AN INDONESIAN-DUTCH INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION OVER DOUBT-HANDLING

Thesis for MIRT TU Kampen

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1. Introduction

This thesis is written as a conclusion of the Master of Intercultural Reformed Theology (MIRT) program at the Theologische Universiteit Kampen-Utrecht.

1.1. Research Problem

In an Indonesian Reformed church, GRII, a teenager told her youth mentor about her doubt, to which she replied, "Do not doubt, you must believe," and the conversation stopped there. The mentor's reaction piqued my curiosity and started an investigation that dug into honor-shame culture, compared notes with the Dutch context where the theological university was located, and resulted in this research.

1.2. Research Goal

The goal of the research is a better understanding of the Indonesian way of handling doubt through an intercultural conversation with a Dutch perspective.

1.3. Research Question and Sub-Questions

Research Question: What insights could be gleaned from an intercultural conversation between Indonesian and Dutch Christians over doubt-handling?

Sub-Questions:

What is the honor-shame culture? How does it influence the way doubt is handled, more specifically in the context of an Indonesian church, GRII?

What insights from Herman Bavinck can be used in this intercultural conversation about doubt? How would Dutch Christians living today handle doubt and how would it contribute to the conversation?

In which points can a conversation be held between the two different cultures? What insights could help define the problem of doubt-handling? What suggestions could be offered to solve the problem?

1.4. State-of-the-Art

The following is a list of Indonesian literature I found with some connection to the topics in this thesis, such as doubt and interculturality in theology.

One Indonesian book on doubt by Lukas Kiswanto, *21 Proofs that Jesus is Lord: Answering Doubts of the Lordship of Jesus Christ* (original title: *21 Bukti Yesus Adalah Tuhan: Menjawab Keraguan Terhadap Ketuhanan Yesus Kristus*). There are more books about faith, some of which are

published by the founder of GRII, the Indonesian church studied in the subsequent chapter, Dr. (Hon.) Stephen Tong, such as *From Faith to Faith*; *Faith, Reason, and Truth; Faith and Religion;* and *Faith and Hope During the Time of Crisis*.

In the area of intercultural theology, the literature I found focuses on contextualization of theology. *Doing Theology in Indonesia: Sketches for an Indonesian Contextual Theology* and *Anticipation of the Future: Doing Theology in Context at the Start of the Third Millennium* (original title: *Mengantisipasi Masa Depan: Berteologi dalam Konteks di Awal Millenium III)* are two titles by an author, Emmanuel Gerrit Singgih. A Polish Roman Catholic missionary to Indonesia, Franz Magnis Suseno, authored the book *Faith in Society: Points of Contextual Theology* (original title: *Beriman dalam Masyarakat: Butir-butir Teologi Kontekstual*).

1.5. Research Methodology

The research methodology consists of a qualitative survey and study of literature. The survey is an interview conducted with Indonesian and Dutch Christians and will be analyzed using the scheme Believing-Behaving-Belonging-Experiencing by Vassilis Saroglou. The main literature studied for the Indonesian perspective is a book by missionaries Jayson Georges and Mark Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Culture*, and for the Dutch perspective is Herman Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Other literature consists of Indonesian devotion and sermon.

1.6. Scope and Delimitations

The interviewees that contribute to this study all come from Reformed churches. In the case of the Indonesians they were members of one local church (2019), the same one of the teenager and her mentor who triggered this research, under the synod of GRII. This narrowed down the teaching they have been exposed to in that particular synod. Members of the local churches have plenty of opportunities to be familiar with the teaching of the founder of GRII. First because he was the keynote speaker of every synodal event, attendance of which was a social obligation for all members of the local churches under the synod, but also because his teaching was influential to the pastors presiding over the local churches and would be transmitted through them.

This decision has some advantages. First, with both Dutch and Indonesian interviewees subscribing to Reformed confessions, points of comparison that are relevant can be made despite the cultural difference. Second, the effort to trace the teaching the Indonesians have been exposed to was realistic enough. Third, a solution can be offered that is specific enough for these circumstances on the Indonesian side.

It would be interesting to study the philosophical-historical development that contributed to the Dutch individualism in depth, but it is not part of this thesis. This thesis set out to answer the Indonesian question about doubt-handling, and the Dutch perspective in its current scope has provided a different stand point with which a conversation with the Indonesian counterpart can be made. Another subject matter that is not part of the thesis is a complete list of causes of doubt or their solutions.

2. A Study on Doubt in Indonesia

This chapter will focus on Indonesia. To better understand the practice of doubt handling in this context, some background on the honor-shame culture is in order. Included in this part are soteriological terms like faith, sin, and salvation as honor and shame interact with them. This will equip the readers with the background needed to dive into the written sources and the interviews from Indonesia in the second part of the chapter.

2.1. Influence of Honor and Shame on Faith

Indonesia shares the honor-shame values with other world cultures and those of the Bible world. First the honor-shame culture will be described (§ 2.1.1.) and then a theology in that context will be explained (§ 2.1.2.).

2.1.1. Honor-Shame Culture

What is honor-shame culture? A story about a young girl called Gulzel from Central Asia will serve as illustration.[1] During a ride in a group taxi, she was the only female among four men in the car. First they made her uncomfortable with their propositions. After vodka was drunk, the threats grew more aggressive. But when her uncle drove by in a car, she did not flag him down. Instead she hid away from his sight. Afterwards, Gulzel's mother also helped her hide the incident – the only way they knew how to keep her honor.

This might seem bizarre to people from Western culture. The next sections will describe the components of honor-shame cultures -- honor, shame, and the community – and how they form dynamics that are unique to the culture that homes them. By the end of this chapter Gulzel story should make more sense in its cultural context.

2.1.1.1. Honor

Honor is not a term that only exists in honor-shame cultures, but in this particular context honor carries characteristics that distinguish it from honor in other cultures. Here are Julian Pitt-Rivers' thoughts on honor in honor-shame cultures: "Honor is the value of a person in his or her own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his *claim* to pride, but it

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[1] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), Chapter 2, Section "Shame Versus Guilt."

is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his *right* to pride."[2] First thing to note here is that honor depends on the community. "Public opinion forms therefore a tribunal before which the claims to honour are brought, 'the court of reputation' as it has been called, and against its judgments there is no redress."[3] Unlike self-esteem, which can be described as honor in an individual's own eyes, honor in honor-shame cultures is "inherently communal and relational."[4] The community will be discussed more specifically in § 2.1.1.3. Honor is not and cannot be a private thing; it is intertwined with the communal identity.[5]

Second, honor is desired above all, including life or its sustenance.[6] Wu stated that "Identity and honor have a near religious significance."[7] After all, honor is regarded as a limited resource, like in a zero-sum game.[8] When two different parties compete for honor, the shame of one party adds to the honor of the other group. "The victor in any competition for honour finds his reputation enhanced by the humiliation of the vanquished."[9] In Palestine two thousand years ago the Pharisees were so disturbed by the honor Jesus received they killed him. Why? Because the more honor Jesus gets, the less honor the Pharisees get.[10] Honor is more valuable than life.

Where does honor come from? Characteristics that cause a good standing among their peers such as one's morality, character, or other personality aspects like physical beauty, prowess, wisdom, and their wealth, family, service to the community. Honor can be achieved or ascribed.[11] Achieved honor means it was obtained by one's performed achievement, for instance, by accomplishing a heroic deed. Ascribed honor means that the person simply inherits it, for instance, from being born from a royal bloodline. Ascribed honor may function like an armour in providing immunity against shame. A dishonorable action might be found to be not dishonorable after all

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[2] Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John George Peristiany (University of Chicago Press, 1974), 21. Also see Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Understanding Honor."

[3] Pitt-Rivers, 27.

[4] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Understanding Honor."

[5] The term "reputation" might convey this communal notion better than the term "honor."

[6] An Indonesian saying, "Death is better than shame," in https://id.wikiquote.org/wiki/Lebih_baik_mati_berkalang_tanah,_dari_pada_hidup_bercermin_bangkai (accessed April 14, 2022); A Haitian tells a missionary he can go three days without food, but not without respect in Georges, Chapter 7, Section "Give Face;" One's reputation or "face" is more important than life itself in Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2013), Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."

[7] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "The Meaning of Morality in Relationship to Face."

[8] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "The Meaning of Morality in Relationship to Face;" Georges, Chapter 10, Section "Biblical Leadership;" Werner Mischke, *Honor and Shame in Cross-Cultural Relationships,* 11, http://beautyofpartnership.org/about/free, (accessed August 23, 2021).

[9] Pitt-Rivers, 24.

[10] Mark E. Moore and Carl Bridges, *Fanning the Flame: Probing the Issues in Acts* (College Press, 2003), 107.

[11] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Understanding Honor;" Wu, Chapter 4.

when done by an honorable enough person, because "just as capital secures credit," enough honor secures him a place above criticism.[12] As Georges and Baker explained it, in honor-shame cultures *who* you are matters more than *what* you do.[13]

2.1.1.2. Shame

While honor is desired above all, shame is to be avoided more than the plague. "Shame means other people think lowly of you and do not want to be with you."[14] Being rejected by a group equals shame.

While honor is considered to be a limited resource, shame has infinitely possible causes. Shame can be ascribed or achieved. Being born with a facial deformity is considered shame by many people and falls into the category of ascribed shame along with any physical disabilities and mental illness.[15] Achieved shame is caused by doing something that is considered shameful by society, ranging from something as trivial as tripping over one's own foot[16] to a scandalous turn into prostitution. Even getting tested for AIDS (not necessarily having the disease) can result in a loss of relationship, discrimination, and even denial of medical care.[17] In both cases, whether ascribed or achieved, shame is caused by failure to meet the group expectations.[18]

Just like honor, shame is determined by the community. "In shame-based cultures, acceptable behavior is defined by ideals from the community. You must be the person others expect you to be."[19] This sheds light on Gulzel's behavior in the beginning of this chapter. The expectation of the community for a young girl is chastity so she acted in order to match her reputation to the group expectation.[20] "Gulzel would have learned this expectation throughout childhood as she heard neighbors gossip about those who deviated from the ideal. The pressure to meet social expectations, and threat of shame for those who failed, outweighed her concern for physical safety. Being seen was more dangerous than being hurt, regardless of who was right and who was wrong."[21]

Shame is a public thing. This cannot be emphasized too much. It is not merely a subjective feeling experienced by a person, but is measured by a standard external to them.[22] The judgment of

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[12] Pitt-Rivers, 37.
[13] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Who, Not What."
[14] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Defining Shame."
[15] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[16] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[17] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[18] Georges, Chapter 1, Section "Global Realities."
[19] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Shame versus Guilt."
[20] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Shame versus Guilt."
[21] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Shame versus Guilt."
[22] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."

others may shape a person's identity more than the person's own judgment. According to Wu, shame "is not simply about public exposure – others thinking poorly of us. It essentially involves our identity, whether or not our claim to some status or character is warranted."[23] It is painful to be thought badly by others in another culture, for instance, in innocence-guilt culture, but a person can say, "That's not who I really am," and do something to clear his name or pay his guilt or improve himself. In honor-shame cultures, labels are near forever. One cannot wipe clean one's shame on his/her own; someone with a higher standing must do it for him/her.[24] Norman Kraus, a missionary to Japan among other countries, showed this by comparing honor-shame culture with Western culture. In Western culture, where the focus is more on guilt than shame, a perpetrator of a crime without intent will be considered less guilty than another one of the exact same crime with intent. In honor-shame cultures the lack of intention will not make the shame less severe, not even when it is unavoidable.[25]

What is the logic behind these dynamics? Shaming done by the group achieves behavior that is aligned to the group code. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict explains, "Shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior, not, as guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin."[26] The resulting shame exists independently of the shamed person's feeling, that is, objectively and not only subjectively. It is "a public social reality."[27] "[H]onor and shame are not just internal emotions; they are concretely expressed in actions that affect others."[28] Honorable people receive external treatments that convey respect; shameful people, disdain.

2.1.1.3. Community

There is no honor-shame dynamics without the community; it defines who is honorable or shameful and dispenses honor and shame. ""Honor-shame cultures" refers to *collectivistic* societies where the community tends to shame and exclude people who fail to meet group expectations, and reward loyal members with honor."[29] The community does not only sit and watch, but it actively drives people to do things it deems honorable and humiliates people who do things it deems shameful. The community has power to accept or reject people, which is equal to honor and shame.

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[23] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "The Meaning of Morality in Relationship to Face."
[24] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "Graced with Honor (Mephibosheth, Feasting and Salvation)."
[25] Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from A Disciple's Perspective* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1987), 206.
[26] Georges, Chapter 1, Section "The Depth of Shame."
[27] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[28] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[29] Georges, Chapter 1, Section "Global Realities."

"Collectivistic societies define people by their relationship to the group."[30] Recall the case of Gulzel. "Because shame leads to exclusion and rejection, the primary response is to hide or cover the shame. If others are not aware of the issue, then shame does not exist."[31] In contrast, an "innocence-guilt culture," as commonly encountered in Western contexts, is more *individualistic*. It relies on conscience, justice and laws to regulate social behavior."[32]

The Chinese[33] have two definitions of self: the little self (小我, *xiao wo*, literally: little I) and the big/greater self (大我, *da wo*, literally: big I), which stand for an independent self-concept and an interdependent self-concept respectively.[34] Quoting Gao et al, Wu explains:[35] The little I is an individual self, distinguished from the others by one's unique abilities and attributes, a sufficient entity on its own. The big I comes from its relationships with others and one's membership or status in a group. "Ultimately, identity is found in the greater self."[36]

As a result of this order of priority, personal opinion is inferior to the social consensus. "In the case of extreme collectivism, individuals do not have personal goals, attitudes, beliefs, or values but reflect only those of the ingroup. People in collectivistic cultures enjoy doing what the ingroup expects."[37] Identification with a group is significant because membership in an honorable group means shared honor.[38] But association with honorable people only happens with approval, [39] which is conditional upon the person's obedience to the group code, including in matters of opinions. The lack of opportunities to form one's opinion results in rusty critical thinking necessary for decision making, and more and more dependence on the group. "People generally welcome predefined social roles and behavior,"[40] because it is safer. The group code of conduct holds sway over both those in high and low positions.[41] Those with higher social status are not necessarily in a better position than those with the lower, because a higher status means more people watching, possibly with an evil eye.

One key concept of managing relationships is patronage, which will be important to understand one of the roles God takes towards His people. In developing countries, most people

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[30] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Collectivism."
[31] Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Shame versus Guilt."
[32] Georges, Chapter 1, Section "Global Realities."
[33] The Indonesians interviewed in the later part of this chapter have Chinese ancestry and are to a certain degree influenced by honor-shame values that are unique to the Chinese culture.
[34] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[35] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[36] Wu, 32%. Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[37] Bruce Malina, *The Social Gospel of Jesus*, (Fortress Press, 2000*)*, Chapter 5, Section "The Collectivistic Self and Family Integrity."
[38] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "Honor and Shame in the "Face" in Chinese Culture."
[39] Wu, Chapter 4, Section "The Meaning of Morality in Relationship to Face."
[40] Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Social Roles (Not Oppression or Inequality)."
[41] Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Social Roles (Not Oppression or Inequality)."

acquire goods and other needs through relationships.[42] "Patronage refers to a reciprocal relationship between two unequal parties. The superior patron provides material goods to a client, and the client repays with nonmaterial goods such as loyalty, obedience or gratitude."[43] Like a closely knitted family, the patron functions somewhat like the provider of a household, except the circle is much bigger and includes non family members. What motivates patronage to be the provider as the community expects of them is both the promise of honor and the threat of shame.[44]

With relationships being in the center of everything, the morality in honor-shame cultures is relational, although not necessarily relativistic. "Their [honor-oriented people's] basis for defining right and wrong happens to be communal and relational (not legal or philosophical). For them, what is best for relationships and honors people is morally right; what shames is morally wrong."[45] Most of the time, the ethical choices that have to be made are not between what is clearly right and what is clearly wrong, but finding the course of action with the littlest possibility of offending someone. It is all about protecting someone's sense of honor.

