ANTHROPOLOGY, JUSTICE AND ESCHATOLOGY

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The doctrine of the bodily resurrection and judgement to follow was as central for the Patristic writers of the first few centuries as it is in the Scriptures. However, the centrality of the resurrection gradually diminished, supplanted by an increasing emphasis on the immortality of the soul and the judgement of the individual immediately after death. This shift in outlook originated in synthesis, the forging of an artificial merger of two opposing and incompatible viewpoints: divine revelation and pagan mythologising speculation.[1]

The inscripturated revelation of God confronts humankind in an antithesis which stands over against our own conceptions of the way things are. It radically challenges and opposes all human thought which sets itself up in opposition to God: something to which we are all prone because of the pervasiveness of sin. It is only on the ground of Scripture that we can reformulate, through the grace of God, our thinking and analysis concerning the reality of which we are a part. Apart from the renewing of the mind in Christ, we cannot think correctly concerning anything, since at the root of our being we stand in relationship to God. If that relationship is violated, the resulting distortion means we are unable to think straight - a condition which reverberates throughout the whole of human life. Human beings are at root religious: no other characterisation of human nature is adequate or truthful, since it does not acknowledge that we stand first and foremost before God in covenanted relationship with him.

Pagan mythologising speculation is rooted in a repudiation of our covenant relationship with God, and in his place hypostatises the creatures he has made, turning them into idols in which it finds the source of ultimate meaning. Greek philosophy is rooted in this mythologising speculation, and thus has at its root an idolatrous conception of reality,

1 Myth is understood to be the formulation of an anti-revelation that stands in opposition to Scripture, a humanly fabricated authority for faith. See Herman Dooyeweerd. **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought**. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1969. Vol. 2, pp. 311, 326. C J Gousmett. “Dooyeweerd on faith and apostasy.” unpublished Interdisciplinary Seminar Paper. Institute for Christian Studies, 1984, pp. 6-12. Available online at academia.edu. W V Rowe. “The character and structure of myth.” *Anakainosis* 6 (1984) 4:1-9.

arising from the rejection of God and his revelation. To form a synthesis between the thought-forms produced on this foundation and the revelation given by God will inevitably result in a distorted and confused understanding and spiritual compromise.

Yet in Patristic literature we find just such a synthesis being formed. The revelation of God was understood in the light of the philosophical categories and frameworks supplied by paganism. The influence of Platonic, meso-Platonic and neo-Platonic thought, Aristotelianism, Stoicism and other pagan Greek philosophies on Patristic thought is well documented. The resulting blend of pagan and Christian thought is characterised overall by nature-grace dualism, a dualism which has ramifications throughout Patristic theology and beyond.

This nature-grace dualism arose from the blending of the form-matter motif of the Greeks with the creation-fall-redemption motif of revelation. This nature-grace motif was eventually secularised to produce the nature-freedom motif of the Enlightenment.[2] In these synthesising motifs the Biblical doctrine of creation is distorted by interpreting it in terms of the pagan view of nature as an independent, self-regulating eternal reality, while God's redemptive acts were reduced to the category of grace, which was thought to stand over against nature. The pure Scriptural motif of creation-fall-redemption, however, is in stark contrast to such views, since redemption stands over against, not the creation, but the fall (sin) and its effects.

Under the influence of the form-matter motif, sin frequently came to be identified with matter (nature),[3] and redemption (grace) was thus often understood as liberation from matter, a theme borrowed from Orphism and exemplified in Gnosticism. But the redemptive acts of God liberate us not from creatureliness, but from covenant breaking. When redemption is reinterpreted in terms of a nature-grace motif, the result is an anti-creational mentality which seeks for salvation through the soul being set free from creaturely (bodily) existence. As a result the Christian doctrine of resurrection is compromised. The dichotomistic anthropology of body and soul which originated in the

2 For details of the history and character of these motifs, see Herman Dooyeweerd. **Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options**. Toronto: Wedge, 1979.

3 Cf. Dooyeweerd's comments on Barth's view in this regard. **Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options**. Toronto: Wedge, 1979, p. 92 and p. 143.

Greek thought-world has produced only confusion when introduced into the Christian thought-world originating in divine revelation.

