

“So many of us have learned about neo-Calvinism through one thinker such as Abraham Kuyper or Herman Bavinck or J. H. Bavinck or Klaas Schilder, but here we are presented with it as a whole tradition with many rich variations and dimensions. This introduction is highly readable and perfect for the theological student. But it is also eminently practical. The chapter on Revelation and Reason alone is bristling with insights and implications for the evangelist, apologist, and missionary. Highly recommended.”

—**Timothy Keller,**

pastor emeritus, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City;
author of *The Reason for God*

“This is an indispensable primer on the most generative and influential version of ‘neo-Calvinism,’ the modern Dutch version that stems from the theological writings of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. Comprehensive yet concise, it is the best place to start for those who need an introduction to the orthodox yet modern, theological yet secular work of the most important Calvinist intellectuals of the last two centuries.”

—**Douglas A. Sweeney,**

Beeson Divinity School Samford University

“While some might imagine the theologian as a lonely soul on a lonesome path, theology’s true nature is communal and convivial. It is nothing less than the communion of saints pondering the faith together. As a tradition larger than any of its individual stellar figures, neo-Calvinism is an example of this. In this outstanding book, Brock and Sutanto offer the reader a lucid, insightful, and fresh introduction to that tradition’s core claims, whilst also modeling the power of thinking theologically together for the benefit of others. It is essential reading for all students of Reformed theology.”

—**James Eglinton,**

Meldrum Senior Lecturer in Reformed Theology, University of Edinburgh

“Dutch neo-Calvinism is one of the most influential iterations of the Reformed tradition. Its importance lies in its all-encompassing vision of Christianity that touches and transforms every aspect of the life of faith. In this short, clear, and engaging work Gray Sutanto and Cory Brock provide readers with a state-of-the-art introduction to the theological agenda of this movement. I highly recommend it.”

—**Oliver Crisp,**

principal of St. Mary’s College;
head of the School of Divinity, University of St. Andrews

“Neo-Calvinism has won overwhelmingly by spreading its reach to a truly global audience and stretching its concerns to virtually every field. Too often, therefore, serious understanding of neo-Calvinism’s animating impulses—the theological principles found predominantly in the writings of Kuyper and Bavinck—has been a lost cause. Cory Brock and Gray Sutanto serve as able guides in reintroducing the witness and wisdom of those two theological giants and the catholic force of their effort to take every thought captive to Christ. Take and read of what they saw and said and of what we may be called to hear and herald, too.”

—**Michael Allen,**

John Dyer Trimble Professor of Systematic Theology,
Reformed Theological Seminary

“This book is a milestone in the new reception of Dutch neo-Calvinism currently under way in the English-speaking world. This reception will be greatly boosted by Cory Brock and Gray Sutanto’s admirably clear and comprehensive introduction to the central theological insights of neo-Calvinism’s founding figures. A great virtue of the book is that, while the authors’ interpretive grip on the texts is clear throughout, they allow Kuyper and Bavinck to speak in their own words, thus enticing readers to delve into the primary sources themselves. Those sympathetic to the movement will discover, perhaps for the first time, the depth, range, and rigor of theological wisdom that launched it, and that alone can sustain and renew it today. Those unfamiliar with the movement, or perhaps suspicious of it, will encounter a remarkable and distinctive articulation of Reformed theology that compels serious critical attention, even when some of its particular claims may need to be superseded.”

—**Jonathan Chaplin,**

member of the Centre for Faith in Public Life at Wesley House, Cambridge;
author of *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosopher of State and Civil Society*

“A timely and important contribution to the study of neo-Calvinism! This well-researched and well-referenced book by Cory C. Brock and N. Gray Sutanto prove that, despite its Dutch origin, neo-Calvinism offers a distinctive-yet-eclectic theological vision for the church worldwide. As such, it will continue to be a ‘fruitful dialogue partner’ for other traditions to enrich the ongoing constructive theological discussions that in turn will benefit the church globally.”

—**Yuzo Adhinarta,**

president, Reformed Theological Seminary of Indonesia

“Considerable attention has been paid over the years to the social, political, and cultural components of the neo-Calvinist movement, relatively little to its theological component. Yet the founders of the movement, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, were primarily theologians, and what they had to say on other matters always had theological roots. The authors, Sutanto and Brock, focus squarely on the theology of the two founders, highlighting the fact that their theology was thoroughly engaged with the modern world while yet being distinctly catholic, and bringing to light the theological roots of their thinking on social, political, and cultural matters. What emerges from their discussion is how learned and creative Kuyper and Bavinck were, and how extraordinarily comprehensive and integrated was the theology that they produced. They were systematic theologians—in the best sense of the word ‘systematic.’ This is a book that has long been needed. Finally, it’s here!”

—**Nicholas Wolterstorff**,

Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology, Yale University

“This is an outstanding and much needed volume! At last we have a thoroughly theological introduction to neo-Calvinism! Those who are new to this stream of thought could have no better guide. Those who are acquainted with neo-Calvinism will find this sure-footed account of key loci in Kuyper and Bavinck to be a richly helpful resource. But this volume is not simply a valuable distillation of their theology—it also points the way toward a continuing, constructive neo-Calvinist theology for today.”

—**Suzanne McDonald**,

professor of systematic and historical theology, Western Theological Seminary

“This book is long overdue. Now that studies of Bavinck and Kuyper are booming and their influence is spreading across the globe, this accessible overview of neo-Calvinism’s original theology fills an important gap in the literature. It will definitely serve both the church and the scholarly community for decades to come. Preventing us from walking away with our own preferred images of Bavinck and Kuyper, the authors insightfully trace back the orthodox-yet-modern attitude of both Dutch theologians to its dogmatic roots. These roots are explored here with great skill and care. Therefore, Brock and Sutanto have put us greatly in their debt with this remarkable synthesis. The fact that neither of them is from Dutch descent clearly demonstrates that neo-Calvinism’s influence has by now spread way beyond its native soil.”

—**Gijsbert van den Brink**,

professor of theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

“Good introductions are worth their weight in gold. Sutanto and Brock’s *Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction* is a superb addition to their ranks. Measured, sympathetic, and lucid, it is a first-class piece of writing and a complete pleasure to read—a triumph that could not have come along at a better time!”