In that connection, foreigners in honor-shame culture learn soon enough that words "are for the purpose of managing relationships and social identities, not presenting information. Harmony takes priority over ideas. Truth in communication is defined *relationally*, not *logically*."[46] It is more important to protect one's reputation than to provide precise information. Georges experienced this when his three-year-old daughter cut her swimsuit into two pieces. He was upset that she had access to sharp scissors and interrogated the local babysitter for when, how, why it happened, and who was responsible for it, but did not learn any new information he had not known before.[47] "It was cut," the local babysitter said. Georges learned how deeply indirect communication was integrated to the honor-shame system.[48] "Deflecting the confrontation was her strategy for mitigating offense and shame. People downplay conflict and tension to preserve harmony and avoid losing face."[49] To communicate that she was forgiven and maintain the relationship, everyone sat down and had lunch together.

The following table will help summarize the main points of comparison between honor-shame culture and Western culture:[50]

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42 Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Collectivism."
43 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Patronage (Not Corruption or Dependency)."
44 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Patronage (Not Corruption or Dependency)."
45 Georges, Chapter 10, Section "Addressing Sin with Reintegrative Shaming."
46 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Indirect Communication (Not Lying or Deception)."
47 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Indirect Communication (Not Lying or Deception)."
48 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Indirect Communication (Not Lying or Deception)."
49 Georges, Chapter 3, Section "Indirect Communication (Not Lying or Deception)."
50 Georges, Chapter 2, Section "Shame versus Guilt." 11%.

Table 1.

	Guilt-Based Cultural Behavior	Shame-Based Cultural Behavior
Cultural Context	individualistic, Western	corporate, Majority World
Definition of Normal	rules and laws	expectations and ideals
Guide for Behavior	introspective conscience	public community
Result of Violations	guilt	shame
Core Problem	"I *made* a mistake" (action)	"I *am* a mistake" (being)
Affected Party	the transgressor	the group
Violator's Response	justify, confess or apologize	hide, flee or cover
Society's Response	punish to serve justice	exclude to remove shame
Means of Resolution	forgiveness	restoration

At the end of this section hopefully the story of Gulzel makes more sense in its original cultural habitat. Gulzel's honor or shame depends on her reputation, on what the community thinks of her, rather than what factually happened. It is very hard to assure that hearsays and rumours tell the story accurately. The less possibility of gossips, the better. The fact that she was innocent will not make the gossips stop, the shame go away, or have acquaintances treat her exactly the same way before. The community has the power to decide what is honorable or shameful, but not like a court of law where there is clarity provided with the book of law, the role of judge, prosecutor and defense, the presentation of proofs and finally the binding verdict. People talk behind her back and she is left guessing if her boyfriend was really too busy to see her or if he'd heard of it, and if he did, which version he heard. And even if the men were pronounced guilty, it does not mean Gulzel is free of shame; she could still be considered tainted, and therefore shameful, even if it was not her fault.

Now all this played in Gulzel's and her mom's head. For all we know the community could well be one with a strong sense of justice, where the elders, out of care for her, will look carefully into the matter. To solve the shame, an announcement of innocence is not enough. What Gulzel needs is a community, or at least a patron that is respected in the community, that stands with her and shows publicly how much she is valued.

To the question, then why did Gulzel choose to hide from her uncle, belongs the answer that she does not know for sure how the community would react. The mere possibility of shame is enough to scare her even more than her concern for her physical well-being. In the Old Testament

we see a similar example of honor-shame dynamics. 1 Samuel 20:34 said that Jonathan was upset, not because Saul had thrown a spear at him or wanted to kill David, but because Saul had disgraced him. Threats to one's life are not as weighty as disgrace or shame.

In the same vein, honor is more important than anything else. And honor comes across as a limited source, with everyone competing for it, included in the same community. The first time Saul saw David as a threat to be eliminated (1 Samuel 18:8) was after David received more praise than him. The zero-sum concept would explain Saul's dramatic reaction when he was not discredited, and even praised with "having defeated thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7).

Having covered the building blocks of the honor-shame culture, we will now go to theology in this particular context.

2.1.2. Faith in Honor-Shame Culture[51]

Honor and shame do not exist in honor-shame culture alone, but in other cultures as well. "Honor and shame are universally present."[52] The whole humanity is made in God's glorious image and therefore humans desire honor.[53] "Shame is not an Asian or Arab issue; shame is an Adam and Eve issue, present in all humans ever since the Garden of Eden."[54] It will be interesting to determine the difference and similarities, but it is beyond the scope of this study. With a focus on honor-shame cultural setting, how do the basic elements of theology (creation, fall, salvation) look?

2.1.2.1. Creation

Creation reveals more than God's omnipotence, but also the honor He possesses and liberally bestows on the first human, Adam, as evidenced by God's bounty of blessing, land, food, naming privileges, and a wife.[55] "Most significantly, Adam and Eve were created in "the image of God," which denotes precedence and glory."[56] They were so honorable they could afford walking around naked![57] "A primary characteristic of sinless paradise was the abundance of honor and absence of shame."[58] This honor is conveyed by the close relationship the created man may enjoy with his exalted Creator.

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[51] This section relies heavily on Georges and Baker.
[52] Georges, Chapter 6, Section "Western Shame."
[53] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection.".
[54] Georges, Chapter 6, Section "Alienation Blocks Community."
[55] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[56] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[57] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[58] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."

2.1.2.2. Sin

Sadly, sin changed all that, introducing shame for the first time in the human world. "Adam and Eve were banished from God's community," Georges observed the connection between shame and rejection of the community.[59]

Shame has both objective and subjective dimensions.[60] Sin is a real, objective reason for shame despite what the sinner subjectively feels. On the other hand, a sinner may feel shame whether or not he/she knows why. Daniel 9:8 spells out the cause of shame: sinning against God.[61] The fall into sin resulting in a lack of glory (Romans 3:23) meant two things: sinners fail to glorify God, and at the same time lack the intended glorious existence.[62]

There are four ways in which sin and shame relate to each other. First, sin dishonors God and breaks relationships. It is disloyalty in a relationship, and not merely a violation of an impersonal law. It shows what little regard sinners have of God. This results in the second thing, namely our true shame before God. Regardless whether the sinners are aware of their sins, God pronounces them shameful. Third, sinners experience shame because of their sin. The loss of fellowship with God is the ultimate cause of shame regardless whether or not the sinners are aware of it. Fourth, shame induces sin. "Sin shames . . . and shame sins . . . it is a spiral of death. This reality has shadowed humans ever since."[63] To deal with shame, sinners devise all sorts of destructive ways to grab false honor for themselves.[64] False honor and shame comes from valuing man's judgment higher than God's, while true honor and shame is aligned with God's pronouncements. Within the zero-sum framework of honor (a limited resource, not the gift of the infinitely glorious God), sinners fabricate a relative honor by shaming others as well as turning against themselves.[65] Jesus criticized the Pharisees in a similar tone (John 5:44).

2.1.2.3. Salvation

When God frees His people from sin, He not only frees them from an internal rebellious lust, but graces them with honor and wipes their shame. "[T]he removal of shame and the restoration of honor lies at the center of God's salvation."[66] Redemption is predominantly "the reversal of status from shame to honor."[67] This cannot be accomplished by one's own doing, but is done through the

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[59] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[60] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[61] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin).".
[62] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[63] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[64] Georges, Chapter 7, Section "Good Honor and Bad Honor."
[65] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "The Face of Shame (The Fall and Sin)."
[66] Georges, Chapter 1, Section "Jayson's Flood."
[67] Georges, Chapter 4, Section "Returning Home (Redemption as Status Reversal)."

mediatorial role of Jesus, who has both honor and a relationship with the Father, and extends His patronage (an important concept in honor-shame culture) to us. "God is a patron worthy of our loyalty and praise because he does act on our behalf, as proven on the cross."[68] The honor Christians receive by faith is an ascribed honor, bestowed by a superior God, and not in any way merited or achieved. The only one doing any achievement is Jesus. Jesus restores the glory of people with both ascribed and achieved shame. He restored their place in the worshipping community, either by healing the sick (eliminating ascribed shame) or by personally accepting notorious sinners (talking and eating with them) despite their achieved shame.[69] When Jesus healed the sick, He was restoring their place in the worshipping community.

Keeping the connection between sin and shame in mind, salvation must solve both the problem of sin and shame in the four ways described above. Table 2 juxtaposes the problem of sin and shame and the solution of salvation. First, Jesus honors God on our behalf.[70] His death also demonstrates that God is honorable in that He is ultimately faithful to His promise.[71] Second, in Christ, God reconciled elect sinners to Himself and adopted them into His family, bestowing enough honor to last eternally and outweigh the previous shame.[72] On this note, it is important to preach the resurrection. No one from the honor-shame culture would believe in a Savior who was only shameful. "The resurrection is God's seal of approval and affirmation that the way Jesus lived and his faithful obedience to the point of death was the truly honorable way."[73] This assures the audience that no one who believes in Him will be put to shame (Rom. 10:11). Third, since the relationship to God is restored, there is no need for His children to feel ashamed anymore. Instead they can feel gratitude and humility. Humility enables believers to endure undeserved or false shame from the worldly community. Finally, with God guaranteeing their honor, believers can say no to sin's enticement of false honor while doing good for the brothers and sisters in Christ and the community.[74] They do not need to belittle others in order to look better.

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[68] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[69] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Touching Shame (The Leper and Jesus' Healings)."
[70] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[71] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[72] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[73] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[74] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""

Table 2.

Problem of Sin and Shame	Salvation
Sin dishonors God and breaks relationship.	Jesus honors God on our behalf and shows that God is honorable, i.e. faithful to His promise.
True shame: Sinners are objectively shameful before God.	God adopts believing sinners into His family, giving them true honor.
Sinners subjectively experience shame.	The reinstatement of honor eliminates cause for feeling shame.
Sin results in shame, which in turn results in chasing after false honor, and more sin.	With true honor, sinners can say no to false honor and do what is truly good.

2.1.2.4. Church and Faith

Speaking of community or church, this is where honor-shame values appear most dramatically different in the theological landscape. As Georges and Baker expressed it: "This new group status is salvation itself,"[75] "Salvation *is* group membership,"[76] referring to the convert's acceptance into church as their new group. From the Epistle to the Romans they explained that the salvation described there "is more about entrance into God's covenant community than entrance into heaven."[77]

Faith is a matter of belonging to the body of Christ, a group membership, caused by allegiance to Jesus Christ, the new patron.[78] "Justification is not simply a declaration of our being not guilty, but our belonging within God's people."[79] Wu emphasizes the importance of the group to one's salvation by stating that "being "in Christ" and "in his covenant people" refer to the same reality but from two different perspectives."[80] The communal perspective helps uncover a new dimension to the phrase "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" – there is no salvation outside the church. Faith is membership in the family of God and repentance a changing of value standards, group identity, a change of alliance from one group to another.[81]

This does not mean that it is the church or its membership that saves instead of God in Christ. It is God who saves, but He does not just save individuals separated from one another, though, but a body of people to be His witnesses. This is the first significance of church: God's witness. Christians must live in a way faithful to their Savior, thereby representing their Savior here

[75] Georges, Chapter 8, Section "Salvation as Group Membership."
[76] Georges, Chapter 8, Section "Salvation as Group Membership."
[77] Georges, Chapter 8, Section "Salvation as Group Membership."
[78] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Repentance and Faith."
[79] Georges, Chapter 5, Section "Bearing Shame and Baring Honor (Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection)."
[80] Wu, Chapter 5, Section "Justification as Achieved and Ascribed Righteousness."
[81] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Repentance and Faith."

on earth. "A person's *pistis* [faith] is a publicly demonstrated commitment to the group and its leader. Such loyalty brings honor to a superior."[82]

The role of witness is not just verbally presenting the gospel, but by functioning like a mother for the believers. Right from the start, even before non-believers become believers and profess their faith, the church is already there for them. "Without neglecting the fact that Christian witness always involves verbally proclaiming the gospel as truth, Majority World peoples may better encounter the gospel of God's salvation as community, not just ideas."[83] This means a personal relationship with other believers, not just data transfer, is required.

In more individualistic societies, new convert's experience would usually happen in this order: evangelism, discipleship, and community.[84] An unbeliever hears the Gospel, is taught and mentored, and after a firm, individual decision to follow Christ, joins a church. In communal societies the order is the exact reverse: community, discipleship, and evangelism.[85] "Group-oriented people view conversion as transferring loyalty and identity to a new group, so they must experience the group before choosing to join it. So participation in the body of Christ is the first step in the evangelistic process. As people associate with believers (community) their lives begin to change (discipleship), and then they come to publicly profess Jesus as Lord (evangelism)."[86] Accepting Jesus' followers means accepting Jesus; rejecting them means rejecting Jesus (cf. Matthew 10:40).

The church also serves as a source of honor in the crooked world, an alternate court of reputation aligned with God's standards. Without the church as the substitute community, no believer can stand the intentional shaming from the worldly community they encounter every day. The reason many people reject Christianity is not the problem they have with Christian theological ideas, but "social and cultural forces that disgrace one's family."[87] "While ultimate honor comes from God, participation in God's family on earth is where honor is remade, affirmed and expressed. The church functions as a surrogate family whose gracious welcome frees people to unmask their shame."[88]

> "Conversion involves changing allegiances, abandoning the agenda of one group for another, turning from the honor code of one group for that of another. . . . The call to repentance summons people to desist from the cultural game of exalting their own name and instead to come live under God's name. Repentance is not so much a change of ideology from one set of beliefs to another, but a change of

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[82] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Repentance and Faith."
[83] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Examples of Community Encounter."
[84] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""
[85] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""
[86] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""
[87] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""
[88] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Approach of "Community Encounter.""

alliance from one group to another. Jesus' command to repent could be paraphrased as "Stop trying to accrue honor through that group, and join my group to obtain the glory of God's kingdom!"'[89]

The convert must align to the new group's code of conduct, so moral change is an important and public, not private, element.[90] The body of Christ should be visibly recognizable by their way of life. Since behavior is a crucial element in one's faith, it is tempting to assume that the common problem of Christians in honor-shame culture is works-righteousness; attempts to attain salvation by good works.[91] The danger is more subtle than that. "[A] more common form of false righteousness in honor-shame contexts is "group righteousness" – a claim to superiority over other peoples because of one's group identity."[92] This is chasing after false honor. One cannot tell from the outside whether the obedience to the church's expectation is done out of gratitude to God or to attain honor for them and the church. But the group code can be verified according to God's Word.

2.2. Doubt-Handling in Indonesia

To learn how the honor-shame communal dynamics influences the problem of doubt, an Indonesian church will be studied, called Gereja Reformed Injili Indonesia (GRII) or Indonesian Reformed Evangelical Church.[93] It was founded in 1989 by Rev. Stephen Tong, an Indonesian citizen with Chinese ancestry, something he shares in common with many members of GRII.

Two kinds of sources are used here. The first one is written sources such as published sermons, and the second one interviews with several members of GRII to flesh out the previous description.