The Patristic writers increasingly succumbed to the pagan way of thinking (in which many of them had been trained, especially in the early centuries). This is evident in their anthropology, which without exception is understood in terms of a dichotomy of body and soul. This dichotomy takes two forms, dualistic and monistic.[4] Dualism postulates the existence of two separate and distinct original substances from which things are made, and in these things there is an uneasy tension between two dissimilar components. Monism on the other hand postulates only one original substance, so that the dichotomy of being is not between two substances, but between two different structures made of the same substance. The problem of dualism is how to account for the *unity* of things, while the problem of monism is how to account for the *diversity* of things.[5]

Even at the beginning of the Patristic period it was agreed that the person was comprised of a composite of body and soul. To begin with, this was not a strictly theoretical distinction, but simply conceptual. The first Patristic writers used terms such as "body" and "soul" without necessarily understanding them in terms of an anthropological theory.[6] Rather they formed a concept of human nature which was not argued scientifically, but used illustratively. It was only with the increasing problems which originated in the use of a fundamentally dichotomistic anthropological conception, which

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4 For details of this approach to the history of ideas see A M Wolters. "On Vollenhoven's Problem-Historical Method." In: **Hearing and Doing: Philosophical essays dedicated to H Evan Runner**. Toronto: Wedge, 1979, pp. 231-262. See also John H Kok. "Souls seeking leadership." ***Pro Rege*** 30 (1991) 1:28-30; **Patterns of the Western Mind**. Dordt College Press, 1998, pp. 223-236; "Vollenhoven and 'Scriptural Philosophy.'" *Philosophia Reformata* 53 (1988) 2:101-142. An abbreviated version of this is published as "Vollenhoven and thinking in the light of Scripture." *Pro Rege* 21 (1992) 11-23.

5 Herein lies the roots of the "one and the many" problem in philosophy. A Biblical alternative must avoid the false problematics of monism and dualism. "The unity of the diversity in creation is found in the subjection of the creation to the one law-order, encompassing all of created reality, established by God for the creation." C J Gousmett. **The miracle of nature and the nature of miracle**. M.Phil.F. Thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, 1985, p. 75.

6 A theory is the artificial construction in abstract thought of the nature and relationships of concrete things. A concept is formed through concrete thinking (natural or everyday thinking) about concrete things. Thus we use concepts in the construction of theories, through abstraction of some aspects of concrete things, and our concepts of them, for the purpose of deeper understanding. Cf. M D Stafleu. "Theories as logically qualified artefacts." *Philosophia Reformata* 46 (1981) 2:164-166.

was incompatible with the Scriptural presentation of human nature, that theories were developed to explain these anthropological concepts more precisely.

The judgement after death

The problems resulting from the influence of pagan Greek dichotomies in the Patristic anthropologies can be seen clearly in their discussion of whether the judgement follows the resurrection or takes place immediately after death. The Patristic authors were unanimous that the judgement can only take place with justice if the subject being judged is present. However, they are anything but unanimous concerning what exactly constituted the subject which was to be judged. Most of the early Patristic writers held that the soul and the body together were involved in both sin and obedience, and so both together should receive the appropriate rewards and punishments, thus requiring the resurrection. With the growing prominence of anthropological theories which postulated a dichotomy between body and soul, ultimately placing the emphasis on the immortality of the soul, the hope of the resurrection of the body was obscured and rendered otiose because of the doctrine of immediate judgement after death.[7]

Since justice required that the subject of judgement be present, the soul came to be viewed as the subject. The body then was downgraded to merely an instrument of the soul, which had no real responsibility for the deeds of the person which originated with the soul alone. But when the Patristic authors attempted to work out this theory in their exegesis of Scripture, the conundrums which were created forced them to develop complicated interpretations to reconcile two incompatible approaches to anthropology. However, none of these alternative anthropologies can be successful, since they are attempting to resolve a pseudo-problem. The acceptance of the dichotomy of body and soul compromised the issue from the beginning, since once this kind of formulation was accepted, the problems thereby created were such that no solution could be found to the difficulties thus caused for the Christian doctrine of the resurrection.

7 I am using “body” here in terms of the Patristic dichotomy, but it must be remembered that the Scriptures do not mean by “body” one **component** of human nature, but human beings looked at **as from** the outside, and not merely the **component** which is “on the outside.” For detailed examination of this approach see H Ridderbos. **Paul: An outline of his theology**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, pp. 115-117.