—Jon Balsarak,

senior lecturer in early modern religion, University of Bristol

“We have long known that we needed a proper theological treatment of neo-Calvinism, but with this volume we have been blessed with far more. Sutanto and Brock have not only provided a truly valuable guide to a notoriously unwieldy and complicated program; they have done so in a way that captures something of neo-Calvinism’s abiding theological freshness, culturally attuned wisdom, and refreshingly candid commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of all. A uniquely important, invigorating book that should be read and reread for many years to come.”

—Mark Garcia,

associate professor of systematic theology, Westminster Theological Seminary

“Neo-Calvinism, which has found a wide variety of expressions since its inception, is a multidimensional way of understanding the world and being in but not of the world. In this book, Cory Brock and Gray Sutanto focus on Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck to outline for us the central theological themes and motifs that provide unity to the diverse dimensions of neo-Calvinism as a worldview that cannot be reduced to theology. The authors authoritatively demonstrate that neo-Calvinism is ‘eclectically orthodox yet modern, self-consciously holistic, and organic and not mechanical,’ and they do so by being such in their own writing. This is a much-needed reintroduction to neo-Calvinism in our day and age, when misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misapplications of neo-Calvinism abound in Christian as well as non-Christian communities worldwide.”

—Alex Shao Kai Tseng,

research professor, School of Philosophy, Zhejiang University

Neo-Calvinism

A Theological Introduction

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Cory C. Brock
and
N. Gray Sutanto



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Neo-Calvinism: A Theological Introduction

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1313 Commercial St., Bellingham, WA 98225
LexhamPress.com

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Print ISBN 9781683596462
Digital ISBN 9781683596479
Library of Congress Control Number 2022940303

Lexham Editorial: Todd Hains, Claire Brubaker, Erin Mangum, Mandi Newell
Cover Design: Joshua Hunt, Brittany Schrock
Typesetting: Abigail Stocker

For Heather and Indita



Contents

Abbreviations	xi
Foreword	xiii
Acknowledgments	xix
I Introduction	1
II Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism	15
III Catholic and Modern	44
IV Revelation and Reason	71
V Scripture and Organism	98
VI Creation and Re-creation	133
VII Image and Fall	185
VIII Common Grace and the Gospel	212
IX The Church and the World	250
X 16 Theses	290
Bibliography	295
Name Index	309
Subject Index	311
Scripture Index	321



Abbreviations

- BR *The Bavinck Review*
- CG Abraham Kuyper. *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World*. Translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman and Ed M. van der Maas. Edited by Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill. 3 vols. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015–2020.
- CCC Herman Bavinck. “The Catholicity of Christianity and the Church.” Translated by John Bolt. *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 220–51.
- CTJ *Calvin Theological Journal*
- CW Herman Bavinck. *Christian Worldview*. Translated by James Eglinton, Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- Encyclopedia* Abraham Kuyper. *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.
- GD Herman Bavinck. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 3rd ed. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1918.
- GE Herman Bavinck. *Gereformeerde Ethiek*. Utrecht: Kokboekcentrum, 2019.
- KGHG Herman Bavinck. “The Kingdom of God, the Highest Good.” Translated by Nelson Kloosterman. *BR* 2 (2011): 133–70.
- Lectures* Abraham Kuyper. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008.

- PoR Herman Bavinck. *Philosophy of Revelation: A New Annotated Edition*. Edited by Cory Brock and Nathaniel Gray Sutanto. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2018.
- Pro Rege* Abraham Kuyper. *Pro Rege: Living under Christ's Kingship*. Translated by Albert Gootjes. Edited by John Kok and Nelson D. Kloosterman. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016.
- RD Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics*. 4 vols. Translated by John Vriend. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008.
- RE Herman Bavinck. *Reformed Ethics: Volume 1: Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*. Edited by John Bolt. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.
- SG Hans Boersma. *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in the Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.
- “Tract” Abraham Kuyper. “Tract on the Reformation of the Church.” Pages 75–280 in *On the Church*. Edited by John Halsey Wood Jr. and Andrew M. McGinnis. Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016.
- WWG Herman Bavinck. *Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Christian Religion according to the Reformed Confession*. Edited by Carlton Wynne. Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2019.



Foreword

George Harinck

ONE CAN STUDY neo-Calvinism or employ neo-Calvinist notions without being acquainted with its theology. Neo-Calvinist jurist Herman Dooyeweerd developed a philosophical system in which theology is not the ground-laying structure or the queen amid other sciences, but merely one of the academic disciplines. And Abraham Kuyper himself stressed in his Stone Lectures that the Calvinist worldview was not reducible to theology or the confessions as such. Neo-Calvinism is appreciated by many for its engagement with culture and society, where theology seems to play a minor role and where the public role of the institutional church is limited or absent. Kuyper's and Herman Bavinck's ideal notion of society is formulated in nontheological terms: it is a place of freedom for every worldview.

Still, the fact cannot be denied that both founding fathers of neo-Calvinism, Kuyper and Bavinck, were theologians, that their keyworks were of a theological nature—Kuyper's *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology* and of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*—and that the academic institutions they shaped were theological in the first place. Basically, all well-known notions in neo-Calvinism that may seem nontheological at first glance, such as sphere sovereignty, democracy, pluralism, and worldview, are deeply rooted in theology. Their employment is possible without knowledge

of the theology that sustains them, but if one wants to understand their dimensions and direction, one has to go back to their theological roots.

Such is the concern in this book: it focuses on the theology of Kuyper and Bavinck, the founders of neo-Calvinism. In a way this introduction by Cory Brock and Gray Sutanto is a return to theology. For whatever Kuyper and Bavinck accomplished in society and academia—it is well-known that they were politicians, journalists, professors, and leaders in the school struggle¹—their activities and research began as a theological enterprise. The need of the church for an up-to-date Reformed theology was their primary motive. The first dissertations on Kuyper and Bavinck were defended around the Second World War. They too were mainly theological in nature. Theology was the central focus, even when it was not the primary topic under investigation.