2.2.1. Written Sources

First two views on doubt will be compared, one from a sermon and the other from a devotion, and then a summary of Rev. Tong's practical advice on suffering and doubt will be presented.[94]

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[89] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Repentance and Faith."
[90] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "Repentance and Faith."
[91] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Dynamics of Conversion."
[92] Georges, Chapter 9, Section "The Dynamics of Conversion."
[93] "Evangelical" here does not mean Protestant, but that this church takes the task of evangelizing seriously so that mission is part of the church's identity.
[94] In Indonesia sermons might be considered weightier than catechism, depending on how much honor the speaker holds in the eye of the congregation. The seminar is especially authoritative, coming from the founder himself.

2.2.1.1. Study of John the Baptist

The Bible passage chosen as point of comparison is the story of John the Baptist in prison sending his disciples to ask whether Jesus is the Messiah. The contrast lies therein that one sermon calls it as doubt, and another one openly denies that it is doubt.

The first is a sermon by Rev. Hendry Ongkowidjojo, preached on July 19, 2009, titled "Yohanes Pembaptis Meragukan Yesus" (John the Baptist Doubted Jesus), based on Luke 7:18-23.[95] The second one is a daily devotion published by Rev. Jimmy Pardede, titled "Yesus dan Yohanes Pembaptis" (Jesus and John the Baptist) based on Matthew 11:1-19.[96]

In Ongkowidjojo's sermon the congregation was invited to think about the question who Jesus is. The audience might think they knew it already but the author of the Gospel presents Jesus as a figure in the center of many arguments and controversies. John the Baptist was certainly loyal to Jesus. Even while in the womb, he reacted to Jesus' presence, who was also still in the womb. John the Baptist certainly knew all the saving deeds of Jesus. But after his imprisonment he asked who Jesus was. He doubted Jesus because his expectation of Jesus was disappointed.

What was John's expectation? Luke 3:9 hinted at the swift, just dealing of punishment to the wicked, and related to that is the restoration of Israel and even the world. To John, Jesus was hardly making any ripple in the ocean of history, babysitting some disciples slow to understanding, moving from one village to another. The expectation of John the Baptist was sound, for he believed Jesus to be the Savior of a cosmic scale. But this was only the first coming of Jesus. The world will not yet be restored until the second coming. Two lessons from the sermon: We must not abandon the little things God has entrusted to us, and before the Lord returns, we must not be easily disappointed.

In Pardede's devotion the readers are taught that John's questions do *not* mean John was doubting Jesus. What John really was doing was voicing his disappointment as to why he was left in prison. Jesus' answer to him was an adaptation of Isaiah 61:1, in which the liberation of prisoners was left out and substituted by the resurrection of the dead, a much more potent sign of Jesus' messiahship. The lesson to be learned here is to accept the way God chooses to reveal Himself, even if it disappoints our expectations. John the Baptist is greater than the prophets in the Old Testament because he points directly to Jesus. Israel rejected John the Baptist, and Israel rejected the true Messiah as well. Let us not ask for signs according to our wish, but believe the signs God has given us that Jesus is the Messiah.

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[95] Hendry Ongkowidjojo, http://www.grii-andhika.org/ringkasan_kotbah/2009/20090719.htm (accessed 27 July 2021). In 2009 he was a pastor in GRII in Surabaya, Indonesia.

[96] Jimmy Pardede, Devotion Day 233, https://pemuda.stemi.id/reforming_heart/yesus-dan-yohanes-pembaptis. (accessed July 27, 2021). He is a pastor of GRII in Bandung, Indonesia.

2.2.1.1.1. Analysis:

Both sermon and devotion went along similar lines that John was a good servant of the Lord. Both sources also portrayed him in a moment of weakness caused by his unjust imprisonment, leading to his questioning Jesus. Interestingly, while Ongkowidjojo's sermon called what John did as doubt, Pardede's devotion denied it. Not only did Pardede abstain from calling it doubt, but it asserted that this was *not* a case of doubt. "John was merely voicing his disappointment as to why he was left in prison," meant John was not sure about Jesus; either Jesus couldn't have helped him because He was not the Messiah (doubt about Jesus' identity) or Jesus was the Messiah who was perfectly able to help him but didn't want to (doubt about Jesus' faithfulness to His people). Basically Pardede described what John was doing as essentially doubting, turned around and explicitly called it "not doubting." How do honor-shame values explain this phenomenon?

I believe on the one hand Pardede wanted to teach the readers a lesson from John's example, but on the other hand he felt obliged to save John's face or honor. Instead of stating directly that John did something so shameful as doubting, he warned the audience not to do what John did while trying to protect John's reputation.

There is the possibility that Pardede was trying to convey that John did doubt but in a less straightforward way. Indirect communication allows describing bad actions in a more round-about way to protect the subject's honor than a straightforward statement of "What X did is wrong." There is also another possibility that Pardede was telling the story hagiographically; that the heroes of the Bible were saints and John as one of them could not possibly have done something as shameful as doubting Jesus. This is the conclusion to which I personally am more inclined, since this way of story-telling goes hand-in-hand with an overemphasis of external behavior.

Whether Pardede's readers concluded John doubted, certainly the message that came across is that doubting is shameful, that it does not suit the definition of Christians, or at least, this particular church's definition of Christians, a warning that "We don't do that kind of thing here."

2.2.1.2. Study of Job

The last source of this section analyzes the content of a seminar "Iman, Penderitaan, dan Hak Asasi Manusia," (Faith, Suffering, and Human Rights) delivered as a speech by Rev. Stephen Tong. It was later published as part of a book series consisting of 5 volumes.[97]

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[97] Stephen Tong, "Iman, Penderitaan, dan Hak Asasi Manusia" in *Hati yang Terbakar: Pelayan yang Mencetuskan Gerakan Reformed Injili dalam Masa Kini*, volume 2., ed. The Boen Giok, Irwan Tjulianto, and Franklin Noya, 353-448. Surabaya: Momentum, 2007.

Summary of the speech:

The doubt addressed here is the questioning of the existence and the goodness of God in suffering. Someone in suffering feels isolated and is strongly tempted to make demands of God that He should pay attention to them right away.[98] Suffering is not always caused by sin; innocent people like Job suffer – here the option of doubting God, of saying that God does not exist or does not care for us becomes very tempting.[99]

Job was exemplary in several aspects.[100] He fought against the wrong belief that only the guilty suffer. Also, he did not turn into an atheist saying, "God does not exist." Instead, Job praised God in his suffering. He regarded himself as someone without understanding, and still he knew that God could not possibly be anything else but good to him. As conclusion, an obedient person's faith, like Job, is not disturbed by suffering. When Job asked, "Where can I find God?" he was not implying that God does not exist, but expressing his wish to see God to tell him his arguments supporting his innocence. In contrast Job's wife is held up as a warning for her advice to forsake and curse God.[101] Criticizing God will result in loss of strength. What someone in suffering should do is respond properly before God, by talking to one's self with courage and reliance on God, who will not cast them away.

Job responded beautifully by refusing to bring up the matters of human rights and stating men should be willing to receive both the good and the bad from the Lord (Job 2:10). Job affirmed God's basic right instead of demanding his human right. The response was also excellent because Job saw the possibilities of good that will come out of his suffering. "After all these trials, I shall be purified like gold," perhaps an allusion to Job 23:10. To illustrate how our suffering might be turned into blessing, Rev. Tong tells an example of people trying to comfort a grieving widow.[102] The first comforter told her, "Do not worry, you will be all right," and failed. The second was a widow whose husband died murdered. She did not need to say anything, because her presence reminded the grieving widow that her own sorrows are nothing compared to the widow of the murdered man. In that way suffering perfects us as comfort for other sufferers.

Taking an example from his own experience, Rev. Tong told how his father suddenly died when his mother was 33-years-old and he 3. He never complained, "Why is my mom a widow? Why am I an orphan?" but instead asked, "What do you mean with all this, Lord?"[103] His mother spent the first year after her husband's death wandering aimlessly before committing herself and her 8

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[98] Tong, 392-393.
[99] Tong, 394.
[100] Tong, 395.
[101] Tong, 440.
[102] Tong, 400.
[103] Tong, 414.

children to the Lord, the Father of orphans and Protectors of widows. 5 of her sons became pastors. He credited himself being a pastor to his mother's prayers, who returned to God and gained strength to raise her children – one of the greatest mothers in the history of Christendom.[104]

2.2.1.2.1. Analysis:

What we have here is a set of behavioral guidelines for this particular group, the group's code of conduct. People in honor-shame cultures find this kind of talk necessary to avoid shame from failure to comply with the group expectation.

The message to the group was: In the case of suffering, one must not criticize God or complain about God. One must remain strong and steadfast in the hope that in the future they will be able to comfort fellow-sufferers. To illustrate this ideal, two Biblical figures, were held up, namely Job as role model and his wife as a warning. Job was described as loyal and respectful to God while his wife a critic of God. Some passages in the book of Job that could support Job's perfect description were selected as source while others were passed over. This is group code replacing God's Word, and we also find the hagiographical tendency repeated here.

Another role model was the preacher himself, who did not criticize God when he was orphaned but only sought after what God's purpose was. It is taught here that good Christians do not complain, because complaining means questioning or doubting the Lord. The two questions he juxtaposed, "Why is my mom a widow and why am I an orphan?" and "What do you intend with all this, Lord?" are very similar in their content but are interpreted differently. The first one is considered complaining/doubting, while the second one is asking for instruction. The delivery of the question either makes it acceptable or non-acceptable to the group. The group code can be that detailed, and that little detail is all it takes to put someone in the category of honorable or shameful.

I suspect that another honor-shame element is also at play here: group righteousness. "We are better than the other groups" because we do not complain in suffering, and afterwards we will be comforters for other sufferers.

Conclusion of the written sources: The group reinforces the code that doubt is shameful, sometimes with dubious Bible interpretations. The group code that focuses mainly on visible behavior and the presence of hagiographical description shows that the scale is heavily leaning towards the external side of religious practice.

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[104] Tong, 427.

2.2.2. Interviews

Interviews had been conducted with seven members of GRII in Karawaci (near Jakarta) on 16-18 July 2019 by telephone. At that time, two of the interviewees were elders, and the others were active members of the church. Their age ranged from 45 to 65 years. Each interview took 30-60 minutes. In order to maintain their anonymity, the following pseudonyms will be used: Fred and Mary, John and Anne, Rick and Lucy, and Toby (the paired names are married couples). Toby's wife declined the interview because she regarded her faith as not exemplary enough.

The interview questions are:

1. Please tell me about your faith journey. Were you born in a Christian family or did you become a Christian after you were an adult? What things are important for becoming a believer?

2. How would you describe having faith?

3. Have you ever had confusion or doubts about your faith? If you have, how were they resolved?

4. How does faith impact your daily life?

5. Do you find it important to be certain of your salvation? Why or why not?

6. What factors strengthened your faith? What factors weakened your faith?

The answers will be analyzed with Saroglou's adapted schema of believing-belonging-behaving-experiencing.[105] Believing concerns the cognitive content, belonging the social aspect, behaving the ethical practice, and experiencing the emotions.

2.2.2.1. Believing

What is faith? Most of the Indonesians describe it as a relationship with God in which behavior features prominently. It must be noted that behavior predominantly means the visible action and does not include a search (by conversation, for instance) for the reasoning or the motivation behind it. It seems that the Indonesians assume a one-to-one connection between visible behavior and the meaning behind it, which is made possible by the unifying group code.

John and **Mary** pointed out that faith is a dynamic process with ups and downs, with the ups and downs referring to what happened along the journey and their responses. **Mary** stated that through all those ups and downs, God remains true. She made the connection between the internal

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[105] Saroglou, Vassilis. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 42, Issue 8, 2011*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022022111412267 (accessed December 10, 2019).

and the external as following: Faith in the heart cannot be seen, but it shows through one's certainty of salvation and <u>how one lives</u> in relation to God. **John** and **Fred** made the connection between certainty of salvation and behavior even clearer. They believed that believers <u>ascertain their salvation</u> by doing their best to <u>live according to God's way</u>.

Lucy defined trusting God as not being obstinate about what she wants. When she assesses other people's faith, she <u>observes their behavior</u> about various things ranging from church attendance to not gossiping. **Anne** and **Rick** also do the same. **Anne** assessed her faith to be little, <u>based on her personal</u> <u>character</u>, which she described as panicky and easily worried. **Rick** sketched the characteristics of a person with average faith as <u>persevering in simple things</u>, <u>committed to the work ethics</u>, and <u>standing firm</u> in his principles. To him, a great believer can remain <u>joyful in difficulties</u> because of God's promise of better things to come.

Doubt is perceived as negative by every interviewee. Two out of seven interviewees claimed they never doubted. Some regarded certainty of salvation as part of or identical to faith: Toby stated that the Calvinist teaching about salvation eliminates all doubts; Mary equated uncertainty with the state of being not yet converted; and Rick believed that a guarantee in our faith is required and already given, otherwise no one can do anything.

2.2.2.2. Belonging

Besides obedience, the second important element in their first experience of Christianity is the <u>church</u> <u>community</u>. Almost all of the interviewees had Buddhist parents, except for Toby (Lutheran parents) and Rick and Lucy (Roman Catholic parents, who later converted to Protestantism). Lucy followed her parents' conversion, while it was campus ministry that helped Rick commit himself to Christ. The others came to faith through various people: friends, boyfriend, elder sister's fiancé, mom's friend, neighbors, and a Sunday school teacher. They were not family, but very close to the interviewees, and became the subsitutionary community for the unbelieving family.

John received great blessing through an extremely dedicated Sunday school teacher. When John was 10-11 years old, a neighbor invited him to a house church. John's Buddhist parents did not mind him going, but he had not really been dedicated to Christ then. He only went if his Sunday school teacher came to his house and went with him to church. Not only that, John also had found it bothersome to get up early on Sundays, so he would only get up and take a shower (the tropical equivalent of getting dressed) after the teacher arrived at his home. This resulted in both of them showing up late to church for about five years.

When he was 15-16 years old, he started having a serious interest in the Christian faith and grew to be a teen mentor in church today, with immense gratitude for his old teacher. Now John

lives in a different town. He is proud of his still-existing close connection to the people of that old church; they also welcomed his previously Buddhist mother there. For him, leaving church is bad for faith. He maintained his daily Bible reading and morning prayer, but it would take a church program for him to read Christian books. His need for a close relation with other people is also shown in his naming his wife as his number one support.

Like John, Fred and Anne are converts who first joined the church's fellowship before dedicating themselves to Jesus. During elementary school years, **Fred** was invited to a house church by a neighbor who was close to his mother. He felt more at home in the church community rather than in the temple. Later his elder sister's fiancé brought him to Sunday services and gospel rallies. These people were very important to his faith and provided the support he needed. Despite his parents' disapproval, he went on with his baptism in secret.

Over the course of many years Fred would see God's hand through other people. Not all of them were good Christians. He met a man who was part of the church visitation team and offered to lend him money. It was only later that he learned this man was actually a loan shark and Fred could not pay back his fast-growing debt. Then the loan shark got ill and needed regular dialysis, so Fred drove him to the hospital for three months. After the loan shark died, leaving behind a hospitalized widow, Fred visited her because he felt bad about the debt he had not paid back. Unexpectedly, she told him to sell one of her cars and use the money to start a business. That business made great profit, and through it all Fred saw God saving him.

It is interesting to note the honor-shame values at play here. Fred found himself shameful that he could not fulfill the expectation of paying back his debt, so he resorted to driving him and visiting his widow in their illness. Harmony in relationships is the focus.

Anne first went to church with her friends from junior high school. Her parents did not mind to her going to church but they objected to her baptism. She evaded the conflict by keeping her baptism secret to them. But when her grandma died, her family asked her to pray for the deceased in Buddhist fashion. They coaxed her by reminding her that she was her grandma's favorite granddaughter, but she excused herself from the rites and stayed in the car, because she was a Christian. Anne is an example of how the church community became her main court of reputation, replacing the old group of her family.