Even those writers who wanted to assert the wholeness of human nature did so by asserting that human nature was a unity of the body and soul, dichotomistically conceived, while more radical dualists were content to dissolve the problems by declaring a divorce of the body and the soul. The eventual result of the latter approach (which eventually became the dominant position) was the abandonment of the significance of the body and bodily life, for instance in the growth of asceticism and the denigration of marriage. Without this dualistic approach, the debate over the relation of body and soul in the resurrection and judgement would never have arisen, as it is in fact a pseudo-problem arising from false conceptions in anthropology. As soon as we accept a dichotomy in human nature between body and soul, then the relationship between the two becomes a dominant theme in theology.[8]

The early Christian writers vigorously defended the doctrine of the resurrection against the attacks of both pagans and heretics. Without confidence in the resurrection, the whole Christian faith collapses (1 Corinthians 15:13-19) and we are left with only a pseudo-Christian heresy. Thus considerable energy was expended on defending the resurrection. In Patristic thought, the doctrine of the resurrection was rooted in the doctrine of creation, and the affirmation of the inherent goodness of our bodily existence. From this followed the conviction that God was able to save the flesh through the resurrection, since he had originally created it. This refutes the Gnostic doctrine of dual creation, in which the flesh is the cause of sin (thus unable to be saved) and originating with a creator other than the one who formed the soul.[9] Christians asserted that the whole person came from the hands of the one creator God. The basis for their argument was the incarnation

8 The controversy over the soul's origin, between pre-existence, creationism or traducianism, is rooted in a similar pseudo-problem and as such is insoluble. Cf. the comment of G C Berkouwer. “For the controversy places in opposition to each other, by way of emphases and accents, two things which can only form a *unity* in the works of God. Whenever our view of the works of God is split, even to some extent, in two directions, then naturally one of the two will be emphasized over the other, and thus in creationism the vertical aspect is accented, and in traducianism the horizontal. Any dilemma which does not do justice to both aspects is to be rejected, for it lies wholly outside the Biblical witness regarding the origin of man.” **Man: The image of God**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, pp. 292-293.

9 Justin Martyr. *Fragments of the lost work of Justin on the Resurrection*, 2. Ante-Nicene Fathers [ANF]. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, Vol. 1, pp. 294-295. Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 1.21.4. ANF 1, p. 346; 1.24.5. ANF 1, p. 350. Leo the Great. *Letter* 13.12. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [NPNF]. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. Series 2. Vol. 12, p. 24. Jerome. *Homily 25 on Psalm 97*. **Fathers of the Church**. New York: Fathers of the Church Inc., 1964. Vol. 48, p. 198.

of Christ, which was seen not only as affirming our bodily life, since God himself deigned to take on that life, but also as providing the promise of bodily salvation in the resurrection, in that as Christ was raised bodily from the dead, so we too will be similarly raised (Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:12-24).

Similarly, Docetism was rejected, since if Christ had only **appeared** to be human, then he was not human at all, and if he had only **apparently** been raised, then there was no resurrection.[10] But because Christ himself was raised bodily from the dead, so will we be. Without that occurring, our salvation will not be complete. Thus we must be raised bodily, and it is our complete, life-long bodily existence that will be judged after we have been raised.[11] Therefore, the early Patristic authors demanded belief in a bodily existence also in the eschaton, since for humankind to be saved, all which made one human had to be included: not just the soul, as the pagans and Gnostics averred, but the body as well.[12] However, the problems created by the adoption of a dualistic anthropology, under the influence of pagan conceptions, meant that the doctrine of bodily resurrection was compromised, and blunted the polemics against Gnosticism and eventually opened the way for Gnostic ideas to influence Christianity.

Many Patristic writers insisted on the indispensability of the body for what it was to be human. To deny the importance of the body was to deny that it was created by God, and that it had been redeemed through the incarnation and bodily death and resurrection of Christ. To postulate that redemption was possible apart from the body made no sense. A human being was a bodily being, and to deny that the body had a part in redemption was to deny redemption as such. Thus there was no way that anthropological views which

10 For instance, Novatian attacks the Docetic heresy which denies the reality of both the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ. He argues that our resurrection is indissolubly linked with the resurrection of Christ: only if that was a real resurrection can we expect to be raised again. Novatian says that the .i.Docetism;Docetic Christ is “that elusive personality, the specious and very highly coloured creation from old wives' fables, the imaginary Christ of the heretics who reject the authority of the Old Testament” who robs us of the hope of the resurrection. There is no salvation for the flesh in a saviour who has only the appearance of a body. Novatian. *On the Trinity* 10. ANF 5, p. 619.

11 *Second Epistle of Clement* 14. ANF 10, pp. 254-255. This idea was based for most of the Fathers on 2 Corinthians 5:10.