Some other examples noting this theological core are S. J. Ridderbos's dissertation *De theologische cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper* (Abraham Kuyper's theological view of culture), defended in 1947 at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and E. E. Rosenboom's dissertation *Die Idee einer christlichen Universität im theologischen Denken von Abraham Kuyper* (The idea of a Christian university in Kuyper's theology), defended at the Georg-August Universität of Göttingen in 1950. Later on, the research on Kuyper's and Bavinck's works and activities took on a philosophical, sociological, and historical dimension, and to such an extent that the theological and more specifically dogmatic dimension of neo-Calvinism was somewhat left behind. When the research of neo-Calvinism developed internationally in the beginning of the twenty-first century, theologians from global contexts were often in the lead, but what they lacked was a theological overview of and reflection on the neo-Calvinist tradition.

How did such theological neglect happen? I would point the reader to several reasons. Maybe the oldest stems from the theological conflict that accompanied the rise of neo-Calvinism in the Netherlands. The confrontations of Kuyper and Bavinck against modern theology, ethical theology, and traditional and experientialist Reformed theology were real clashes,

1. See the 2017 publication by Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

and they caused divisions and alienations that had not existed before their times. Kuyper was a polemical theologian; but Bavinck, too, contributed to the conflicts, disputes, and tension that molded the new and independent position of neo-Calvinist theology. Of course, their opponents added their bit to heated controversy and a polluted atmosphere. This was especially the case with the loci of revelation (Scripture), creation, and the covenant. Kuyper never restored his broken relationships with the modern, ethical, and Reformed theologians, though Bavinck did try to mend the fragmented connections, reaching out to the modern theologians and keeping a good personal relationship with ethical theologian J. H. Gunning Jr. Even though he tried to build theological bridges or at least to initiate conversations with other theological schools or traditions, his efforts were not very successful. The relation with experiential Reformed theology, for example, did not lead to significant confrontation, but has stayed uncomfortable until the present day. These theological controversies were transplanted to the domain of the church, especially in the tensions between the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (neo-Calvinist), on the one side, and the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (modern, ethical, and traditional Reformed) and smaller, experiential Reformed denominations, on the other side. It was not until the 1960s that the first two denominations were on speaking terms. They reduced their differences to a “domestic dispute”² and finally merged in 2004 as the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (also including the Lutherans). In ecclesial life the main sharp edges have been smoothed, but in the Dutch theological landscape these late nineteenth and early twentieth century divisions lingered on, in such a way that led neo-Calvinist dogmatician Cornelis van der Kooi to speak of ongoing “Balkanization.”³

A second reason for the neglect of the theological frame is the presence of an autarkic trait in neo-Calvinism. Its theological tradition had a flying start in the last decades of the nineteenth century due to its quality.

2. So *hervormde* theologian A. A. van Ruler in George Puchinger’s interview with him on 7 June 1969. G. Puchinger, *Hervormd-gereformeerd, één of gescheiden* (Delft: W. D. Meinema, 1969), 381.

3. Kees van der Kooi, “Over kerk en samenleving. Enkele opmerkingen bij de verschijning van Kuypers *Commentatio*,” *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* 65 (November 2006): 21.

No other tradition could match the breadth and depth of Kuyper's *Encyclopedia* and Bavinck's *Dogmatics*, and after the turn of the century the Gereformeerde Kerken and the Vrije Universiteit, along with the neo-Calvinist Kampen Theologische School, were flourishing like no other church or theological department. This situation gave way to the neo-Calvinists' impression that they covered the theological discipline in its entirety and had no need to interact with other theological traditions. They, and no one else, were *issu de Calvin*. This imbalance between identity and connectivity has been a hallmark of neo-Calvinist theology, explaining why ethical theology was rejected completely and why the theology of Karl Barth met a cold reception in neo-Calvinist circles until the 1950s. Theologically, the neo-Calvinists thought they had everything they needed. Barth was welcome as a friend and ally only if he aligned his Reformed theology with Kuyper's and Bavinck's. These were the years Gerrit C. Berkouwer characterizes as a time of principled "isolation."⁴ Because of this attitude, neo-Calvinist theology for a long time had a negative connotation in the theological world. This may explain the relative disinterest in this theological tradition in the past few decades in the Netherlands.

The third reason for the neglect may include a general spirit or implicit conviction that neo-Calvinists ought not agree to disagree dogmatically within their own circle. Historically, every minor point of difference had to be solved, for a variety of opinions would weaken the disputed position of neo-Calvinist theology. The pretended cohesiveness and completeness of this theology was incompatible with theological disagreements. In at least three cases this zeal for uniformity led to a church split: in 1924 on common grace (in the United States), in 1926 on the historical character of Scripture, and in 1944 on baptism, the covenant, and church polity. These incidents did not contribute to the popularity of neo-Calvinist theology.

A final reason neo-Calvinist theology has been neglected is the philosophizing of the notion of worldview. This notion is related to neo-Calvinism through its philosophical tradition, more so than via its theological branch. In the 1930s Herman Dooyeweerd and Dirk Vollenhoven developed a neo-Calvinist philosophy, rooted in the works of Kuyper and

4. G.C. Berkouwer, *Het probleem der Schriftkritiek* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, [1938]) ch. 7, esp. 383–84.

Bavinck. This philosophy was highly influential in North America, where it was introduced at Calvin College after the Second World War as part of the Kuyperian heritage. The notion of worldview was on the rise in evangelical circles in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century on, when these groups started their systematic opposition against modernism in their country. The Calvinist philosophy of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven fit very well in this intellectual climate and helped the small group of neo-Calvinists in the United States to fortify this worldview-thinking intellectually. Kuyper and Bavinck were mostly studied through this lens, and hence worldview, understood as a philosophical concept, became the distinguishing mark of neo-Calvinism, more so than its dogmatics.

In the Netherlands, this theological backlash has not been overcome yet, and neo-Calvinist theology is not *en vogue*, but internationally the interest in neo-Calvinist dogmatics is on the rise. A new generation of theologians from all over the world, and often without historical connections with the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition, came into contact with its theology through the translations of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, Kuyper's Stone Lectures on *Calvinism*, and many other publications they wrote. Since about 2000 this translation got a new and decisive impulse and developed into an industry, thanks to many, but especially through the efforts of John Bolt (Bavinck) and Rimmer De Vries (Kuyper). Translations in English, French, German, Portuguese, Korean, Russian, Chinese, and other languages are available or on their way. At present a young generation of international researchers has a plethora of texts at their disposal to revive and explore neo-Calvinist theology and open new avenues.