The influential people for **Mary** were even more diverse. When she became pregnant with her first child, her husband Fred was unemployed, making her the only bread winner of the family. They were so poor they would go to their siblings' homes during dinner time, hoping they would be invited to the meal. (This is an example of indirect communication; the timing of the visit, not a clear

speech, conveyed the plea for help. In case their plea was rejected, the indirect communication would soften the blow and help preserve honor.)

On top of that, the company's policy towards female employers was an immediate termination upon pregnancy. They tried to abort the pregnancy by medicine and over-exercising. But when she went to see a Moslem doctor, he advised against the abortion by quoting a Bible verse about whether a parent would give his child a stone. It is unknown whether he was aware of the origin of the verse or whether he knew she was a Christian. The doctor believed that no parent would fail to feed their child and that a baby can survive on breast milk alone. That reminder of God's Word given by a fellow human being led her to pray, "Lord, since it is You who give us this child, we will keep him/her." She informed her boss about her pregnancy, expecting to be laid off, but he kept her job and even paid for her medical bills.[106] Her pregnancy was kept in secrecy from the others at work. Just in time when her belly couldn't be hidden any longer, her husband's business boomed so they were financially secure. Despite their attempt at abortion, the baby was completely healthy.

This was not the only trial Mary faced in which other people exercised their influences on her. While she was in surgery, the surgeon found she needed a womb removal, to which Fred consented while she was unconscious. She got depressed when she learned about it, believing her relatives that a barren woman is worthless and that she would soon die. She tried to end her life, but her husband stopped her. She was in the hospital for a long time. There a pastor and his wife shared God's Word with her, specifically 1 Corinthians 10:13, explaining that although we do not understand now what God meant, God always only meant good for His people. The pastor's wife visited her every day. Later they started together a Sunday school class in Mary's house, which eventually grew into the church GRII Karawaci. Mary became a Sunday school teacher and Fred an elder there.

Rick equated leaving the church with leaving God, and returning to church with returning to God. Fellowship with God's people is the same thing as fellowship with God. **Toby** also saw the same thing; already when he was a child he would complain to his mother when they missed church.

The order of conversion in general here is community (family or other people), discipleship, and then evangelism (profession of faith). In some ways the larger community exercises influence over their members like parents over their young kids.

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[106] It is only recently that President Joko Widodo introduced health insurance for people from all economic classes.

2.2.2.3. Behaving

The behavior highlighted here revolves around doubt.

Two interviewees, **Fred** and **Toby**, made the strong claim of having never doubted. **Fred** was an especially interesting case. He made the claim of never doubting, but once in a particularly difficult time, he had a breakdown in his car and shouted, "God, what do you want from me?" **John** admitted to doubts whether his prayers for the success of a ministry entrusted to him would be answered, and concluded his faith is lacking, but said he never doubted his salvation. The rest spoke of doubts in the past, all already solved, and not a single one mentioned a current struggle. **Lucy** downplayed her doubt as a passing thought, although it was solved over a window of time in which she read theological books and attended Bible studies.

This behavior is consistent with their believing that doubt is always negative. I believe it was not easy for them to even admit to past and solved doubts.

How is doubt solved? Mostly by a combination of God's Word and people with some connection to the Word. But none of them ever mentioned specifically seeking out other believers to confide in about their doubt.

Mary's struggle to obey the Lord in the matter of giving birth to her child and finding the will to live was related to two specific Bible verses that were presented to her by someone else, in contrast to reading them on her own in the Bible. She did not actively seek out someone to solve the problem of doubt. She looked for medical advice from the doctor, and it was not her, but her husband, **Fred**, who requested for the pastor and his wife to minister to her. In her husband's own words, he saw that it is God Himself who provided all the solutions to his problem coming using the people around him, the loanshark included.

Anne had to care for her disabled parents and in-law in addition to her husband and three children. Her doubt came from anxiety whether she could do her duty and from other people's criticism (about her cooking, for instance), but she experienced that God sent people to help her, including a caretaker after her mom fell. A friend from a fellowship for Christian families (not the chuch GRII) said she had become a blessing for other burdened women and it encouraged her. In the same fellowship she benefited from someone else's shared experience of showing the family all the efforts needed to feed them. The verse she most often went to is Matthew 6:32, and in a particularly difficult time she read the Psalm about God not leaving His righteous people.

Lucy was helped by reading theological books and Bible studies at church. Friends played an important role in her attending those Bible studies.

Rick left the church (the equivalent of leaving God) because he was disappointed with God when he did not get his dream job. He wanted something extraordinary to happen for him to return to God. Somehow he returned even if he was not certain why or how.

2.2.2.4. Experience

In general the deep emotions revolved around personal relationships, with God or other people, and more specifically around expectations. They had expectations of other people and of God, and vice versa. When others exceeded their expectations, the interviewees were immensely grateful. They also felt good when they fulfilled or exceeded other people's expectations of them. When their expectations were disappointed, they reacted strongly. When they did not fulfil others' expectations of them, they were very grateful if the other party (usually God) still showed them kindness.

The following is a description how the interviewees' experience is related to expectations.

Rick was disappointed in and left God when he did not get his dream job. He might want something extraordinary to happen to him to show that God cares for him, since letting down one's expectation is sign of a sour relationship. He did not get something unusual, yet God brought him back, and he was amazed because it exceeded what he had in mind.

Mary's surprise at God's help in her pregnancy came from her realization of her failure to fulfill God's expectation of obedience and not aborting the child. Later, she hated her husband for consenting to the removal of her womb because she expected him to protect her from being worthless. Since the people around her found her worthless, she saw the same thing and tried to kill herself.

John was grateful for his Sunday school teacher's persistence despite him not doing the bare minimum to show his appreciation. He was embarrassed of his uncertain prayers and of his exhaustion in the ministry, thinking he did not reach what God expected. He was also worried about the people's expectation in church. To his relief, God did not let him down in his ministry.

Anne worried a lot because she believes God expects her to be a witness to her parents and in-law by caring for them. She felt relieved when people thought she did it well. On the other hand, when her expectation of spending time together with her eldest son was disappointed because he was very busy, she broke out in tears.

Lucy was disappointed to see a Christian friend start a romantic relationship with a non-Christian. She expected more of someone who had been active in the ministry, close to the church community, and worked under a fellow church member.

Fred was amazed that he did not blame God for his wrongful arrest after he got baptized in secret. When he had a breakdown in his car, he was anxious to show that he trusts God and therefore claimed that he was not doubting at that time.

2.2.2.5. Findings

We have seen in **believing** how the interviewees judge their and other people's faith mostly, if not only, by their external behavior. For some interviewees certainty is equal to faith and is ascertained by obedience. Doubt is always perceived negatively.

In **belonging** the meaning of community is front and center. The influence of other people weighed greatly on the interviewees' decision in faith and other life areas. Disobedience to parents or older family members, like getting baptized against their approval, is done in secret and with the support of the new community of faith. The order for new converts is community, discipleship and profession of faith.

The **behavior** about doubt is consistent with the finding in **belief**. All the interviewees came from the same church and would be familiar with the group expectation of not doubting God (§ 2.2.1.2.). Interestingly, despite the close ties between community members established in **belonging**, hardly anyone spoke of their doubts to someone else. The interviewees did not reach out to other members of the community in doubt, most likely because they are worried about other people's opinion or gossip.

Finally, in **experience**, the emotional ups and downs of the interviewees revolved around personal relationship and expectations. Those relationships and expectations are both vertical (with God) and horizontal (with fellowmen). Achieving other people's expectations had great weight in determining the well-being of personal relationships which also serves as the sign of someone's status in the community.

2.3. Conclusion

In honor-shame culture, honor is more important than life or physical well-being. The community dispenses honor and shame according to its group code, which regulates external behavior by shaming those who do not comply. This shaming is very effective because shame is feared more than the plague, and most members will actively participate in it by being the ever watchful eyes of the community or the ever gossiping mouth. This active participation may be driven by zeal for the group's collective honor, or by the competition between individuals in the same group. Honor is considered a limited resource, and one's loss of honor is the other's gain.

In the case of GRII, the group code also mostly concerns external behavior and dictates that doubt is shameful. The interviewees also view faith as mostly a behavioural issues tied to the expectations of God and most often are intermediated by the church community's expectations. Faith is a relationship between God and man, but this relationship is colored by the expectations from both sides (or what the believer thinks are said expectations). Despite the closeness in which members live out their life with one another, no one really tried to talk about their doubt with someone else.

3. A Study on Doubt in the Netherlands

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes the thoughts of Herman Bavinck, a Dutch secessionist theologian and pastor (1854-1921), especially *Reformed Dogmatics* book I. A motive in his thoughts, called the holistic principle, will be discussed here, so that a dialog between the Indonesian and this point of view can follow in chapter 4. The second part presents the analysis of interviews with Dutch Christians living today, which will be compared with the Indonesian interviews in chapter 4.

3.1. The Holistic Principle of Herman Bavinck

Herman Bavinck was a Dutch Reformed theologian along the theological line of Augustine and Calvin, who knew of globalism and pluralism of his time. He was a profound and comprehensive thinker able to express his ideas clearly and a careful student of beliefs differing from his own conviction.[107] He moved in a large circle as "a pioneer in psychology, a pedagogical reformer, a champion for girls' education and advocate of women's voting rights, a parliamentarian, and a journalist."[108] A certain motive in Bavinck's teachings, "unity in diversity," or as this thesis will refer to it, "the holistic principle" will be used to hold a conversation with the Indonesian perspective.

This principle can be seen in Bavinck's description of the Christian worldview in his *Prolegomena*:

> "According to this theistic worldview, there is a multiplicity of substances, forces, materials, and laws. It does not strive to erase the distinction between God and the world, between spirit (mind) and matter, between psychological and physical, ethical and religious phenomena. It seeks rather to discover the harmony that holds all things together and unites them and that is the consequence of the creative thought of God. Not identity or uniformity but unity in diversity is what it aims at."[109]

Reality exists in a pluralism of substances etc. by virtue of God's creative thought, and it exists in a harmonious unity. For the purpose of this research, the holistic principle is important because it also applies to the understanding of faith. Faith exists on God as its number one foundation, who provides His Word as the external foundation and the regeneration work of the Spirit as the internal foundation. Faith itself is the organic connection between knowledge and trust. The balance of the two sides is important that Bavinck cautioned against going to one extreme.[110]

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[107] James Eglinton, "Everybody Loves Bavinck," http://christianitytoday.com (accessed February 17, 2022).
[108] James Eglinton, *Bavinck: A Critical Biography* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), xvii.
[109] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 1,* trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 368. In the subsequent footnotes this volume will be abbreviated as RD I.
[110] RD I, 345.

The next sections will discuss the two foundations of faith with focus on this organic unity (§ 3.1.1.), then faith itself with the same focus (§ 3.1.2.), and finally what happens when the true foundations get replaced by something else (§ 3.1.3.).

3.1.1. The Foundations of Faith

The holistic principle helsp explain the foundations or fundamental principles (*principia*) of faith.[111] First of all, God is the ultimate foundation of faith, the principle of existence of religion and theology.[112] The foundation of faith has external and internal sides to it: as external foundation, the special revelation of God in Christ provides believers with knowledge, while as internal foundation, the Holy Spirit's enabling them to believe that revealed knowledge, or in short, regeneration in the broad sense of the whole order of salvation.[113]

Special revelation is external and objective, while the work of the Holy Spirit is internal and subjective.[114] Objective means the Word exists outside human beings as an independent entity apart from the humans' reaction to it. It does not only exist in someone's mind. However, this objective existence does not mean that every human being that encounters it will come to the one same conclusion. Why? Because only those transformed by the Holy Spirit can understand God's revelation for what it is. To result in faith, the external foundation cannot stand alone.

Subjective means the work of the Holy Spirit is done internally in a subject/person in continuity with that person's own life experiences. It does not mean that the believer's decision happened randomly or without any connection to a cause in the real world. The objective revelation in God's Word vouchsafes that. We do not know of all the ways God grants His salvation, for instance, to the elect that die in the womb, but generally God uses the external foundation to work together with the Spirit's work of regeneration.

The external and the internal foundation may be distinguished from each other, but must never be separated that one is left without the other. This is the significance of the holistic principle, and it will be useful as a partner in conversation for the Indonesian perspective.

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[111] RD I, 207. "By **principia** in general is usually meant the basic cause and ground of reality as well as the means by which we come to know them."

[112] RD I, 506.

[113] RD I, 506, 587. The regeneration meant here is in RD IV, 76, "regeneration included the total renewal of a person as the renewal was brought about by and out of faith and coincided with repentance)," also not in the narrow sense of just the beginning of one's experience of salvation.

[114] RD I, 594.

3.1.1.1. The External Foundation: Word

The special revelation of God in Christ provides knowledge, a constituent of faith. By virtue of its organic connection to the work of the Holy Spirit, it bears special characteristics differentiating it from other kinds of knowledge, and despite all the differences, remains valid knowledge.

The first difference: the content of this knowledge is not merely God's words and deeds, but his grace in Christ.[115] This puts the Reformation on a different standing from the Roman Catholics with their so-called historical faith, in which faith is primarily understood as intellectual assent.[116] The Reformed on the other hand holds the distinction between historical faith and saving faith. Historical faith may be of great value, it may precede saving faith, but it is not identical to saving faith.

What matters the most is not how vast or how sophisticated one's doctrinal knowledge is or that the Scripture says whosoever believes in Christ will be saved, but whether through that knowledge the believer holds the gospel promise as true. The most important thing is knowing Christ in the sense of having a trusting and loving personal relationship. This does not arise automatically whenever the natural, unspiritual man encounters God's revelation. Faith is not just a matter of knowledge and truth,[117] but is above all "trust and surrender to God, a religious relationship between a human being and God."[118] As example, the Jews in Christ's time knew of him, but not all of them believed in him, i.e. they did not know him as God and Savior. Believing God's grace in Christ requires knowledge of God's words and deeds, but knowing God's words and deeds is by no means all there is to believing God's grace. Here is where the regeneration by the Spirit must transform the sinner so he/she sees Christ as Lord and Savior through the Word. The combination of the Word and the regneration results in faith, which for the Reformation "was an activity of the newly born-again person and therefore also sufficient for salvation."[119]

Second, while there are other ways of acquiring knowledge, the knowledge of faith reaches us through the witness of others; the apostles and prophets in one sense, and Scripture in another sense.[120] "Faith, including genuine, saving faith, therefore always involves knowledge. Not an immediate, direct knowledge, not a knowing from face to face, not seeing. Not a knowledge gained through personal investigation, argument and proof, through observation and experiment. But a

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[115] RD I, Chapter 5, Section "Two Kinds of Faith."
[116] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume,* ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 128. This title will be abbreviated as RD Abridged.
[117] RD I, 569.
[118] RD Abridged, 127.
[119] RD Abridged, 129.
[120] Herman Bavinck, *Certainty of Faith*, trans. Harry der Nederlanden (Ontario: Paideia Press, 1980), 71. In the subsequent footnote it will be abbreviated as *Certainty.*

knowledge gained from a reliable witness."[121] These witnesses, the apostles and the Scriptures, and one's personal circumstances may include Christian parents, church tradition, and the Christian community, all have been led by the same Spirit.[122] The Holy Spirit has been working since the beginning in preparing witnesses for the truth of Scripture. And the Spirit also transforms the heart of believers to recognize this witness to be true.

"Faith in the religious sense, moreover, is distinguished from immediate certainty by the fact that the latter is based on one's own insight whereas the former is rooted in the insight of others."[123] This insight of others safeguards believers from the charge of fideism.