12 L Boliek. **The Resurrection of the Flesh. A study of a confessional phrase**. Amsterdam: Jacob van Campen, 1962, p. 25.

denied the significance of the body and its redemption would be countenanced. But if to be human was to be a bodily being, then whatever was done by a human being was done in and with the body. The body then had to share in the judgement and to receive punishment or reward for the deeds in which it was an active and willing participant. Since the human being was seen as a unity, in which both body and soul were involved in every act, there was no sense in which the soul alone, or the body alone, could be treated justly separately from its partner. Thus there was no possibility of an immediate judgement after death, which would have meant that the body either escaped its due punishment or was denied its reward. The judgement was considered to take place after the general resurrection at the eschaton, when all the dead would be raised and examined by God. It is in 2 Clement that we first explicitly find the idea, which was to become a commonplace in the early centuries of the Christian era, that since we sin in the body, we must also be judged in the body.[13]

In contrast to pagan authors who accepted the immortality of the soul and its correlate, the judgement which follows immediately after death, Justin Martyr specifically rejected this idea.[14] While he acknowledges that the pagan writers also believed in a judgement, he stresses that punishment or reward are received only at the resurrection when the judgement takes place, and not immediately after death. In this regard the pagan writers were in error.[15] We see then very early in the Patristic period that the idea of an immediate judgement after death is associated by Christians with pagan views concerning the immortality of the soul and the rejection of the resurrection.

Other Patristic authors sought to affirm the unity of human nature, which was, however, still dichotomistically conceived, by postulating alternatives to the Platonic idea of the immortal soul. Tatian for instance tried to maintain the unity of body and soul by asserting that both body and soul died, and thus the eschatological life required the resurrection at which time the soul was also restored to life. Here we have an attempt to

13 *Second Epistle of Clement* 9. ANF 10, p. 253. Tertullian. *On the Resurrection* 14. ANF 3, pp. 554-555.

14 Cf. Justin Martyr. *Fragments of the lost work of Justin on the Resurrection*, 2. ANF 1, pp. 294-295.

15 Justin Martyr. *First Apology* 20. ANF 1, p. 170.

refute a pagan conception by adopting another pagan alternative to the problem which has cogency only within a pagan framework, since Tatian was using an Aristotelian conception of the soul in order to defend the importance of the resurrection.[16] Thus even one who rejected the immortality of the soul did so not because it arises in a false anthropology, dichotomistic in basis, but on the grounds of a synthesis with a differing stream of pagan Greek thought. This is equally erroneous, since the fundamental problem of synthesis between Christian and pagan thought has not been addressed.

Athenagoras is the first of the Patristic writers who explicitly and unambiguously states his belief in the innate immortality of the soul. Yet he also believed firmly in the resurrection of the body, which he thought was complementary to his view that the soul was immortal.[17] Athenagoras held that human beings were a unity of soul and body, and the immortality of the soul therefore required the resurrection of the body in order for the person to be whole in the eschaton. And it is the wholeness of the person on which Athenagoras focuses: he does not believe in the ultimate independent existence of the immortal soul, although he does consider that it exists independently after death and before the resurrection. Athenagoras has a teleological view of creation, which demands a resurrection so that God's purposes for the creation will be accomplished. There must be a resurrection so the body can be rejoined to the immortal soul. The soul for its part must be immortal so as to ensure the continuance of that which God has created.[18] Unless the whole person shared in eschatological life, the purpose of the creation would be lost: thus a resurrection is demanded.[19] Athenagoras holds that both body and soul will face punishment, since body and soul have acted together, the person being the unity between them and not located in the soul alone. Only thus, he considered, can the justice of God's judgement be maintained.[20]

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16 Tatian. *Oration against the Greeks* 13.1-2. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 27.

17 L W Barnard. **Athenagoras. A Study in Second Century Christian Apologetic**. Théologie Historique 18. Paris: Beauchesne, 1972, p. 126.

18 Athenagoras. *Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* 15.5-8. Oxford Early Christian Texts, pp. 125, 127.

19 Athenagoras. *Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* 25.1-2. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 147.