This introduction to neo-Calvinist theology is an excellent specimen of this revival, for two reasons. In the first place, Brock and Sutanto are scholars who have been educated in neo-Calvinist theology solidly, in places such as Edinburgh and Kampen (and in Pasadena, Amsterdam, and Grand Rapids). They are well acquainted with neo-Calvinist theology and give an excellent overview of Kuyper's and Bavinck's theology in this new introduction by going *ad fontes*, back to its sources, and by combining and summarizing their views. They represent the energy of

a new generation, eager to discover, develop, and apply this theology in our present world. In order to do this, a balanced overview of the basics of neo-Calvinist theology is the indispensable starting point. The main concern of the authors is not to contextualize or historicize this theology, but to present its structure and architecture as envisioned by Kuyper and Bavinck. They bring Kuyper and Bavinck into conversation with recent international studies of their work. Interestingly, such an overview did not yet exist. We were in need of this book.

Second, by doing this work they also offer a state of the art of neo-Calvinist theological research plus an introduction to recent debates in the international theological community, such as on the beatific vision and on common grace and natural theology. It is most interesting for a Dutch neo-Calvinist scholar such as me to read this introduction so independent of the Dutch context, which limited and stifled its theological influence, as described above. In this book, Brock and Sutanto open the windows and hopefully also eliminate the barriers that still seem to limit the development of neo-Calvinist theology in its Dutch context.

I welcome this introduction as a milestone in the history of neo-Calvinist theology. It marks the transition of this theology from a Dutch specialty into an international flavor. The Dutch source and stream of neo-Calvinism was, is, and will be relevant, but this book is the sign that its theology has now passed beyond the Dutch fairway. It has reached the international waters. Fit for all seasons, it is now at open sea, where, as far as Kuyper and Bavinck was concerned and Brock and Sutanto demonstrate, it is meant to be.

Kampen, the Netherlands

July 2021



Acknowledgments

THE IDEA FOR this book first came during our time studying together at New College, University of Edinburgh, 2015–2018. We continue to be thankful for the friendship of like-minded neo-Calvinists there. Further, we are grateful for the continual encouragement from James Eglinton and George Harinck. We are also grateful to Lexham Press and to Jesse Myers, Brannon Ellis, and Todd Hains for taking on this project. Indeed, it was a lively conversation with Jesse and Brannon in particular over breakfast at the Biola Cafeteria during the 2019 LA Theology Conference that spawned the idea for this book.

I (Gray) would like to thank my colleagues, friends, and students at Reformed Theological Seminary for their support and hospitality. Many of the ideas in this book were formed through conversations both in and outside the classroom. In particular, my thanks to Thomas Keene, Scott Redd, Peter Lee, Jennifer Patterson, Timo Sazo, William Ross, D. Blair Smith, and Michael Allen, for the streams of thoughtful conversation as I wrote the bulk of this book in quarantine from Jakarta and Bali, Indonesia. Thanks as well are due, of course, to my wife, Indita, whose patience made the writing of this book possible.

I (Cory) was able to write this book during my time ministering at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Mississippi. I am grateful for space given me to both pastor and do research as a theologian in that season. Likewise, I am ever thankful for my wife and family for lovingly putting up with the seasons of book writing that coexist alongside the many other aspects of life. Last, Gray and I have both had countless conversations about the

topics in this work with so many in Edinburgh, Reformed Theological Seminary, and the churches in which we have served, and we are indebted to their thoughts. In particular, Bruce Pass and George Harinck read through the entire manuscript and offered invaluable feedback. This book is a better work because of their attention. We would also like to thank Jon Huff for forming the bibliography, and Wilson Sugeng for the index.

I

Introduction

Academically, Kuyper was first and foremost a theologian. However, because he was involved in so many areas of life, his public work has often received far more attention than his work as a theologian. In recent years the Kuyperian tradition has been developed in philosophy and politics, but far less so in theology. This is a mistake. The theology of Kuyper, Bavinck, and Berkouwer, to mention the three major figures, is exceptionally rich and needs to be retrieved and updated for today.

— Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition*

BARTHOLOMEW'S OBSERVATION HERE, which marks the beginning of his chapter on theology in his fine introduction to the Kuyperian tradition, continues to ring true. Studies on neo-Calvinism carry on apace, and this is a cause for celebration. However, despite both the rigorous dogmatic output and the details of the theology that functions in its center and heart, studies that focus directly on neo-Calvinistic theology in particular are scant by comparison. In addition, as Bartholomew points out, the neo-Calvinist tradition is not developing as dogmatics. Though the studies that explore the implications of neo-Calvinism on public theology, politics, and philosophy are exciting, worth investigating on their own right, and intertwined with the work of dogmatics, this imbalance is unfortunate. This is the case not least because the dogmatic output of Kuyper and Bavinck is so rich but also because their work seems to promise substantial yields for contemporary dogmatics.

In a neglected essay by George Hunsinger written in 1996 (and republished in 1999), for example, he predicts that Kuyper and Bavinck will mark a decisive middle way forward for generative dialogue between evangelicals and postliberals on the doctrine of Scripture and its interpretation specifically: “The views of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck offer a greater possibility for fruitful evangelical dialogue with postliberal *theology* than the tendency represented by Carl Henry.”¹ Consider also Joshua Ralston’s 2016 editorial in the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. Ralston, working with Brian Gerrish’s *Christian Faith*, locates Gerrish closer to Friedrich Schleiermacher than either Barth or Bavinck, which locates Bavinck shoulder to shoulder with other giants in the modern theological landscape.² Indeed, Bavinck is recognized now as a choice that stands between the two giants of modern theology.

The theologies of Kuyper and Bavinck not only contain promising possibilities for contemporary dogmatics, but are also a significant but sometimes silent influence behind many theological trajectories today: the theological interpretation of Scripture, redemptive-historical hermeneutics, theological retrieval, Christian missiology, apologetics, and eschatology. This book seeks to fill this need by providing a theological introduction to the unique dogmatic contributions of the first generation neo-Calvinists, especially Kuyper and Bavinck. Three further impulses prompt the writing of this book.