3.1.1.2. Internal Foundation: Spirit

"The Holy Spirit is the great and powerful witness to Christ, objectively in Scripture, subjectively in the very hearts of human beings."[124] Some Reformed theologians hold that regeneration would be possible without the external calling of the Word, but the Holy Spirit freely binds his workings to the Word in a special way.[125]

Without the witness of Holy Spirit, believers would have to choose between believing on the ground of external things (like church or Scripture) or in some internal grace within the human subject.[126] If we say the first, then there would be a need for some external proofs. But there is no external proof that can convince on its own. It will need another proof, which also needs some justification from yet another proof, and so on and so on *ad infinitum*. On the other hand, if the recognition of revelation were immediate, then this immediate recognition must be another revelation on par with Scripture or the church. It does not require faith and belongs to the afterlife, not to the present where we walk by faith, not by sight.

Bavinck quoted John Calvin, "Scripture acquires certainty as God's own Word with us by the testimony of the Holy Spirit."[127] It takes both the Scripture and the Spirit to produce faith. Proofs are great help, but they are not the ultimate arbiter of revelation. It is the Spirit that convinces us in our hearts internally that the external revelation in Scripture comes from God. It is not some genius inspiration, high intellect, impeccable ethics or spectacular experience that convinces us, but the Spirit. The Scripture tells us that we are sinners. Sin is not mere ignorance that can be fixed with some enlightenment, but an appalling power responsible for all guilt and stain, all errors of the

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[121] *Certainty*, 71.
[122] *Certainty*, 71, 74 and 26-27.
[123] RD I, 569.
[124] RD I, 506.
[125] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 4,* trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 76ff. In the subsequent footnotes this volume will be abbreviated as RD IV.
[126] RD I, 581.
[127] RD I, 583.

intellect and the impurity of the heart, death of soul and body, not just for the individual but to the family and its generations, people and society, humanity and the world.[128]

It is the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that regenerates and gifts faith. How do we know this? The answer would be the recognization that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God. How do we know this? The answer would circle back to the Holy Spirit. Anticipating the charge of circularity, that a believer arbitrarily decides he/she wants to believe,[129] Bavinck has some answers.

First of all, although believers cannot give a cause beyond faith's recognition of divine authority in Scripture by the Spirit, it does not mean we are on less solid grounds than unbelievers. "Unbelief, too, is rooted, not in proofs and arguments, but in the heart."[130] Unbelief either needs external proofs (which in turn need justification by more proofs) or is an immediate, personal conviction, which cannot be explained or debated either.

Second, the belief in Scripture as the Word of God may not be universally human, but it is universally Christian.[131] Despite the differences found among believers about everything else (and those are a lot!), the agreement that Scripture is where God has spoken is overwhelming, and this recognition is a gift of grace. "What really causes us to believe is not the insight of our intellect, nor a decision of our will, but a power that is superior to us, bends our will, illumines our mind, and without compulsion still effectively takes our thoughts and reflections captive to the obedience of Christ [2 Cor. 10:5]."[132] Faith is neither the conclusion of a syllogism nor a decision of the will.[133] "People cannot believe when they please; the will cannot order the consciousness to accept something as truth when that consciousness itself does not in any way grasp that truth."[134]

And finally, there is much resistance to this faith – not just from outside! – but from inside the believers themselves.[135] "Faith . . . is a continual struggle."[136] This struggle is, however, a confirmation of faith. It does not automatically arise from the natural inclination of the human will nor of the intellect, precisely because it is effected by the working of the divine Spirit.

Here the holistic principle reminds us that the subjective witness of the Holy Spirit must always be united to the objective revelation of Christ. "The illumination of the Holy Spirit is *not* the cognitive *source* of Christian truth."[137]

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[128] RD I, 595.
[129] RD I, 590.
[130] RD I, 590.
[131] RD I, 591.
[132] RD I, 591.
[133] RD I, 592.
[134] RD I, 592.
[135] RD I, 592.
[136] RD I, 592.
[137] RD I, 594.

3.1.2. Faith as Knowledge and Trust

Bavinck describes faith as an organic interconnection between knowledge and trust.[138] "From the very beginning this faith included two elements: (1) acceptance of the apostolic message concerning the Christ and (2) personal trust in that Christ as now living in heaven and mighty to forgive sins and to bestow complete salvation."[139] The main part of (1) is knowledge and (2) is trust and again we find the holistic principle helpful.

Bavinck was not satisfied with the way Heidelberg Catechism described the connection between knowledge and trust as a mere juxtaposition.[140] A juxtaposition is no organic unity. An organic unity is similar to a connection of a whole organism. An organism is more than the sum total of its parts. Each part is only truly itself when connected to the rest. Faith is not just holding a number of beliefs as true, but a vastly complex phenomenon rooted in two faculties, the intellect and the will.[141] "Believing is indeed an act of the intellect, but it presupposes a bending of the will by grace; the intellect must be disposed toward faith by the will."[142]

This holism is also found in John Calvin's definition of faith: "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us."[143] It does not mean that faith is just knowledge here. The object of that knowledge is God's grace in Christ; it is not just agreeing with theological statements but a trusting in God's goodness. Calvin also declares that faith is "both revealed to our minds and *sealed upon our hearts* through the Holy Spirit."[144] It is no mere proposition going through the head, but a conviction impressed in the soul.

Why is this organic unity important? Take away either one of knowledge and trust, and what's left resembles nothing like faith.

3.1.2.1. Knowledge

Without any knowledge faith is inconceivable.[145] There can be no belief without the slightest amount of knowledge. In the Bible, believing unto salvation is often called knowing.[146] "Knowledge . . . is not an accidental and externally added component of salvation but integral to it."[147] Faith is a

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[138] RD IV, 130.
[139] RD IV, 106.
[140] RD IV, 112.
[141] RD IV, 129.
[142] RD I, 579.
[143] RD IV, 111.
[144] RD IV, 111.
[145] RD IV, 111; John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion Volumes 1-4* (Albany: AGES Software, 1996), III.ii.2-5
[146] RD I, 128. John 6:69; 7:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:6; etc.
[147] RD IV, 103.

great term because it retains the link to knowledge in other areas.[148] It shows that faith is not only supernatural (in the sense that it takes the supernatural work of the Spirit to bring about faith, not in the sense that it is a superadded gift as in the Roman Catholic notion of *donum superadditum*), but that it is "completely natural, normal, and human."[149]

"In all areas of life we start by believing."[150] Despite some usage of the word "belief" as something less certain than knowledge, believing more often means a stronger certainty based not on proofs, but on immediate and direct insight. The area covered by the latter, like ties of family, friendship and love, is far bigger than that of demonstrable certainty.[151] Augustine teaches, "Unless you have believed you will not understand."[152]

This brings us to the second reason, "[R]evelation of God can become knowledge only through the conscious mind."[153] The term "faith" highlights the importance of reason as a receiving organ for revelation and does not allow religion to be reduced into complete mysticism.

3.1.2.2. Trust

Knowledge is not all there is to faith. Faith must trust in the known object.

In contrast, in Roman Catholicism knowledge or assent to theological dogmas equals faith.[154] The Reformation calls it historical faith and differentiates it from from saving faith. Roman Catholics deem this historical faith not enough for salvation and must be completed with love.[155] This takes away the center stage position from faith in salvation. Another problem arises from the oversimplification of faith into knowledge in the existence of mysteries, things believers cannot know or comprehend. Roman Catholic church commends believers for their "sacrifice of the intellect," an acceptance of the incomprehensible.[156]

Bavinck presents three types of connection between saving faith and historical faith in a context anyone can observe.[157] Some children of believers trust in the Lord from a young age. In their case, historical faith and saving faith coincide. Others are well-versed in Scripture but do not arrive at saving faith until when they are adults, or never do. In this case, historical faith precedes saving faith, or remains alone. Then there are converts who come to trust in Jesus and then study

[148] RD I, 565.
[149] RD I, 566.
[150] RD I, 566.
[151] RD I, 567.
[152] RD I, 567.
[153] RD I, 565.
[154] RD I, 571.
[155] RD I, 572,
[156] RD I, 572.
[157] RD IV, 126.

the Scripture. This is saving faith being in the foreground of historical faith and the latter grows significantly only later.

"[S]aving faith always includes a cognitive component as well. Granted, this knowledge of saving faith is essentially distinct from the knowledge of historical faith. Even if the latter precedes the former, it is later grafted anew upon saving faith and changes in character. It is no mere "holding as true" but a firm and certain knowledge in the sense of Holy Scripture; the biblical idea of "knowing" is quite different and much deeper than that implied in ordinary usage."[158]

3.1.2.3. Faith and Certainty

While the Roman Catholics confined certainty only to the objective truths of revelation, the Reformed experienced an assurance of salvation through a saving faith that "is accompanied by its own certainty that rests on the testimony and promises of God himself."[159] The cause of confidence is God Himself, His testimony and promises. It is one thing to agree that the God-man came into the world to save sinners; it is another to believe that *I* am a sinner and that salvation promise is also meant for *me*. The latter is only accomplished by the work of the Spirit in the believers. The Word and the Spirit's work together bring true faith.

For Bavinck certainty is included in faith, but they are not identical. "This faith . . . carries its own certainty with it. Just as in knowing the consciousness of knowing is included, so also faith by its very nature includes complete certainty."[160] In the similar way that we know in daily life that we know, so believing comes with certainty of what we believe, but the certainty is distinguishable from the knowledge.

Bavinck criticized two extreme views of certainty that reduces faith into either knowledge or trust. He criticized antinomianism for equating faith with assurance, denying all the other activities of faith, and reduced faith into the intellectual acceptance of the sentence "Your sins have been forgiven."[161] Here faith is reduced into knowledge, eliminating all need for trust.

He also criticized the stance of nomistic pietism that certainty is a rarity; that faith can only come to certainty after a hard, strenuous self-examination.[162] Here the trust receives an overemphasis, making it imperative for believers to be constantly checking that the trust is good, thereby putting aside the objective promise of the gospel.

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[158] RD I, 570.
[159] RD Abridged, 129.
[160] RD IV, 131.
[161] RD IV, 131.
[162] RD IV, 131.

Believers may have doubt from time to time.[163] The solution is looking, not at ourselves, but away from ourselves to Christ.[164] "[T]hose who embrace the gospel with a true faith are . . . also certain of their own salvation, and vice versa."[165] Certainty comes by looking at Christ proclaimed in the Gospel through trust that is brought about by the regeneration of the Spirit.

3.1.3.   False Autonomies

The question, why people come to faith in Christ, has been offered three answers among many: the intellect, ethics, and experience. Bavinck called these *organs* of knowledge and cautioned against calling them *sources* of knowledge.[166] Organs are recipients of knowledge, just like an eye receives light and the knowledge of objects illuminated by that light. The eye is neither the source of light nor of the objects. Now in the case of natural, unspiritual people, all organs of knowledge are broken that they cannot appropriate revelation until the Spirit comes along and regenerates them.[167]

These three are righful organs to receive faith's knowledge, but they have been mistaken as the foundation or source of faith.[168] "They [the faculties] do not contribute content from within themselves but receive it from without . . . . People therefore evince a lack of psychological and epistemological sophistication when they claim to have arrived at religious knowledge and certainty simply by intellect, reason, heart, and conscience."[169] This mistake will be henceforth known as false autonomy throughout this thesis. John Bolt explains, "Revelation comes to us from without; it seeks our response but does not ask for our approval. Rather, it insists that we believe and obey. Fundamental to all our questions in this area is the matter of authority. Do we accept and authority beyond ourselves and external to us or do we insist on *autonomy*? And if we choose autonomy, do we locate its source in our minds, our hearts, our consciences?"[170]

When the true foundations of faith are taken away and replaced with something else, problems with faith or doubts are sure to follow.

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[163] RD IV, 131.
[164] RD IV, 131.
[165] RD IV, 131.
[166] RD I, 504.
[167] RD I, 505.
[168] RD I, 504.
[169] RD I, 504.
[170] RD Abridged, 112.

3.1.3.1. Reason: The Historical-Apologetic Method and the Speculative Method

To safeguard against mistaking organ as source, we need to answer the following question. What is the difference between perceiving man's faculty of reason as source of the knowledge of faith instead of as organ?

Intellect as organ means we use it to inspect our understanding of the Word of God which we receive by the work of the Spirit, while intellect as source means we inspect revelation with it, the revelation sitting in the dock while the intellect presiding over the court room as the ultimate judge of truth.

How did the false autonomy of reason start? There was in the early church a valid need for apologetics, or defense of faith, to answer questions from non-believers. The main arguments of apologetics is the superiority of Christianity in internal and external criteria over pagan religions.[171] Later the Protestant church proved to be not immune to the mix-up of apologetics as *cause* rather than *fruit* of faith. "Protestant theologians . . . have repeatedly returned to the theory of natural theology and of the historical proofs for the truth of revelation."[172] Even John Calvin said that "he would find it easy to prove the divinity of Holy Scripture."[173] The main problem here is that this kind of proving elevates man's judgment over the Scripture.

Although apologetics may be misused, the importance of valid apologetics remained. Bavinck listed three things.[174] First, apologetics forces the content of Christian theology to come out deliberately and clearly. "Apologetics, after all, was the first Christian science."[175] Second, apologetics shows the support for Christianity in the world; in nature and history, science and art, society and state, and in the heart and conscience of every human being. Only the Christian worldview "fits the reality of the world and of life."[176] Third, even if apologetics cannot convert people, but it can confront opponents with the truth of revelation.[177]

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[171] RD I, 509-510. The internal criteria include "the knowledge of the one true God who has been revealed only in Christianity, the complete redemption from sin and death . . . by Christ, and the hope of eternal life . . . by the resurrection of Christ. Also included are the holy character and life of the prophets and apostles and above all of Christ himself. Finally . . . Holy Scripture." The external criteria consisted of the church, Christian tradition, miracles, the perseverance of the martyrs; the holiness of Christian ascetics, the blessings brought by Christianity by encouraging virtues and discouraging vices.
[172] RD I, 512.
[173] RD I, 512-3.
[174] RD I, 515.
[175] RD I, 515.
[176] RD I, 515.
[177] RD I, 515.

Bavinck was against the misuse of apologetics for the following reasons:[178] First, the false assumptions of apologetics standing outside the Christian faith, either above it as a higher authority, or apart from it as if on neutral ground. Second, the wrong identification of natural theology, exegetical and historical theology, or intellectual proofs as the cause of faith. Third, the misplaced expectation that apologetics can do the regenerating work of the Spirit.

The next development was the speculative method, which relied more on theoretical arguments than external proofs. In the matter of stance, it was an improvement of the apologetic method in that it takes its stance in faith instead of a neutral ground.[179] "They [its theologians] do not base themselves on some sort of authority but on the Christian consciousness of the church and seek proof for the truth of faith, not in an appeal to one authority or another, but in its self-evident inner nature, in its cognitive necessity."[180] It also refuses the rationalistic demand of clarity to make revelation acceptable.[181] However, in terms of authority, speculative philosophy did not fare better than the historical-apologetic method, since "cognitive necessity was proof of truth."[182]

Bavinck's criticism to speculative method: (1) By deducing doctrines from a basic idea, one would only arrive at "a poor set of abstract ideas,"[183] a miserly stand-in for religious content. (2) The extraordinarily strong subjective assurance every religion brings can only be explained by the presence of divine image in humans, not intellectual proofs. "Religion is something very different from science."[184] (3) This method ignores the reality of the religious community and Scripture. It moves "in a tiny circle of intellectual arguments and abstract ideas no one cares about and no soul can live by."[185] Elsewhere Bavinck also states: "The shape of one's thought is often nothing more than the history of his heart,"[186] touching on the illusion of neutrality of man's reason.

