A Protestant Theologian’s Journey into the Catholic Church,” in *Nova et Vetera* 9, no. 4 (2011): 876. So, too, by *Le Groupe Des Dombes*, in “One Teacher” *Doctrinal Authority in the Church*, trans. Catherine E. Clifford (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 [2005], no. 127; and, on warrants for doctrinal development, see Guarino’s list in *Vincent of Lerins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 91–111: *Prima Scriptura*, ecumenical councils, theological doctors, Christian faithful, and papal magisterium.
134. *Reformed Dogmatics*, I, 32–33.
135. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 65–66.
136. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, SJ, “The Dehellenization of Dogma,” in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, ed. William F. J. Ryan, SJ, et al. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 14, scare quotes added.
137. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 95.
138. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism*, 74.
139. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 96.
140. Eduardo Echeverria, *Revelation, History, and Truth: A Hermeneutics of Dogma* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019).