First, as mentioned above, much literary output has been focused on the political and philosophical deliverances of neo-Calvinism, to the neglect of its dogmatic creativity. When the theology of neo-Calvinism is treated within these works, it is discussed as a prelude to the political or philosophical program under discussion. To be sure, political theology is a dogmatic enterprise. Yet, in many of the works under consideration, the emphasis lands on cultural discipleship rather than political theology. The five-volume *Kuyper Center Review*, for example, while having individual chapters on particular theological loci, focuses self-consciously on *Reformed Theology and Public Life* and has covered topics such as politics,

1. George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 340.

2. Joshua Ralston, “Editorial,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18.3 (July 2016): 257.

religion, and public life (vol. 1), Calvinism and culture (vol. 3), Calvinism and democracy (vol. 4), and the church and academy (vol. 5). Even its most explicitly theological volume, the second, written on the doctrines of revelation and common grace, was divided into two parts: revelation and philosophy, and common grace with interreligious dialogue.³ There are many monographs and edited volumes that treat specific histories and applications of neo-Calvinism: neo-Calvinism and worldview (Heslam), neo-Calvinism and Christian philosophy (Goheen and Bartholomew), neo-Calvinism and culture (Edgar), the political theology of Herman Dooyeweerd (Chaplin), and the history and life of Kuyper and Bavinck (Dordt, Bratt, Bolt, Harinck, and Eglinton).⁴ Yet, a single volume that treats their distinctive dogmatic theology in an introductory yet summative and textually grounded way is yet to be written. Bartholomew's excellent introduction to the Kuyperian tradition devotes much of its attention to neo-Calvinism's contribution to philosophy, culture, politics, and education, with only a few chapters on explicitly dogmatic topics (Scripture, creation and redemption, and theology). The point here is not to demean these efforts (and we have benefited very much from all of them) but merely to establish the focused dogmatic lacuna.

Second, there is a major diversity on what passes as neo-Calvinism or neo-Calvinistic in the present day. To quote Kuyper quoting Plato, "Plato does not say in vain: 'To teach a thing rightly it is necessary first to define its name.'"⁵ What does the name "neo-Calvinism" mean? While the answer is manifold, for our purposes, we want to define historic neo-Calvinism as a nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement in the Netherlands.

3. John Bowlin, ed., *Kuyper Center Review*, vol. 2, *Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

4. Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Jonathan Chaplin, *Herman Dooyeweerd: Christian Philosophy of State and Civil Society* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); Chaplin, *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work, and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*, ed. Steve Bishop and John H. Kok (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2013); Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); George Harinck and James Eglinton, eds., *Neo-Calvinism and the French Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014); John Bolt, *Herman Bavinck on the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017); James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

5. *Encyclopedia*, 229.

Neo-Calvinism was a revival of Reformed confessionalist theology in the Netherlands roughly beginning with the rise of Kuyper as a theologian, with the founding of the Vrije Universiteit in 1880, the formation of the Gereformeerde Kerken in 1892, and its systematization in the theological output of Herman Bavinck. Its most mature distinctive was not first in political theology, Reformational philosophy, or public-theological models for the relation between the church and social order, but in its careful, nuanced, and unique marriage between classical, Reformed confessionalist dogmatics and modern philosophy and theology that allowed it to speak Reformed dogmatics to a particular European, modern world. By modern, we mean that age beginning with the fall of the Bastille (1789), with the metaphysics and epistemology of Kant, and spanning all the way through the long nineteenth century into the Great War. The public-theological models birthed in the neo-Calvinist age in the Netherlands, while having political-theological derivatives important for today, were for the Netherlands in a particular time and place. Yet, what historic neo-Calvinism offers foremost today is both its material dogmatic reflections and a model for adapting and updating orthodox, confessional dogmatic reasoning for each generation and in each culture. Springing from its roots, there is indeed a neo-Calvinist tradition that blossomed in all manner of directions over the last century. Yet, in defining the essential dogmatic contributions, it is important to first speak of historic neo-Calvinist theology, and here we focus on the first-generation of neo-Calvinism.

At a popular level, the term “neo-Calvinism” has now become associated, even as a synonym, with transformationalism (a public theology defining the mission of the church as social as much as evangelical). This ought not to be so. In other instances, some associate the term with a more recent cohort of public Christians. Daniel Knauss provides a clear example: “From Herman Dooyeweerd to Francis Schaeffer and Nancy Pearcey, [neo-Calvinism] is confessionally partisan, [where] self-legitimizing history is told, apparently in total ignorance of and complete contradiction to established historical and theological scholarship of at least the past three decades.”⁶ For Knauss, neo-Calvinism is a movement dissociated

6. Daniel Knauss, “Neocalvinism ... No: Why I Am Not a Neocalvinist,” *Comment*, June 1, 2006, <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/neocalvinism-no-why-i-am-not-a-neocalvinist/>.

from the church, and one that began in the 1950s. It is the philosophy of Dooyeweerd and the worldviewism of Pearcey. Knauss goes on to suggest that neo-Calvinism ignores the best of scholarship and includes what he calls a “killing of the fathers.”⁷ This version and common level understanding of neo-Calvinism is impossible to find if one looks to its origins. Historic neo-Calvinism was a Dutch enterprise for the sake of the whole church under the theological minds of Kuyper and Bavinck that included at its core an immense ecclesiological movement, a return to the “fathers” and to a catholic, confessional faith in a modernist context.

In this vein, there are also tendencies in studies on Kuyper and Bavinck that are driven by the desire to append them to particular movements or ideological traditions relating to intramural theological debate. The use of Kuyper and Bavinck within the contemporary dichotomy between Thomism and Van Tilianism, for example, exemplifies this in a rather stark manner. The desire to distance or append Kuyper or Bavinck to these movements often produces a rather lopsided reading of the primary sources, such that particular passages are emphasized while others are ignored, reducing these first generation neo-Calvinists to either preludes or formidable critics of Thomism or Van Tilianism. In our judgment, this debate has gradually become counterproductive, and for these reasons we have set aside this debate entirely in this present volume in order to unveil the dogmatic distinctives of Kuyper and Bavinck in their own milieu. Further, neo-Calvinism need not be genetically overassociated with either of these traditions—their work is too capacious, eclectic, and distinctive to be appended to another “ism” other than on their own terms. While we do not deny that neo-Calvinism remains a fruitful dialogue partner for these and other traditions, whether past or present, this is not our interest to pursue in this book.