3.1.3.2. Experience: The Religious-Empirical Method

What is the difference between man's experience/feeling as source and as organ? If religion is experienced as a real personal relation to the object of worship, there would be feelings following faith and with legitimacy.[187] "Such a personal relation to God cannot but have impact on one's feelings. It does not leave people cold and indifferent but moves them in the depths of their heart. It

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178 RD I, 515.
179 RD I, 520.
180 RD I, 520.
181 RD I, 520.
182 RD I, 522.
183 RD I, 523.
184 RD I, 523.
185 RD I, 524.
186 *Certainty*, 23.
187 RD I, 266.

arouses in them a strong feeling of delight or displeasure and generates a long series of affections: sense of guilt, sorrow, contrition, regret, sadness, joy, trust, peace, rest . . . . The heart is the center of religion."[188] However, it is impossible for the faculty of emotions to judge according to the criterion of truth. It needs reasoning to process God's revelation and reasoning needs the Spirit's regeneration to process it rightly. Therefore emotions cannot produce faith's knowledge, but follow faith.

Historically, as the church tried to make the scientific realm accept Christianity,[189] it seemed Schleiermacher's definition of religion as "feeling for the infinite"[190] that eliminates thinking, acting, metaphysics and morality, would secure the win.[191] Franz Hermann Reinhold von Frank, professor at Erlangen (1827-1894), followed Schleiermacher in making feeling the ultimate judge and declared that specific Christian truth content can be deduced from the personal certainty believers experience by virtue of their regeneration.[192]

Bavinck criticized this method by simple daily observation.[193] We can be certain that an objective reality exists around us and name the grounds of that certainty. But deducing specific truth contents from that certainty is like deducing the reality of specific objects from the certainty or its grounds. "[E]xperience teaches us that no individual believer ever arrived at knowledge and acceptance of the historical facts and truths of Christianity by this method; on the contrary, he or she knows them only from Scripture and accepts them on its authority."[194]

What is commendable about this religious-empirical method is its starting point in the believing subject, which with Frank is specifically the regeneration.[195] Experiences that accompany godliness do find their expressions in the Bible, especially the Psalms, but the fact that the subject experiences emotions alone is no guarantee for truth. It is common for religions to awaken emotions and experiences but these do not include "the right to conclude to the truth of that faith and of its content. . . ."[196] The legitimacy or emotions must be evaluated according to biblical standards such

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[188] RD I, 266.

[189] RD I, 524. "[P]eople entertained the conviction that, by taking its position in religious experience, Christian theology would regain its honorable status in the eyes of secular science." RD I, 540. "Schleiermacher took over Kant's theory of the unknowability of the supernatural and his dichotomy of religion and science but sought for religion a safe refuge in feeling."

[190] RD I, 265.

[191] RD I, 524. As for the obligation of arguing the truth of Christianity, Schleiermacher considered himself free from it.

[192] RD I, 528.

[193] RD I, 527.

[194] RD I, 535.

[195] RD I, 525-526.

[196] *Certainty*, 71.

as:[197] (1) They belong to a religious-ethical category, not epistemological. (2) They follow God's Word. (3) They follow faith instead of producing it. (4) They need God's Word to correct them.

Bavinck's criticism for the religious-ethical method:

First, religious-ethical feelings like guilt, repentance, forgiveness, gratitude, joy, are felt, but what historically happened and made up a religion is not something that can be experienced.[198] We know from Scripture, not from experience, of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. Second, every believing theologian, including Frank, accepts the truth from the Scripture and by divine authority.[199] They start with that truth instead of deducing it from religious experience. Third, following this method would result in no Christianity.[200] "Religious experience is such a subjective and individualistic principle that it opens the door to all sorts of arbitrariness in religion and actually enthrones anarchism: religion as a private thing."[201]

3.1.3.3. Morality: The Ethical-Psychological Method

The ethical-psychological method inclines toward ethical self-assertion.[202] Here Christianity is regarded not as "a doctrine that can be demonstrated or a historical fact that can be proven but a religious-ethical power that addresses itself to the human heart and conscience."[203] Only morally well-disposed people experience Christianity as a match for their religious-ethical needs.[204] Not arguments, but this match is the proof that Christianity is divine truth.[205]

It is true that as organ, a good sense of morality in humans perceives the correspondence between Christianity and our moral needs.[206] However, as source for faith's knowledge, morality fares only poorly, since Christianity is never conceived as a ready-made match for a sinner's heart before the Holy Spirit has regenerated him/her.[207] And like emotions, one's sense of morality, however righteous it is, cannot replace the understanding of God's revelation.

Matters were further complicated by a separation between truth and morality. First this line of apology was used by many, including Tertullian and Pascal, without losing sight of the unity between ethics and truth.[208] In the later time, by Kant's influence, this method ignored metaphysics

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[197] RD I, 534.
[198] RD I, 534.
[199] RD I, 534-535.
[200] RD I, 535.
[201] RD I, 535.
[202] RD I, 536.
[203] RD I, 536.
[204] RD I, 536.
[205] RD I, 536.
[206] RD I, 536, 552.
[207] RD I, 552-553.
[208] RD I, 536-538.

and mostly followed a psychological procedure.[209] Kant's purpose was to give religion its own

position, alongside and outside of science, and its own foundation: the moral nature of humanity.[210]

This was achieved by recognizing the existence of moral certainty and its right to exist outside the

realm of science, all by the practical reason's freedom from the regulations of the realm of

theoretical reason, by dividing between "phenomenon" and "noumenon," between knowing and

believing, between theoretical reason and practical reason.[211] Bavinck saw Ritschl following in Kant's

footsteps with some modifications, and found that following Ritschl's line of thought consistently

would result in the restriction of the content of faith to the religious-ethical dimension or value

judgments.[212]

For Bavinck this is equal to letting the head and the heart have their own truths.[213] Religion

and science are distinct but not incompatible. A believer should not accept contradictory truths from

the two realms for a good reason. "Although theoretical and practical reason, human receptivity and

activity, are distinct, human beings are all of a piece and continue to look for a synthesis. In God

there is unity, for humanity and the world both owe their existence to him."[214]

The good thing about this method is not enough to redeem its flaws, but it still deserves to

be mentioned. It avoids reducing religion into doctrine that needs validation by human intellect and

accords a rightful place to the significance between religion and the moral needs of human beings.[215]

"Faith with its grounds has as much validity as science with its proofs."[216] Still it does not justify

separating or banishing truth from the religious realm. "If Christ is not truly God, he cannot for the

Christian have the value of God. And that is true of all the dogmas. Religious evaluation is integrally

bound up with objective truth."[217]

3.2.   Doubt-Handling in the Netherlands

The influence of Bavinck's thoughts described above can be observed in a more practical,

day-to-day context. The following section shortly describes the cultural background of the Dutch

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[209] RD I, 537-538.

[210] RD I, 540.

[211] RD I, 538-540. This system is not free from criticism. At times the dependence on the person's morality often seemed to disappear and be replaced with rational inference that is not influenced by morality. "Belief in freedom, God, and immortality is objective insofar as it is postulated by the practical reason that belongs to all; yet it nevertheless also depends on the moral disposition of the individual person." The inconsistency is obvious: the practical reason belongs to all, regardless of their moral disposition, and at the same time it depends on the individual's moral disposition, but he cannot afford to let go of any of the two.

[212] RD I, 547.

[213] RD I, 556.

[214] RD I, 551.

[215] RD I, 552.

[216] RD I, 556.

[217] RD I, 554.

Christians today, and then three Dutch Christian interviewees will share their views on faith and related issues.

3.2.1. Individualization in the Modern Times

In chapter 2 honor-shame culture was discussed to provide context for the Indonesian Christians. This section will shortly describe the background of the Dutch Christians.

In Bavinck's lifetime modernism had already made its entrance in the history of Western Europe and changed the religious landscape.[218] It is of particular interest for this thesis that it also changed how Dutch people relate to the church as the traditional institution embodying Christianity. There was a quantifiable decline of church membership and attendance.[219] In matters of belief, the authority of Scripture, church and tradition also weakened.[220] The place for religion in the public became more and more marginal.[221]

The decline of the significance of religion is called secularization and it went hand-in-hand with individualization.[222] Anton van Harskamp defined secularization as the adjustment of religion to the secular world and the decline in religion's significance, and individualization as the process of individual development becoming the cultural norm.[223] The main effect of individualization in the religious sphere is the elevation of authentically personal experience.[224] One way of measuring authenticity is the degree of influence of parties or institutions outside the individual exercises on him or her; i.e. the less people are influenced by church the more authentic their experience is.[225] Internal reflection gains more interest while focus on the external diminishes.[226]

These trends have not always been there. Van Harskamp argued that individualization in the times before the 1960s, be it in Augustine, the Reformation, Pietism, Methodism or Evangelicalism, existed as "a confirmation of the central role in religious faith of the individual 'self', but this confirmation went hand in hand with the belief in a universal harmony of all these 'selves' in a God-

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[218] George Harinck, "The Religious Character of Modernism and the Modern Character of Religion: A Case Study of Herman Bavinck's Engagement with Modern Culture." *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 29 No. 1 (Spring 2011): 76-77.

[219] James C. Kennedy, "Recent Dutch Religious History and the Limits of Secularization," in *The Dutch and Their Gods: Secularization and Transformation of Religion in the Netherlands*, ed. E. Sengers, 30.

[220] Kennedy, 30.

[221] Harinck, 76.

[222] Anton van Harskamp, "Simply Astounding: Ongoing Secularization in the Netherlands?" in: *The Dutch and Their Gods: Secularization and Transformation of Religion in the Netherlands Since 1950*, ed. Erik Sengers (Verloren b.v., uitgeverij, 2005), 43.

[223] Van Harskamp, 43, 46.

[224] Van Harskamp, 47.

[225] Van Harskamp, 47.

[226] Van Harskamp, 47.

given order."[227] It was the 1960s that "really brought new dimensions with respect to religious individualization."[228] The belief of universal harmony was gone, the authority of church and tradition also experienced rejection.

Van Harskamp noted three things about the period after the 1960s:[229] First, an increase in the movement towards immanence and away from transcendence could be observed. The individual self replaced the outside world as a sacred place (desacralization). Second, religion is seen as a way towards authenticity. Third, the desire for personally-tailored religion was so great that "the tie of the individual to a shared framework – also the bond to each other that exists in a religious community – would come under pressure."[230]

3.2.2. Interviews Analysis

A set of interview questions had been put to three Dutch theological students, two females (Samantha, Marianne) and one male (Judah). At the time of interview (June 2021) their ages were around 27-32 years. Each interview took approximately 60 minutes and was done through video calls. The survey questions are the same as the ones put to the Indonesians in § 2.2.2. and will also be analyzed with Saroglou's schema.[231] Believing concerns the cognitive content, belonging the social aspect, behaving the ethical practice, and experiencing the emotions.

3.2.2.1. Believing

What faith is: all three interviewees described faith having more than just one side. It is something you choose and at the same time chosen for you; accepting of truth propositions but more than that, faith is experiencing love, joy, the mind of Christ, and connection to God (trusting God and being loyal to him); knowing and trusting; reconciliation (accepting Jesus' work) and sanctification (becoming more like Jesus).

Certainty of salvation is the starting point of the journey of faith, not the end result. All three found certainty important and agreed that uncertainty can paralyze and does not necessarily encourage good works.

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[227] Van Harskamp, 48.
[228] Van Harskamp, 48.
[229] Van Harskamp, 48.
[230] Van Harskamp., 49.
[231] Saroglou, Vassilis. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 42, Issue 8, 2011*. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022022111412267 (accessed December 10, 2019).

What doubt is: There can be different kinds of doubt, like cognitive or existential. The cognitive doubt can start from something small like wondering what a Bible verse means, to doubting whether an event described in the Bible really happened, up to distrust. It is normal to have doubts.

There is also the category of doubt as part of a growing faith as well as doubt as signs that the faith is going through troubles. Doubt is not perceived by the interviewees to always be harmful. Judah introduced the notion of doubt that was related to the personal development: you have heard things taught to you, but you have to go through the process of making them your own, in which they feel less certain than when they were simply lessons you heard. This kind of doubt is part of a healthy process of maturing in faith, and not so much a symptom of sickly faith.

Doubt does not automatically lead to loss of faith. It can actually lead to a stronger faith. Going through doubt can serve the function of throwing away false foundations of faith. For Samantha, going through her rebellion phase where she refused to go to church, made God more real afterwards. For Marianne, her experience of doubt made her kinder and more empathetic to people who doubt or lose their faith.

Despite the positive results mentioned above, doubt always needs careful handling. Judah thinks doubts that last a long time are harmful. In terms of problematic doubt, the interviewees listed some examples, like questioning whether the gospel is true (obstacle for accepting Jesus' work), or shutting yourself off from your connection with God (obstacle for becoming like Jesus). When these questions penetrate through your trust in God or when they corrode your faith, that's when doubt becomes harmful.

For Samantha, being too busy, especially on Sunday, is a factor that weakens the faith. For Marianne, current church practice is something to be doubtful about. It needs examination why we are doing it this way, whether it is the right thing to do.

3.2.2.2. Belonging

The scope of the influential circle of people:

Mostly it's a close circle, like parents or friends. All three found their parents and family very important for their faith journey. All of them had a Christian upbringing and the Bible would be read together every day after meals. Samantha did not remember asking questions or having discussions, but she remembered that before she was 6 or 7 they would read from a children's Bible. Judah remembered that there were opportunities for discussions, but he didn't think he was asking questions. In Marianne's case, discussions were freely done; she could ask questions and share her

opinions. In doubt, Samantha and Marianne talked to their parents, while Judah went for professional help from a pastor and a therapist.

Role of church:

Samantha missed church during the COVID-19 pandemic, but did not see this as a weakening of her faith. She was helped by people helping one another, and not necessarily the church. The other two were more critical to the church. For Marianne, the church played a counter-productive role. She felt connected to God but not the church, which never feels like a place to belong, especially because there were lots of Christians whose walk and talk do not align. Judah recalled a regrettable ongoing hostility between the pastor and the layman leader in his first church. Apart from that, he lamented that the church should be better than just a bunch of people going to the same meeting.

3.2.2.3. Behaving

The behaviors described in this section are especially related to doubt.

When it came to their own doubts, all three had no problem admitting that they had had big doubts in the past, out of which two have been resolved. About doubts in the present, all three admitted to having them. Judah was struggling with a prolonged big doubt, while Samantha and Marianne still had questions. What they would do in doubt could be done on their own, such as thinking about it, looking up books and other relevant sources, or involving other people like praying, talking to parents, psychological therapist, pastors, and other people. The purpose of talking with other people is not to have them solve the doubts but to help put their thoughts in order.

Samantha thought most Dutch people would try to solve doubt on their own. Good sermons would help with doubts if preachers addressed them and not just waltzed over them, which sadly happened sometimes. Marianne and Judah mentioned that people would also ask pastors in private, or ask questions in forums like a Bible study.

In the hypothetical case where they are asked to help with other people's doubts, all three interviewees do not hold themselves responsible for the faith of other people, although they would try to understand by having a conversation with the doubter. Samantha stated that she would not expect other people to solve her doubt, and people coming to her with their doubts also did not expect her to solve it, unless they specifically said it and requested her to. For Marianne, being a Christian involves how one treats other people. But she had been too scared to handle other people's big questions until she realized that no one is responsible for others' faith. Marianne wouldn't simply tell them "Don't doubt," because it conveyed a judgement that the doubter is a failed Christian based solely on his or her current doubt.