Tertullian also believed that the person does not consist of soul or body alone, but of both together. It would be unjust to punish one without the other as both were involved in sin.[21] He argues that if the flesh has been used solely as an instrument by the soul, and that it is the soul which will face the judgement, then the flesh is innocent and should be raised, since it should be saved because of its innocence.[22] But because he sees both acting together, Tertullian insists that the body must be raised to be rejoined with the soul in order for them to face the judgement together.[23] Later Tertullian changed his view, and held that the soul will suffer alone the penalties of the sins it committed alone, but it will suffer with the body the sins committed with the body.[24] In the intermediate state the souls receive either rewards or punishments prior to the resurrection. This does not in his opinion diminish the significance of the resurrection to judgement thereby, as the rewards and punishments will be those appropriate for the soul alone, and therefore the body will not be deprived of its deserts. At the resurrection everyone will receive the deserts of their deeds committed by body and soul together.

But while the body of the wicked will be kept in existence to suffer, that of the saints is of no further use after the allocation of rewards. His instrumentalist approach, while appearing to retain the significance and necessity of the resurrection (in order for both body and soul, which had been involved in the deeds of this life, to come to the judgement), eventually also makes it possible for him to discard the body entirely. Here the deficiency of the instrumentalist approach can be clearly seen. Tertullian's anthropology still suffers from dualism, even though he is endeavouring to counter that very error as found in the thought of the Gnostics. Because of his unbiblical dualism, Tertullian is unable to escape from the inconsistency inherent in maintaining the

20 Athenagoras. *Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead* 20.3. Oxford Early Christian Texts, p. 137.

21 Tertullian. *On Penitence* 3. Ancient Christian Writers [ACW]. Westminster: Newman Press, 1959. Vol. 28, p. 18. Cf. also Tertullian. *Apology* 48. ANF 3, p. 53.

22 Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 16. ANF 3, p. 556.

23 Tertullian. *The soul's testimony* 4. ANF 3, p. 177. Cf. Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 1. ANF 3, p. 545.

24 Tertullian. *On the resurrection of the flesh* 17. ANF 3, p. 557.

resurrection as the restoration of the whole person, while believing in the separate life of the soul.[25]

The belief in the immortality of the soul and its future life meant the decline in significance of the resurrection. This is largely due to the influence of Origen, for whom the physical body is not an essential part of human nature, but simply that which the soul used in its earthly life. The body is merely an instrument of the soul, which only has influence over the soul if the latter is subjected to the sin of the flesh. Origen sees a conflict between the two components of human nature as a result of importing dualistic conceptions into his interpretation of Scripture.[26] However, even though Origen expressed a strongly dualistic anthropology which denigrated the body, he initially held to the more common Patristic view. In his treatise *On the Resurrection* he argues that it would be unjust for God to give a reward to the soul when the body has also suffered and struggled for the sake of the gospel.[27] In this passage Origen accepted the argument from God's justice as a guarantee of the resurrection of the body,[28] and thus adopted the view which was most widespread in the first few centuries. He was later to reject this view in favour of one which was more akin to that of Gnosticism. As a result, the doctrine of the resurrection body was distorted in his thought.

Writers such as Augustine also held that the body was an instrument of the soul and that the soul receives rewards and punishments alone after death, and further rewards and punishments together with the body at the resurrection.[29] His efforts to maintain the significance of the resurrection demonstrate his perplexity in reconciling the immortality of the soul with the resurrection of the body. The eventual outcome in mediaeval

25 C Tresmontant. **La métaphysique de christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne**. Paris, 1961, p. 626. Cited in: G L Bray. **Holiness and the will of God. Perspectives on the theology of Tertullian**. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1979, pp. 36-37.

26 Origen. *Commentary on Matthew* 14.3. ANF 10, p. 496.

27 Origen. Fragment, *On the Resurrection*. Excerpt in the *Apology of Pamphilius on behalf of Origen*. Cited in: L Boliek. **The resurrection of the flesh**, p. 41.

28 L Boliek. **The resurrection of the flesh. A study of the confessional phrase**, p. 42.

29 Augustine. *The City of God* 13.12. NPNF Series 1, Vol. 2, pp. 250-251.

theology was the virtual eclipse of the hope of the resurrection, to be replaced by the doctrine of purgatory and the immediate judgement after death.

Thus a dichotomistic anthropology introduced into Christian thought from pagan sources results in the decline in significance of a central feature of revelation. The eschatological character of Christianity, and its focus on the redemption of the creation fallen into sin, has been compromised. This nature-grace dichotomy has ramifications for the whole of Christian thought, not just its anthropology and eschatology. Only with the eradication of synthesis between revelation and pagan views can we recapture our integrity.