Third, there is an exciting amount of English translations on Kuyper and Bavinck today that span across many different publishers. This includes the initiatives of the Acton Institute, publishing Kuyper’s works with Lexham Press; Baker Publishing Group’s English editions of Bavinck’s *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*; and, more

7. Knauss, “Neocalvinism ... No.”

recently, Bavinck's previously unpublished *Reformed Ethics*, Hendrickson's new editions of Bavinck's *Philosophy of Revelation* and the *Sacrifice of Praise*, Westminster Seminary Press's new edition of Bavinck's *Magnalia Dei* (*The Wonderful Works of God*), and Crossway's English translation of Bavinck's *Christian Worldview* and other volumes on the way. With this renaissance of translations, however, comes a degree of intimidation. How should one begin to explore this staggering amount of newly translated material? Again, this book aims to fill that need.

There is, of course, an exciting amount of new scholarship that attends to the theological works of Bavinck and Kuyper, but these monographs are highly specialized in nature, exploring a particular doctrine within either Kuyper or Bavinck in a niche and highly detailed way. These include studies on Kuyper's doctrine of the Spirit (Bacote), Scripture (van Keulen and Henk van den Belt), and ecclesiology (Wood); and Bavinck's eschatology (Mattson), Trinitarian theology (Eglinton), Christology (Pass), and our own work on Bavinck's epistemology and use of Romantic sources, among others.⁸ The downfall of the two-Bavinck thesis, particularly, frees the student of neo-Calvinism to give more sustained attention to positive presentations of the whole project, rather than being encumbered in deconstructing previous dichotomizing readings. We have also contributed to this trajectory of Bavinck scholarship. Sutanto's monograph, *God and Knowledge*, sought to locate the classical and modern sources of Bavinck's theological epistemology, and argues that the organicism that structures Bavinck's epistemology showcases a principled eclecticism. Brock's monograph, *Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's Use of Schleiermacher*, proves Bavinck's eclectic theological method by establishing that Bavinck appropriated the modern-theological turn to the self,

8. Vincent Bacote, *The Spirit of Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Dirk van Keulen, *Bijbel en Dogmatiek: Schriftbeschouwing en schriftgebruik in het dogmatisch werk van A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck en G.C. Berkouwer* (Kampen: Kok, 2003); Brian Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology and the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); James Eglinton, *Trinity and Organism: Toward a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011); John Halsey Wood Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bruce Pass, *The Heart of Dogmatics: Christology and Christocentricism in Herman Bavinck* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020).

particularly in Schleiermacher. No longer is the researcher now forced to choose between a “modern” or “classical” Bavinck. With Bavinck’s (and, by extension, neo-Calvinism’s) eclecticism firmly in place, the reader can get a sense of the unity behind the occasional deployment of particular ideas from both classical and modern milieus. This book follows this research trajectory and presupposes the established consensus on the eclectic character of Bavinck’s thought.

Hence, this particular introductory volume provides a panoramic overview of the distinctive dogmatic contributions of neo-Calvinism. In that regard, while we are broadly sympathetic with many of the claims of Kuyper and Bavinck, the purpose of this book is *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. That is, we aim to present what Kuyper and Bavinck themselves offered as the distinctive marks of their own theological work (even while we may agree or disagree with some of their theological judgments) precisely because a close reading of the primary texts demands them. The chapters of this present book represent that aim, as we cover differing theological loci. Moreover, while we do at times draw from second- or third-generation neo-Calvinists to press a particular point, Kuyper and Bavinck remain the focus of this book. We also try to include minimal forays into the secondary literature, seeking only to do so if it illumines a salient feature of some theological description. Our main goal here is exposition and summation of key dogmatic developments. The decision to focus on these loci rests on what Kuyper and Bavinck explicitly regarded as the main loci that needed further work and clarification—that there is no chapter focusing solely on the doctrine of God and Trinity (although these doctrines are present in every chapter), for example, indicates that, while there were interesting creative insights from Kuyper and Bavinck on the doctrine, they did not regard it as a doctrine to be rearticulated anew but rather were largely content with a retrieval of classical statements of the same.⁹

9. On the salient and creative aspects of the doctrine of God from the neo-Calvinist tradition specifically, see especially Gayle Doornbos, “Herman Bavinck’s Trinitarian Theology: The Ontological, Cosmological, and Soteriological Dimensions of the Doctrine of the Trinity” (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2019), and Cameron D. Clausing, “‘A Christian Dogmatic Does Not Yet Exist’: The Influence of the Nineteenth Century Historical Turn on the Theological Methodology of Herman Bavinck” (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2020).

While the chapters focus on distinct theological loci, there are at least three binding themes that thread them together, and we take these to be distinctive neo-Calvinistic modes of the thinking operation. The neo-Calvinists are methodologically and eclectically (1) orthodox yet modern, (2) self-consciously holistic, and (3) organic, not mechanical. Let us summarize these briefly in turn.

First, neo-Calvinism conveyed that the heritage of classical Reformed orthodoxy can engage fruitfully with the insights of modern theology and philosophy. Along with Kuyper, Bavinck often conceived his own neo-Calvinist position as that between conservatism and modernism. While conservatism decried the present in a nostalgic call for the past, Bavinck argued that the present age remains a remarkable opportunity to recommunicate the Christian faith in fresh ways. Instead of shying away from the modern debates and arguing that orthodox theology should bypass the academic discussions of the day, Bavinck and Kuyper often sought to incorporate as many contemporary insights as possible within the boundaries of orthodox Calvinism. Indeed, James Eglinton rightly notes that Bavinck often “fought modern with modern.”¹⁰ These inclinations led the neo-Calvinists to be critiqued by modernists and conservative thinkers alike. Modernists argued that Bavinck and Kuyper were merely redressing fundamentalism in modern idiom, while conservatives often accused them of capitulating to the allure of the modern age. Indeed, Bavinck’s 1911 oration “Modernism and Orthodoxy,” as we will see, addressed these charges directly all the while arguing that modernism and orthodoxy may exist fruitfully together. Hence, just as the Reformed orthodoxy of the early modern period was eclectic in its deployment of medieval philosophies for dogmatics, so were Kuyper and Bavinck self-consciously eclectic in their use of classical and modern insights for the sake of constructive theological work.