3.2.2.4. Experiencing

Here are all sorts of feelings the interviewees experienced and mentioned in their interviews, one interviewee at a time.

During her first university years, **Marianne** experienced "loss of faith" for about 18-24 months because of her unbelieving teachers. It was unpleasant, but afterwards she realized there were some positive results as well. It made her kinder and more empathetic to people in doubt. She also felt more grateful towards her dad for their conversations in her doubt. The doubt experience also made her recognize and shed away the false foundation of her faith, which was mostly intellectual, theological ideas. When she saw other Christians asking questions, even if it was unpleasant for the person currently going through doubt, she found their desire to know God more and more awesome. She was more worried about Christians who never had questions about their faith and did not seem to care at all. But before the realization that no one is responsible for others' faith, she felt scared when people came to her with big questions. Usually parents would feel scared too when their children have doubts, and in turn they scare their children into thinking they are not Christians.

Hope is significant in her experience. Once she attended an informal Christian meeting, and a lay Christian lady shared about her faith. She was enthused by the lady's authenticity and wanted to be like her. Besides hope, experiencing love and joy is an indispensable part of faith.

Judah wanted to feel close to God but he did not always feel it. The big doubts he had were not really solved; they only grew less intense. He experienced sacraments as a solid thing he could always go back to, regardless of his feelings. Regarding certainty of salvation, he thought it very stressful if people thought they had to do good works to attain it. As Christians we know that good works do not contribute, but if one cannot shake away the feeling that you have to do them, it ends in a cognitive dissonance. Some churches actually do not let their congregants be certain about their salvation, something Judah disapproved of. He was also disappointed with a church where a conflict between the pastor and the layman leader went on for a long time.

As a teenager, **Samantha** refused to go to church, felt it was boring, and made her parents unhappy with her decision to leave church. They did not force her, but for some reason she did not know for sure, she wanted to go to church again. She described it as "being grabbed back." Now in the pandemic she was really happy and grateful to see one another again in church after a period of not being able to go to church.

Another event which she described as a scarring, something that weakened her faith, was the death of a little boy in the neighborhood. It shook her trust in God. After praying and thinking and talking about it with her mom, she came to the conclusion that God was there, even though for

a moment she could not feel it, that the brokenness of this world made God sad as well. Another thing that helped her in doubt is studying the Psalms. It helped her realize that other people also go through the same feelings or things, and gave her tools to go through whatever feelings she had.

3.2.2.5. Findings

First of all, the Dutch described their **beliefs** about faith from more than one angle. They described different sides to it, like active and passive (faith is something you choose for you and chosen for you; loyalty to God and acceptance of truth), objective and subjective (knowing and experiencing/trusting), state and process (accepting Jesus' work and becoming more like Jesus). The same thing applies to doubt. Doubt is not seen merely as something negative; there are more angles to it. Doubt can be a sign of troubled faith as well as part of the process of growing up in faith. Distinguishing between different categories of doubt can be profitable. The interviewees found certainty important as the starting point of the faith journey and the motivation to do good works.

The way they perceived faith and doubt has similarities to Bavinck's holistic principle.

Next is **belonging**. The role of Christian parents is highly significant for the interviewees, with one notable aspect is the regular Bible reading. The interviewees could openly come to their parents with their questions or even, in Samantha's case, their decision to leave the church against their will. The church is seen in a more negative light, ranging from not very important to counter-productive (the last one due to the church people's unchristian behavior). The secularization and individualization theory is a possible explanation how the view that external religious things, like church, suffocating and less authentic influences the interviewees' distance to the church.

Third, regarding the interviewees' **behavior** about doubt, none of them had difficulties admitting their doubts. They also witnessed other Dutch Christians asking pastors or Bible study partners about their doubt. Besides asking others, trying to find answers through literature is also a possibility. When other people tell them their doubts, they can respond freely and fearlessly because no one is held responsible for other people's faith.

Another thing about doubt is the way they would approach it. Besides not assuming people's needs, they would try to listen and understand what the doubters have in mind. There is room for people to speak up what is in their heart. They do not feel obliged to solve the doubt or tell the doubters what to do, like "do not doubt." It is also the same when they have doubts and share it with others. Unless the request is expressly stated, they do not expect the conversation partners to solve their doubts, but only be a discussion partner that helps putting their thoughts in order.

The final aspect is **experience**. There is not much in common between all the events that deeply touched the interviewees. Marianne came out of her experience of doubt with a stronger

foundation for her faith and has hopes for Christians who have questions or doubts because they wish to know God more. Besides in the sacrament, Judah had strong convictions in what he thought and felt. The result of Samantha's struggles was a stronger faith in God and a greater appreciation for the church. All three are willing to share their personal opinions to the interviewer. It can be concluded that they have a strong sense as individuals.

Regarding the holistic principle, Marianne's experience in particular can be taken to show the recognition of mere ideas or cognition as a false foundation of faith. Another observation of her assessment of doubt is that she not only sees the external aspect of doubt, but the internal side of it, namely the desire to know God more. She finds it better than someone whose faith seems unproblematic on the surface but internally does not care at all about their faith.

3.3.   Conclusion

The study of Bavinck and the interviews provides a different perspective than the Indonesian. Bavinck's holistic principle is a useful concept to understand the connection between the external and internal foundations of faith, and faith as unity of knowledge and trust. True foundations of faith can be replaced by false autonomies to the effect of problems in faith. The Dutch interviewees give a more detailed description how faith and related issues look in day-to-day experiences.

4. An Intercultural Conversation

A conversation between the Indonesian and Dutch perspectives will be made in the effort to learn insights in two steps: first to define the problem more specifically (§ 4.1.), and finally to suggest solutions to the said problem (§ 4.2.).

4.1. Points of Connection

The question, in which areas a valid conversation can be made between the two cultures, will be given consideration here. The first part (§ 4.1.1.) will compare the interviews, while the second part (§ 4.1.2.) will connect the cultural influence of honor-shame culture on the Indonesian religious communal practice with Bavinck's holistic principle.

4.1.1. Comparison of the Interviews

Believing: The Indonesians made assessment of faith and certainty almost exclusively on external behavior, while the Dutch were more balanced in identifying various sides of faith. Both found certainty important, but stood on opposites when it came to doubt. The Indonesians have an unanimously negative view on doubt while the Dutch do not find all doubts necessarily harmful.

Belonging: The order of conversion in honor-shame culture, community-discipleship-evangelism, shows how important the community is to the converts. In the Dutch society, the same order can be observed in Dutch children born to Christian parents, except that the community is their core family instead of a church. The core family would be the children's first community and teach them the way of Christian discipleship without knowing beforehand whether they would come to profess their faith as adults. The Dutch interviewees have had more encounter with the Bible since a young age than their Indonesian counterparts.

In Indonesia, relationships bring expectations with them. This does not only apply to the closest people like the core family and good friends, but also casual acquaintances. We have seen how Fred took care of the loanshark because he failed fulfilling the expectation of paying back his debt. Parents expect to be obeyed by their children, even in matters of faith. Disobedient children would try to find ways to be as least offensive as possible, for instance by keeping their baptism secret, because disobedience defies the expectation of parents and the community and would result in a rift in the relationship.

The Dutch, on the other hand, do not need to adhere to such expectations in order to keep a maintain a good relationship. For example, Samantha openly decided not to go to church against her parents' will, and also returned to church on her own will, all in amicable terms with her parents.

Behaving: The Dutch were more open about their doubts than the Indonesians, which is in line with their respective beliefs about doubt. All the Dutch interviewees spoke of their past and current doubts; none of the Indonesian did and a couple asserted that they never doubted. With doubt being perceived as shameful to the doubting individual and his/her entire community, Christians in doubt rarely come forward with their questions and look for help from the church community. The main strategy of the Dutch in helping others with doubt is conversing with them.

Experiencing: While personal relations and expectations are at the core of the Indonesians' emotional ups and downs, those are conspicuously absent from the Dutch's emotional life. God holds the central position for both contexts, but their ways of expressing it are very different. The Indonesians are concerned about fulfilling the expectations they assumed others (including God) had of them, as well as their expectations being fulfilled by others. The Dutch are concerned about their relationships to God in the form of what they thought, felt, and experienced as individuals. There was less need for other people's approval.

Conclusion: There is a great difference between the two cultures. What is effective for handling doubt in one place requires adaptations to be effective in the other.

4.1.2. Community as False Autonomy

The Indonesian study found an overemphasis on the external aspect of religious behavior. Honor-shame cultural system relies on public honoring and shaming to steer the members' visible behavior and is not interested in what lies beyond that. In the studied church, GRII, this emphasis on externalities can also be found both in the pastors' teachings and in the interviews of the laymen.

Herman Bavinck's holistic principle has been chosen to be the dialog counterpart of the Indonesian overemphasis on the external. In § 3.1.1. he has laid out the connection between the internal and the external foundation of faith. The two are inseparable, even though distinguishable as God's Word and the Spirit's work of regeneration. The Word alone cannot make any impression in the heart of sinners unless the Spirit regenerates them; the Spirit uses the Word so that humans can have something visible to found their faith on.

But from man's point of view, often something else has been misidentified as the source of faith. In the Dutch context it was man's reason, feeling, or morality. In the Indonesian context it is the community. The result of these misunderstanding, then, is that doubt, defined simply as problem with faith, will follow.

The community is a legitimate organ that helps people to receive faith's knowledge. Man is not God, nor does a gathering of man come close to God, but sanctified man is the image of God restored through Christ. Therefore a community of regenerate people is the representative of the

Almighty God Himself, a priesthood anointed by the Holy Spirit and equipped with the Word as sword. One saint of God needs the other saints of God as mirrors because we all see better the sinful splinters of the brothers than the beams in our own eyes. The community is also proof of God's promise of grace and forgiveness.

Sadly a church community in the Indonesian context can be a false autonomy. In the devotion about John the Baptist (§ 2.2.1.1.) and the interview of Fred (§ 2.2.2.3.) we have seen how the problem of doubt was denied correct identification, because doubt is such a shameful thing. In § 2.2.1.2. we have seen how the book of Job received the cherry-picking treatment in order to present the group expectation of keeping a stiff upper lip during suffering as God's expectation. That group code (no voicing of frustrations, questions or complaints in suffering) presents doubt as shameful. To illustrate how shameful doubt is perceived, for the guilt-innocence culture it can be contextualized by "being a convict" or "committing a crime," which conveys some degree of shame regardless whether the punishment has been paid in full or how much time has passed since. As a result of the group code, the interviewees perceived doubt as wholly negative (§ 2.2.2.1.) and showed reluctance to admit their current doubts with some claiming to never doubting (§ 2.2.2.3.).

The Job preaching was a clear example of how the Bible can be set aside for the sake of the group code. As comparison in the Dutch context (§ 3.2.2.2.), the daily reading of the Bible around the family's dining table and room for discussion about its meaning provides more chance to interact with the Bible and new interpretations.

Believers who look up so much to the community also hide their shameful doubts rather than openly ask for help. This happens when the rightful foundations of faith are set aside. The group code can be found more authoritative than God's Word and the group's shaming considered more powerful than spiritual regeneration.

4.1.2.1.   Doubt and Expectation in the Indonesian Context

First we will define doubt in the Indonesian honor-shame context. It is established that for Indonesians faith is predominantly a relationship, and relationships revolve around expectations (§ 2.2.2.4.). To complicate the matter further, the expectations here are usually assumed or communicated indirectly, and very rarely spoken explicitly. By contrast, in the Dutch context (§ 3.2.2.3.) presumed expectations are not the norm; spoken agreements are. In the Indonesian context problems in a relationship or doubts occur when those expectations are disappointed by whichever party.

This perspective of doubt is closely related to which authority defines the expectations believers have. What breaks or makes those expectations should be God's Word, but in a false

autonomy the group code is considered superior. This false authority creates false expectations in God's people. When the group code replaces God's Word, the false expectations causes problems in faith. We will see this in three cases of the Indonesian interviewees.

In Mary's struggle with abortion (§ 2.2.2.2.), she knew God expected of her to not terminate her child, but not that it was never expected of her to accomplish that obedience on her own; that God would provide all her needs. Her struggle with suicide is more complex. The group identified her as worthless because she was sterile. As part of the group, she took that identification in. Expectations are very much determined by who the parties are. A shameful, worthless person cannot afford to expect anything from those of higher values. First she did not have another choice but to listen to the first group code, but then a different group bearing God's Word showed her another way. The verse 1 Corinthians 10:13 means to her that her not understanding her situation does not mean God thought she was worthless too; that God was still doing her good beyond her current comprehension; that God did not cut her off from their relationship although she thought God was defying her expectation of Him. This alternate group code gave her hope.

In the case of Fred (§ 2.2.2.3.) he believed God expected of him not to complain according to the church's group code. When he couldn't take it anymore he transgressed against the group code, but in his mind the group code represents God's Word without error.

Rick (§ 2.2.2.3.) was very clear about being disappointed in God. He expected God to give him his dream job, and when God failed to do that, he demanded a restitution, something spectacular to show God's interest in restoring that disappointed relationship with him. In the indirect communication of honor-shame culture, people do not apologize directly. Instead they send gifts or something exceeding the usual expectation in that relationship to communicate their restorative intent. The cultural practice in Rick's group sets the framework of expectations Rick applies to his relationship with God.

4.1.2.2. Group Code versus God's Word

We have seen above how abandoning God's Word result in false expectations which in turn result in doubt. There are other less doubt-related, but not less problematic things.

First, the group code advertised as God's Word can be simply wrong without the community member having the least suspicion. In honor-shame culture many converts hear the Gospel through the church community, so in order to be able to differentiate between God's Word and the group code, it is indispensable that believers must grown in their understanding of the Bible and not follow the group's interpretation blindly.

Second, even when the group chooses specific applications of God's Word as their rule of faith, this works only temporarily. A new generation of believers is coming and they will face a different context, for which they will need the principles and not just their applications to guide them through the new challenges.

Third, why is the group code that is so strict, almost ascetic, so attractive? For groups that crave group-righteousness, it proves their superiority over other Christians. Instead of glorifying God, the group glories in false honor.

4.1.2.3.   External Sanctions versus Spiritual Regeneration

The external and the internal foundation of faith is organically connected. One reason people renounce God's Word and flock to the group code is the failure to hope in the Spirit's work of regeneration. The group's shaming may seem to yield more obvious and faster results in terms of external change of behavior, but not without sacrificing what really matters.

First, the community verdict is solely based on external, observable behavior, and has no interest in understanding the person's inner struggle. This partial investigation does not take the whole man seriously.

Second, the overemphasis on externalities encourage perfectionism and pretentiousness. We have seen how pastors take a hagiographical angle to present an illusion of accomplished saints. Believers then either despair in their imperfection or deceive themselves by lowering God's perfect standard.

Third, internalizing Christian values takes time because they are foreign to human's sinful nature. Without such process, believers live out relativism by following whatever group code one happens to be in at the moment.

4.1.3.   Conclusion

First, the problem of doubt in Indonesia is closely related to the community. A community that is a false autonomy tells people that doubt is shameful so that people are ashamed to admit it, hide it instead, and do not look for help from other believers although the community is so significant for the people in so many ways. Second, in the specific Indonesian honor-shame context, doubt is closely intertwined with unfulfilled expectations, whether or not the expectations are verified.

4.2. Suggestions

§ 4.2.1. will provide suggestions for the problem of community as the false autonomy, whereas § 4.2.2. will focus on doubt and one specific angle of God's Word, namely as the shaper of expectations.