A Contemporary Alternative

The problems which we have seen in the anthropologies of the Patristic writers all arise from a synthesis between Biblical revelation and non-Christian systems of thought. In order to escape from such problematics, it is essential to develop a more Biblically-faithful anthropology, which requires a repudiation of synthetic approaches. This means a rejection of both monistic and dualistic frameworks in favour of a Biblically-attuned integral approach. It is not enough simply to look for a holistic integration on which to base a Christian understanding of anthropology. There are many forms of integration and holism, most of which are based to a greater or lesser extent on a synthesis of non-Christian thought with Biblical givens and thus have a non-Christian character. We need, for instance, to repudiate all attempts to develop integrated anthropologies (which form a whole through the integration of independent, separate parts), and to seek instead to develop an integral anthropology (one which begins with the concept of the human being as a **whole**). The need has been well expressed by Seerveld.

Traditional philosophical anthropologies have been unbiblical in so far as they misconceived the spirituality (the structural, to-God's-Word response-ability relatedness) and corporeality (multi-sorted ways of concrete action) of the human creature and theoretically abstracted and hypostatised spirituality into a spiritual part (a substantial soul) and corporeality into a somewhat begrudged, that-too, material part (a body one has for a while). Such God-neglecting analysis, begun by pagan thinkers who explained man *per se*, has been largely accommodated rather than critically reformed by Christian theoretical thinkers; the synthetic Christian, conceptual result has usually defined man *in*

se and added a relation of man to God or Jesus Christ. Secular thinkers by and large define man *pro se*, and then have the problem of what to do with our selves. But the to-God-relatedness is what defines man, and only this idea of *coram Deo* structural centering, I think, has the onto-logical wherewithal to stop the theory of woman and man from losing the unity and identity of the human creature as only one whole woman or man whose total corporeality must be directly obedient to the Lord, rather than letting him or her be fractured off into pieces where, for example, one talks about being a Christian *and* an athlete, or a Christian *and* a scientist.[30]

This task can be performed only on the basis of a self-consciously Christian philosophy. The nature of philosophy is itself a philosophical question, and those who argue that there is something inherently deficient in the concept of a specifically "Christian" philosophy take their standpoint in a philosophical position which the Christian cannot accept. But from a Christian standpoint there is nothing inherently contradictory about the concept of a Christian philosophy[31] which proceeds on the basis of God's revelation. According to Popma, the task of Christian philosophy is "to discern the structure of creation and to describe systematically, i.e., in logical order, what is subject to that structure."[32] This can be done only in humble submission of our philosophising to Christ and Scripture.

It has been suggested that it is inappropriate to name a philosophy "Christian" because of the danger that through labelling a human system of thought with the name of Christ we may bring dishonour to him and succumb to arrogance concerning the rightness of our thought. But surely the attempt to obediently subject all our thought, including philosophising, to the lordship of Christ, in spite of our failings (for which there is forgiveness) and in spite of our academic weakness (for which the Holy Spirit supplies

30 Calvin Seerveld. "A Christian tin-can theory of man." *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, June 1981 pp. 79-80.

31 Cf. Alvin Plantinga. "The Christian will of course suppose that belief in God is entirely proper and rational... Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hair may disagree, but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community, conform to their examples? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to *its* set of examples, not to theirs." "The Reformed objection to natural theology." In: **Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition**. Lanham: University Press of America, 1983, p. 376.

32 Cited in: L Kalsbeek. **Contours of a Christian philosophy. An introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's thought**. Toronto: Wedge, 1975, p. 35.

strength), is the only path to faithfulness to Christ. Such faithfulness is certainly impossible if we consciously and deliberately use the thought of pagans and humanists to structure our philosophy, theology and other academic pursuits by accepting the thought-forms and philosophical structures of those who deny Christ, and have shaped their thought in repudiation of him. There is in fact no more danger in labelling a philosophical system Christian than there is in so labelling a theological system.[33] Both are fallible human thought constructs oriented to analysis of the structures of creation,[34] both are subject to the influence of sin and of grace, and both have their rightful place in the task of the body of Christ, along with every other academic discipline and human endeavour.

Reformational[35] Christian philosophy recognises that all human intellectual life is oriented towards the structure of created reality, and through the process of abstraction we uncover and articulate in a human way something of that structure, created and sustained by God, in order to understand the world we live in. Because Scripture reveals that the deepest root of human existence is our covenantal relationship with God, any attempt to stand outside that relationship in order to understand our world (or ourselves) will lead to distortion and falsehood. It is only as we stand in and with Christ as the root of the new humanity, Christ the creator, the redeemer and the consummator of all things, that we can arrive at proper understanding.