Second, neo-Calvinism argued for the holistic and leavening implications of the Christian faith. Aware of the totalizing nontheistic ideals of the 1789 French Revolution and later of Nietzsche’s thoroughgoing nihilism, Bavinck, like Kuyper, saw that it was necessary to present Christianity

10. Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography*, 138.

as a full-orbed alternative. It was no longer viable simply to assume that Christianity was relevant for public life in these modern conditions, which increasingly argued that faith belonged within the ecclesial and private spheres alone. This realization led Bavinck and Kuyper to call confessional theology to awaken to Christianity's ability to speak of reality (of self, world, and God) and to offer reasons for its necessity not merely in the church, but for every area of life. However, while Kuyper argued for this in a deductive and perhaps at times inflated way, Bavinck's method was more reserved and inductive. He argued that Christianity remained the inescapable conclusion if one patiently sifted through the data that contemporary arguments presented.

Finally, neo-Calvinism enfolded the organic language ubiquitous in Romantic philosophy into its own confessional Calvinism. The organism idea includes the claim that God created the world, that God created natures, and that the world is a unity-in-diversity of parts existing for a purpose, as God defines them. While organic imagery was often invoked to argue for the union between subject and object, between God and human affection, in a way that sometimes denigrated the necessity and authority of Scripture in theology, Kuyper and Bavinck utilized theological organicism in order to convey the richness of the orthodox Christian worldview. Neo-Calvinistic organicism includes the idea of inductively drawing together all the facts explained by the reality of the Triune God. If nontheistic worldviews are reductionist, neglecting one phenomenon by reducing it to the other (as seen in naturalism or pantheism), which is a mechanical move, Christianity preserved the Creator-creature distinction and argued that the world exists in a pluriform way. The mechanistic tendency is, for Kuyper and Bavinck, a one-sided reduction, a reference to a false or forced uniformity, or sometimes used to describe the human devolution of an organic reality, fighting against the world as God created it to be. It is to take that which is living and whole by divine command, and cut it into isolated parts and set those against the others. For example, to suppose one particular ethnic people group more aligned with the image of God than another (the sin of ethnic partiality) would be mechanical, dividing the human organism that God has created as one. The mechanical pushes against nature as God made it.

Yet, by the logic of the Christian faith, psychology and spirituality, the physical and the immaterial, can coexist as each diverse part is united under the single idea of creation, which all points back to the archetypal unity-and-diversity of the Triune God. The principle of organism refers, then, to a unity of parts that arises precisely from God the Creator, possessing both nature and purpose. In a simple sense, the organic is the natural. And while the organic is indeed a common Romantic concept within the modern world, Kuyper and Bavinck appeal to its presence in Scripture, in the imagery and metaphor of the garden, the tree of life, the body, and the vine, among others, which God chooses to use to describe creation, Eden, the church, and the eschatological kingdom. It is critical to remember too that the language and concept of organism appears widely in classical philosophy, especially in Plato, which is precisely the origin from which modern Romantic philosophy derives the idea. The ubiquitous presence of the idea in both name and metaphor across philosophies and theologies is evidence of a reality, that God created the world, the cosmos, to be one in many.

Neo-Calvinists of later generations took these holistic insights in a number of fascinating though at times mutually conflicting directions. This is seen in the works of diverse figures, including the likes of Bavinck's missiologist nephew, Johan Bavinck (1895–1964); philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977); and theologians Klaas Schilder (1890–1952) and G. C. Berkouwer (1903–1996). Indeed, the neo-Calvinist tradition remains lively and diverse, yet united in these ideals of a publicly engaged Reformed theology, inheriting a penchant against any form of separatism and dualism for the sake of holism, and the desire to communicate a capacious Christian faith for the contemporary world. As such, this book serves not merely as an introduction, but also as an invitation to this generative theological trajectory.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This book has organized the chapters in accordance with the order of presentation common in Reformed dogmatics: from prolegomena, to creation, salvation, and ecclesiology. As such, reading the chapters in subsequent order would provide an organic and logical dogmatic ordering.

However, readers who seek to dip to a particular locus that interests them most can also do so fruitfully. Although other chapters are occasionally referenced, each chapter is a relatively self-contained study of the dogmatic locus under discussion.

The second chapter seeks to trace out the way in which the term “neo-Calvinism” began to be used in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century but more particularly by Kuyper and Bavinck. What did this term mean, exactly, and what did the “neo-” in neo-Calvinism refer to? Cognizant of the ways in which “Calvinism” has taken on a life of its own in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship, we seek to distinguish Bavinck’s and Kuyper’s usage of “neo-Calvinism” from these contemporary definitions. Particularly, the chapter argues that Kuyper and Bavinck considered their projects to be inspired by the holistic impulses of John Calvin and used “Calvinism” specifically to refer to a full-orbed vision of the implications of Christ’s lordship for every sphere of life. Hence, while there were shifting attitudes toward the helpfulness of the term to identify their own theological and public projects, Kuyper and Bavinck continued to maintain that Reformed theology resulted in a holistic responsibility.

The third chapter observes the way in which Kuyper and Bavinck charted a path between what they considered to be a dead conservatism, on the one hand, and a forgetful liberalism, on the other. True catholicity involves the recognition not only that orthodoxy is rooted in the past, but also that it labors for the future. In this regard, Kuyper made a distinction between the form and essence of Christianity—the forms of Christianity might look different from age to age, and from place to place, but the essence remains the same. Conservatism clings to a dead form while forgetting that the essence can live on through new cultural, linguistic, and philosophical dresses. It mistakes the forms for the essence. Thus, the Christian theologian must be conservative without conservatism. Liberalism, on the other hand, substitutes the essence of Christianity and supplants it with an entirely new root—it forgets that Christianity is based on a historical revelation and has been developing through the catholic church across time. Bavinck argues that the catholicity of the church, therefore, means recognizing the culturally and philosophically pliable character of Christianity. Precisely because the Christian faith is truly

universal, it can utilize and reshape any culture, philosophy, and place, and is not tied down to any one culture, philosophy, or place.