4.2.1. Hiebert's Centered Approach

Paul Hiebert, a missiological anthropologist, recommended a particular way of defining the church, called the centered set.[232] He described four possible combinations to define the church using a mathematics set made up of four variables: clear/fuzzy boundaries and intrinsic/extrinsic identification of the members.[233] The centered set has clear boundaries and its members are identified by extrinsic characteristics. Clear boundaries mean there is a clear limit of what belongs to the set and what does not. For the centered church, it means there is a clear cut between who is a member of the church and who is not.

Extrinsic means the membership of the set is determined by relationships to a center outside of the members themselves.[234] As an example, siblings is a relationship defined by an external relation to the same parents; i.e. the parents are the center in this set. In centered sets, only those related to the center or moving towards the center are members of the set. All that is related to the center is a full member; there are no second-class members. However, some members are closer to or further from the center, and some members are moving towards the center while others move away from the center and become nonmembers. The emphasis on the relationship to the center results in two kinds of change. The first change is the entry into or exit from the set and the second one is the movement toward or away from the center.

For the centered church, Christ is the center. Church is first a place of worship, to declare allegiance to Christ. No inherent characteristics like race or theological view defines the membership, but every person's relationship to Christ. In this set, theology is done by the church as a hermeneutical community, not just a few individuals. The hermeneutics is guided by a metatheology to interpret and apply Scripture to its particular settings.

Members, that is, Christians, are defined based on their relationship to Him as their Lord according to Scripture. People who admire Jesus as a self-sacrificing, wise, or great man, are not

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[232] Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), https://archive.org/details/anthropologicalr0000hieb/page/116/mode/2up?view=theater (accessed May 7, 2022), 134. I only discuss one approach here, but I highly recommend Hiebert's complete description.
[233] Clear boundaries are an either/or pair, without any in-between, while fuzzy boundaries are like the seamless transition from day to light or mountains to the plain.
[234] By contrast, intrinsic means the characteristics that defines a thing is inherent in that thing. It is not defined by its relationship to something external to it. For instance, an apple is an apple because it is a member of a certain species, not because it stands in a certain relationship to the fruit store.

considered Christians. But non-Christians would be welcomed in the fellowship and directed to Jesus Christ.

Members are not only defined by their once-and-for-all entry into a faith confession or church membership, but also by their ongoing progress in obedience to Christ as Lord. They can grow in spiritual maturity; that is, closer to the center; or move further away from the center in disobedience.

This allows room for different levels of spiritual maturity. There is not so much concern about maintaining strict membership rolls as much as there is readiness to realize there are seekers, believers, baptized members, and elders. Spiritually mature elders with self-disinterest and servitude would be trusted to make decisions while immature believers would be recognized for who they are and treated with more tolerance. For those going astray, church discipline is exercised with the goal of restoration, not exclusion.

Evangelism is seen as calling people to turn and follow Christ. The goal of evangelism is no mere cognitive assent or intense emotion or church membership, but becoming obedient to the Lordship of Christ. Discipling new believers would be just as important as conversion, just as sanctification and justification are equally important and inseparable.

Table 4. Centered Set and Centered Church

	Centered Set	Centered Church
Extrinsic Definition	Members are defined extrinsically; i.e. by their relationship to the center	Church members are defined based on their relationship to Jesus, the center
Clear Boundaries	Dstinction between members and non-members and those moving closer to or further from the center	Distinction between Christians and non-Christians as well as recognition for different levels of spiritual maturity among Christians
Two Kinds of Change	(1) Entry into or exit from the set (2) Movement toward or away from the center	Evangelism as calling people to turn (entry into God's people) and follow Christ (continuous progress in sanctification)

4.2.1.1.   Benefits of the Centered Approach for the Indonesian Context

Georges and Baker find centered churches especially beneficial for Christians in an honor-shame culture.[235] They recommend the centered church approach, not only to protect against shame, but to generate honor that is aligned to the *true* honor in the Kingdom of God.[236] In communities that shame to control behaviors, Georges and Baker give a word of caution: If the group honor code does not always align with God's standard, honor and shame would be dispensed for the wrong reasons.[237] This kind of church should be called a syncretic church for incorporating the pursuit of false honor into the life of God's people.

To stand against a false autonomy in the form of a community, Christians must have an alternate community.[238] This is the main importance of a centered church, besides the following:

1.   Christ as center. It is harder for the community to replace God and His Word with the group and its code. Members are not shamed for having different theological insights, so there is a wide space for discussing the Bible, sharing opinions, having questions. This is an ideal atmosphere for someone to be open with their doubt.

2.   Growing closer to Christ is obligatory. Progressive sanctification is for all Christians, not just the most wicked ones.

3.   There is church discipline, but with the goal of restoring instead of excluding. This must be explained again and again, and love and respect must be communicated in the practice.

4.   External behavior is important, but it is not the whole reality. With growth as the default mode of Christian life, more time is allowed than a snapshot of what is currently showing. This practice gives room for people to understand and rely more of the invisible regenerative work of the Spirit. Members are also encouraged to be honest and real, instead of playing hypocrites. Doubt is not labelled as shameful without further investigation and support from the community.

4.2.2.   God's Word as Shaper of Expectations

With expectations being at the heart of relationships in Indonesia, including the relationship with God, the ministry of God's Word must incorporate this angle into its proclamation. The first two

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[235] Georges, Chapter 11, Section "Church Communities that Liberate from Shame."

[236] Georges, Chapter 11, Section "Shame-Resistance in 1 Peter;" Chapter 11, Section "Church Communities that Liberate from Shame."

[237] Georges, Chapter 11, Section "Church Communities that Liberate from Shame."

[238] It will take another study to see if the alternate community must be a completely different circle of people than the old false autonomy, or if it can be found within the old one albeit with some tension. The first option is ideal, but the latter option is supported by the fact that the local church consists of regenerate and unregenerate alike.

sections will offer an exegesis of the Bible passages described in chapter 2 about John the Baptist (§4.2.2.1.) and Job (§4.2.2.2.) respectively, and then connect the exegesis to the case of Mary, Fred, and Rick (§4.2.2.3.).

4.2.2.1. Exegesis of John the Baptist

The exegesis in § 2.2.1.1 missed the opportunity to show how Jesus deals with the problem of honor and shame in the story of John the Baptist doubting him. The following is an option which shows more clearly how valuable Jesus is in an honor-shame culture.

Within the honor-shame framework, John's question whether Jesus is the Messiah can be perceived as shaming Jesus. Previously John had announced Jesus as the Son of God and pushed everyone including his own disciples to follow Jesus (John 1:29-37), so the question showed a widening distance in respect and trust. But we have to remember that not only did imprisonment rob someone of their freedom, but also of their dignity. John was imprisoned not because he committed a crime, but because of rebuking the king's crime, and Jesus did not save him swiftly as it was expected of the Messiah (cf. the Luke 3:9). Jesus disappointed John's expectations.

Jesus did not retaliate with shaming John. Instead He answered John by pointing to the miracles He did, encouraged John, and described him to the public as "a prophet, even more than a prophet," as well as announcing that he is the greatest of the whole human race ("born of women"). Jesus watched over John's honor by dignifiying his shaming question with an answer, rebuking John very gently by encouraging him to not stumble on Jesus, and praising him in front of the crowd.

The next sentence, "Those in the kingdom are greater than John," is harder to decipher. James R. Edwards offered an explanation that those in the kingdom are "born of the Spirit" in contrast to those "born of women" in the old dispensation, and this kingdom is inaugurated by Jesus, someone greater than John, not in degree but in kind.[239] If we take Edwards' explanation, then we can conclude that Jesus was unafraid to declare Himself as the greater one (cf. John 3:30 where John stated, "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease"). After all, everyone's eternal fate hangs by this one thread: whether they know Jesus as the Christ (John 17:3), a knowing which is more than just cognition but also must have cognition (see § 3.1.2.). In proclaiming who He is, Jesus is saving people. John's question could have been perceived as a challenge and Jesus could have responded by insulting John's little faith to gain false honor. But Jesus cares about our honor, not just His, and about the true honor, not the false one.

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[239] James R. Edwards, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to Luke*, general editor D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 222.

Ultimately Jesus showed how much He cares by trading places with us on the cross (see § 2.1.2.3.), trading his glorious throne with our shameful punishment. The only thing we have to offer Jesus is our sin and shame which we cannot solve on our own (see § 2.1.1.2. and § 2.1.2.2.). But out of God's sincere generosity, whoever comes to Him in whatever kind of shameful state (like John the Baptist did with his doubt) and believes His promise receives the honorable status of God's children (see § 2.1.2.4). God has created human beings in His own image after all (see § 2.1.2.1.), and He will not let sin destroy His creation. God graciously entwines our honor with His honor. That is a message that will draw the attention of the people in honor-shame cultures.

4.2.2.2.   Exegesis of Job

Job teaches us that even the most pious of us all is still a weak sinner in need of God's grace. Instead of holding him up as the flawless superhero, it is better to recognize that Job did fall short of respectful behavior as honor-shame culture prescribes it, but like with John the Baptist, God answered his shaming questions and did not shame him. Instead, out of mercy, God restored Job and had him be the intermediary between Him and Job's three friends.

On the surface those friends spoke more *respectfully* about God, but God did not recognize them as speaking *rightly* as Job did (Job 42:7). Behind the visible words Job had faith in God while his friends did not. Job asked questions as someone who was concerned with who God was, what He was doing, and what He thought about all Job's suffering; in short as someone in a relationship with God. The friends already established their opinion about God and based on that, forced on Job their conclusion that he must have done great injustice to receive such punishments from God. They were not interested in revising their view, not even if God Himself were to speak to them, while Job wanted to hear what God had to say about all this. Job had a real relationship with God, messy as it was, like all relationships are, while his friends did not. This relationship we also call faith. In the case of Job, the internal faith struggled and posed questions, while in the case of his three friends, their respectful opinions about God could not deceive God about their problematic faith or perhaps lack thereof. It must be taught that Job's faith, or any true faith for that matter, is the result of both God's Word and the regeneration done by the Holy Spirit (see § 3.1.1.2).

The lesson here is that external behavior is not all there is to Christianity, but also the invisible work of the Holy Spirit. Demand for external piety without internal regeneration would result in forced behavior and hypocrisy. But when there is true faith, granted by the Spirit's regenerating work, it will manifest its fruit in time.

4.2.2.3. Test Cases: Mary, Fred, and Rick

Because we hope in the Spirit's gracious work of regeneration, there is good reason for proclaiming the Word. What could Mary, Fred, and Rick learn from the two exegesis above, fitted for the Indonesian honor-shame context?

Both exegeses show that God's grace is so much bigger than what the believers thought. Believers often think they are good enough and it is God who disappoints our expectations, because many believers seem to be of good conduct when they are judged by the group code that only looks at the surface. When believers see that this is not the case, they can be very hard on themselves and imagine God is as unforgiving as the community that measures only by what it can see.

Mary and Rick could learn from John the Baptist that our expectations of the Lord may well be wrong and cause us to doubt God's omnipotence or omnibenevolence. Fred could learn from Job that God does not hold it against His people when they come to Him in honesty, and even improves them. All three could learn that God's grace is not defined by their expectations that are often misled by the group code. Also that God and men may have differing judgment on honor and shame; what men define as shameful or honorable, even when they claim it is from God, is not necessarily what God deems shameful or honorable. They could learn that God is not impressed by good behavior on the surface, but wants to sanctify His children from within.

4.2.3. Conclusion

The importance of the true foundations of faith plus considerations for the specific Indonesian honor-shame context spell out suggestions for the centered church approach that actively avoids false shaming and the proclamation of God's Word that shapes believers' expectations of God and informs them of what God expects of them. What God expects of believers is not an externally impeccable behavior according to the group code, but a progress in sanctification in which God's Spirit Himself works actively and sovereignly. This sanctification is not just external, but involves a change of values prompted by God's instructions and promises in His Word and the Christ-centered community.

5. Conclusion

The thesis is triggered by an observation of an Indonesian youth mentor silencing a Christian in doubt with the instruction, "You mustn't doubt, you must believe." The investigation that followed centers not only on doubt and faith, but on the cultural context called honor-shame culture. Chapter 2 describes this honor-shame perspective and its influence on Christians, chapter 3 describes Herman Bavinck's holistic principle on faith and the experience of Dutch Christians. Chapter 4 compares the two perspectives.

In chapter 2 we are introduced to the honor-shame culture which functions like a large umbrella over Indonesia and many other non-Western countries. There honor is more important than life or physical well-being. It is more than someone's self-esteem, it is public; the worth of a person in the community's eyes. Every community has its own honor code; what is regarded honorable or shameful, and it judges one's external behavior. It keeps the people in line by public honoring or public shaming.

Theology in honor-shame culture describes God as the source of infinite honor, sin as inseparable from shame, and redemption is accepting God as our patron, His people as our community, His Word as our group code of honor, and the honor He bestowed through Jesus Christ as opposed to grasping after false honor according to the wordly group code.

A study of written sources and interviews was made on an Indonesian church with the following observation: the group code is put on par with or higher than the Bible, external behaviors were accorded so much weight it comes close being the only basis of judgment. When it comes to doubt specifically, church members are taught that it is shameful and so in doubt they do not come forward to other believers that may help them. One finding that is significant to the thesis conclusion concerns the close connection between personal relationships and fulfillments of assumed expectations, in the sense those expectations are rarely communicated directly or explicitly agreed upon.

In chapter 3 the theoretical framework is provided by a study of Herman Bavinck and a brief introduction into individualization in the Netherlands. Bavinck's holistic principle shows faith as the unity of knowledge and trust, and the foundations of faith as the unity of the external (God's Word) and internal (regeneration by the Spirit). Problems in faith, or doubts, arise when the true foundations are replaced by man's reason, experience, or morality. This unlawful replacement is also called a false autonomy in the sense it is imagined to be standing independent of God's Word or regeneration.

The holistic principle finds its parallel in the Dutch interviewees' description of faith and doubt: "Faith is not just …, but also …". Doubt, too, is not found to be always negative and harmful,

and can be necessary, like spiritual growing pains. The interviewees speak freely about their own doubts, and about their dissatisfaction with the community of the local church. In their relationships they do not assume expectations but talk about it directly.

Chapter 4 compares the Indonesian and Dutch perspectives and find some interesting insights. The community in Indonesia is so significant it can be a false autonomy. The group code can override God's Word in a subtle way. The external sanctions can be depended on more than the regenerating work of the Spirit. Now when the true foundations of faith are replaced, doubt is sure to follow. In the specific context of Indonesian honor-shame culture, doubt comes from the wrong expectations around the relationship with God. When the group code usurps the place of God's Word, believers run into all sorts of wrong expectations, both from their side to God and from God's side to them. The matter is worsened by the group code that admission of doubt is shameful, hindering efforts to reach out for help.

To this problem a two-parts solution is offered. First of all, there must be an alternate community for believers to face the old one and its false honor-shame values. In Hiebert's centered approach believers are judged based on their relation to Christ. This is beneficial in many fronts. It reduces the chance for false honor-shame values and its foundation of group code and external sanctions to misuse its power. With Christ as center, not some group code hiding behind the mask of certain theological doctrines, there is more transparency for people to assess how submissive the group code is to God's Word. The relation to Christ is evaluated over a course of time, and so provides a more balanced approach instead of a particular, one-time event.

The second part of the solution involves the explanation of the Word with focus on honor-shame values, especially what it means for the shaping of believers' expectations of God and of themselves. In honor-shame culture first time converts generally encounter the Word through the community and for many of them, the Word is what the community tells them, no questions asked. Individual believers need to grow in the Word, but the main way they do it is by being a part of a community that is faithful to the Word – back to the first part of the solution that answers the need for a Christ-centered community.

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