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33 Cf. the comment by Richard Russell concerning the rejection of philosophical **systems** by Christians, because of the danger of "allying the Christian faith too closely with any single philosophical system" because "no system of philosophy is complete and perfect." [Colin Brown. **Philosophy and the Christian Faith**. I.V.P., 1968, pp. 268-269]. Russell comments that the prefix "Christian" can thus apply only to a "complete and perfect system." He mentions that no such warning is ever issued for **theology**. Richard Russell. "The growing crisis of the evangelical world-view and its resolutions." M.A. thesis, Bristol University, 1973, pp. 80, 95.

34 The task of theology is theorising about faith-life, including the norms, content, structure and practice of faith, while that of philosophy is theorising about theory, in that both faith and theory are subject to the law-order for the structures God has created. For a discussion of this approach see John Vander Stelt. "Theology as study of faith-life." *Pro Rege* 18 (1989) 1:15-23.

35 The term "reformational" is used by the school of thought represented by Dooyeweerd and others cited in this section to describe a Christian philosophical position rooted in the Calvinist tradition, grounded in Scripture and confessing the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life, including academic activity. The reformational movement has its roots in the revival of evangelical Calvinism in Holland in the 19th century.

For a Christian to take a philosophical standpoint in any other basis than Christ is to attempt to establish a basis for understanding other than that which God has himself appointed for us. As Paul has written, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20) All attempts to blend a non-Christian philosophical system with Christian revelation turn into idols, in spite of our best intentions. However, taking a dialectical stand against non-Christian thought is also to be shaped by that thought, since such a dialectical position is itself rooted in a non-Christian attitude.[36] A Christian philosophy will in total honesty attach itself to the scandal of the cross, and will confess at the beginning that we stand in Christ, are loyal to Christ and have nothing to hide concerning the subjection of our philosophical thought to Christ.

Christian philosophy must be rooted in, centred on and directed towards Christ, not secondarily or ultimately, but initially.[37] Unless Christ stands at the centre from the very beginning of our philosophising, the result cannot be other than a hybrid and idolatrous system of thought. We cannot therefore start with the philosophies of Plato or Aristotle, of Wittgenstein, Polanyi, Popper, Rorty or Kant, and attempt to modify, blend and supplement them with Christian relevation. Christ does not thereby stand at the centre of

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36 For instance the opposition of Tertullian to pagan philosophy as expressed in his dictum “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?” is shaped by classical rhetoric, and in his attempt to demonstrate that every heresy was traceable to a pagan philosopher, he was essentially thinking as a Stoic. Albert M Wolters. “Christianity and the Classics: A typology of attitudes.” In: **Christianity and the Classics. The acceptance of a heritage**. Wendy E Helleman, ed. Lanham: University Press of America, 1990, p. 196. Cf. Karl Barth’s attitude to philosophy, which was essentially pragmatic: he says that theologians should not be committed to any particular philosophy, but should utilise whatever philosophical approach seems appropriate in any given circumstances. **Church Dogmatics**. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956. Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 731. This sceptical approach to philosophy is inherently unstable and lies at the root of Bath’s “dialectical” method.

37 This thereby precludes a specifically **theological** foundation for Christian philosophy, in which it is subject to theological formulations. Such a view is rooted in the conviction that theology is the science which properly establishes the Christian outlook on reality. Christian philosophy is **immediately** subject to God's revelation, not **mediately** through the products of theological enquiry. This is in contrast to the views of Karl Barth, who held that since understanding and philosophy are essentially profane and sinful, it is impossible for philosophy to acknowledge the Word of God. For Barth, **Christian** philosophy is actually a **theologized** philosophy in which an existential theology makes only a **formal** use of philosophy while it **materially** transcends sinful man-made philosophy. John C Vander Stelt. **History of Christian Philosophy**. Class syllabus. Dordt College, 1983, p. 4.

our thought, but is added after we have already developed and structured that thought. We cannot by subsequently incorporating Christ produce Christian philosophy. By doing philosophy in this way we treat Christ as an addendum, a mere Deus ex machina, to ensure that in spite of the alien starting-point, in spite of the tenor and thrust of our thought, we can still nevertheless arrive at a conclusion which is somehow compatible with God's revelation.