The fourth chapter explores the relationship between revelation and reason, particularly focusing on Kuyper's and Bavinck's understanding of general revelation. While Kuyper and Bavinck follow the classical Reformed articulation of revelation, they preferred the terms "general and special revelation" over the terms "natural and supernatural theology" in order to highlight humanity's dependence on God for every point of theological knowledge, though they recognize the relative usefulness of the latter terms. This chapter also notes that Kuyper and Bavinck nuance this doctrine in a decisively romantic direction, arguing that revelation is perceived by human beings in a pre-theoretical fashion, resulting in unconscious affections, a feeling of absolute dependence. Due to the systematic and philosophically nuanced ways in which Bavinck in particular articulated these ideas in his writings, this chapter (along with the chapter on common grace) involves more technical exposition of the relevant writings.

The fifth chapter studies the doctrine of Scripture in a twofold way: the authority and usefulness of Scripture in relation to the other sciences, on the one hand, and the organic inspiration of Scripture, on the other. While Bavinck and Kuyper argue that Scripture is a book for humanity and is authoritative over and for the other sciences, they articulate this in a nuanced fashion. They resist a biblicist impulse that argues that the Bible is the sole source of knowledge for all of the other disciplines. They argue that the Bible has a soteriological and religious aim and is not a manual for the other sciences. Nonetheless, due to the organic character of all reality and subsequently of all knowledge, the Bible remains relevant and authoritative for the other disciplines. Further, both Kuyper and Bavinck argue that an organic account of the inspiration of Scripture is needed to do justice to the interface between divine and human agency in the authorship of Scripture. The key distinctions between center and periphery, between differing modes of inspiration, Scripture's attributes, and the analogy of Christ's dual nature with Scripture's divine and human origins are noted in this chapter.

The sixth chapter deals with the organic unity between creation and re-creation. The relationship between creation and salvation is one of the most prominent and tenacious matters appearing in the whole of the neo-Calvinist theological tradition. This is often referred to as the nature-grace relation. In brief, neo-Calvinism accents an essential theological commitment: that the *goal* of salvation is not an entirely new idea, even post fall, because the goal of re-creation is the end of creation, yet by different means. Re-creation's end is creation's original end: that God would make his dwelling place with humankind, the Immanuel principle. The organic unity in the nature-grace relation, or that grace restores nature, is perhaps the key insight and emphasis of neo-Calvinist dogmatics that gives shape to all else.

The seventh chapter observes the holistic character of Bavinck's and Kuyper's theological anthropology. In particular, Bavinck argues for what we have termed an "organic whole federalism" view of corporate humanity. The image of God, he argues, refers not merely to individuals as psychosomatic unities, but also singularly to the corporate human race taken as a whole. Rooted in the classical conviction that the perfections of God can only be reflected in finite creation in a manifold way, no single human individual can manifest the fullness of the image of God, and hence the diversity of individuals is involved together in imaging God. The unity of this organism of humanity is founded in the federal headship of Adam or in Christ. Kuyper likewise emphasizes the unity of humanity in both Adam and Christ. Kuyper also builds a narrative anthropology, or one shaped by the nature-grace relation, arguing that humanity's royal calling in Adam is fulfilled and recommissioned in its union with Christ.

The eighth chapter defines the doctrine of common grace in relation to the gospel and ends by noting the key differences between common grace and the natural-law tradition. Kuyper believed that common grace required a separate treatment as a locus in dogmatics and that it had been neglected since Calvin. For Kuyper and Bavinck, God's common grace is God's general favor that sustains the creation order despite sin. Common grace is distinct from special grace. God's special grace restores, renews, and recreates creation order as the kingdom of God. The former

serves and anticipates the latter. In brief, God's common grace is the fact of his loving patience in preserving both humanity and the creaturely cosmos despite human rebellion and its polluting corruption for the sake of redemption, while also offering the possibility of human development, of progress in the richness of human life and civilization. Common grace marks an era between the curse of the world and the second advent of Christ, wherein God gifts moral, epistemic, and natural goods to the world, maintaining in high degree an organic creaturely unity despite the curse.

The ninth chapter, finally, identifies Bavinck's and Kuyper's understanding of the church as both institute and organism, and discusses the relation between these terms with the invisible and visible church. Kuyper and Bavinck were both churchmen and ecclesial theologians. Neo-Calvinism is an ecclesial movement, forming a new denomination and providing a robust theology of institute and organism that has guided Reformed ecclesiology for a century. The chapter finally moves to a discussion of the relationship between the church and the world, and sketches a neo-Calvinistic political theology in brief.

By sketching the dogmatic roots and contours of neo-Calvinism, we hope to reground the neo-Calvinist tradition in its own catholic roots and also to invite nonspecialists from other backgrounds to draw on this tradition for their own work. We have pulled from many sources in both the corpuses of Kuyper and Bavinck, and yet there are many more not explored in this work. We also hope that readers will be provoked to read these theologians for themselves.

II

Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism

To repristination I am as averse as any man; but in order to place for the defense of Christianity, principle over against principle, the worldview over against worldview, there lies at hand, for him who is a Protestant in bone and marrow, only the Calvinistic principle as the sole trustworthy foundation on which to build. ... What, then, are we to understand by this return to Calvinism? Do I mean that all believing Protestants should subscribe the sooner the better to the Reformed symbols, and thus all ecclesial multiformity be swallowed up in the unity of the Reformed church organization? I am far from cherishing so crude, so ignorant, so unhistorical a desire.

—Abraham Kuyper, Lectures on Calvinism

One forgets thereby that the doctrine of God in Christian theology is not built on singular disparate statements but on the whole of revelation in Scripture, and that Calvinism as it was revived in the previous century deserved to be judged not after a single work but in its entirety and compared with the doctrine of the Reformer of Geneva. Positioning oneself at this impartial standpoint, one shall soon make the surprising discovery that the alleged contrariety does not exist between the Scriptures and contemporary theology, and neither does it exist between the old and the new Calvinism, but it appears in