Such a methodology does not accept the conclusions to which the structure and impetus of the philosophy itself brings us, but attempts to introduce a component that will somehow allow us to maintain a position which is at variance with the starting point of that philosophy. Used in this way, philosophy functions merely as a pseudo-justification for our conclusions, since in a very real sense our conclusions do not and can not follow from the structure or methods of such a philosophy. It may appear on the surface as though we have established a credible foundation by this means for Christian philosophising. But by starting with non-Christian premises, a non-Christian perspective on reality, a non-Christian direction and structure for thought, and a non-Christian agenda of questions to be examined, we inevitably arrive at a position in which Christ has no real place.[38] To then introduce Christ into the system in order to justify the specific conclusions we see to be desirable, is nothing short of dishonest, and to use Christ as a tool for our own ends. The only acceptable approach is to work from within a specifically Christian philosophical framework in the light of the revelation of God.

The Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) in conjunction with many others, has sought to develop an intrinsically Christian philosophical system, one which begins and ends with Christ and God's inscripturated revelation. It is a genuinely philosophical system and not a form of theology.[39] Taking his starting-point in the

38 See for example the review by Brian Walsh of Ronald Nash. **Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a world of ideas**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992. Walsh demonstrates how Nash presents a rationalistic worldview as if it were a Christian worldview, and says that, paradoxically for a presentation of a supposedly Christian worldview, it "seems to have no need to refer to Jesus Christ." Further, the Bible "actually seems to play no role whatsoever in his description of the Christian worldview," and what he offers instead is actually "rationalistic theism." *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993) 2: 505-507.

39 See for instance Jeremy Begbie's work, **Voicing Creation's Praise: towards a theology of the arts** [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991], where he discusses Dooyeweerd in terms of his theological position.

Biblical witness to God's creative acts,[40] Dooyeweerd discerns a total of fifteen mutually irreducible aspects or modes of being in the creation, ranked in order from lowest to highest on the "modal scale."[41] The ranking is not one of significance or importance, but in terms of the function of each aspect as foundational to the succeeding (higher) aspect. Each aspect expresses itself in all the other aspects, and in turn mirrors all other aspects. This takes place according to the fixed irreversible order of the aspects. Each "lower" aspect by means of analogies called "anticipations" refers to the higher aspects, while the "higher" aspects refer back to the lower aspects by means of analogies called "retrocipations." All the analogies retain the qualification of the aspect concerned; they only remind you of other aspects. Examples are the "sense of justice" or the "joy of faith" which are retrocipations to the sensitive aspect from the juridical and pistic aspects. Similarly feeling "unfairly treated" is an anticipation in the sensitive aspect of the juridical.

The modal scale of aspects is an analytical tool which does not describe what things are, but rather the way things function. Only things exist and only things function: modal aspects do not exist or function. The modal scale is a means whereby we can analyse (a human subjective function) the things of created reality. God thus cannot be subject to analysis in terms of the modal aspects, since God is not a creature.[42] Thus the human

40 Creation is a foundational concept for Dooyeweerd's philosophy and for the whole of reformational thought. For an example of the way creation is understood in this perspective, see Henri Blocher. **In the Beginning. The opening chapters of Genesis**. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1984.

41 The Scriptures do not present an analytical structure such as the modal scale, because the Scripture is a covenantal document which addresses the whole person as religious being in relationship with God. But in the light of Scripture we can formulate such analytical tools as the modal scale, in response to our calling to understand and shape the world we live in. Thus we can discern the structure of created reality in the light of Scripture and codify that discerning in a tentatively held framework such as the modal scale. Cf. Karl Barth. "We remember that we shall search the Old and New Testaments in vain for a true anthropology and therefore for a theory of the relation between soul and body. The biblical texts regard and describe man in the full exercise of his intercourse with God. Their authors have neither the time nor the interest to occupy themselves with man as such, nor to give to themselves or their readers a theoretical account of what is to be understood by the being of man." **Church Dogmatics**. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Vol. 3, Part 2, p. 433.

42 Theology then as a human activity does not have God as its object (since God is to be the object of our faith and love, not of scientific analysis). Theology is rather the analysis of human faith-life: what constitutes the structure and articulation of our faith commitment. This is to be distinguished from the Enlightenment view of religion, since while some thinkers saw theology as the study of human faith, they denied the reality of that faith and the God in which that faith was

person is not a combination of the modal aspects, not even the sum total of them, since the modal aspects are not ontological in character but functional: the human person is a concrete reality which functions in all these diverse aspects, not compositions of disparate substantial parts, such as a body and a soul (or body and mind), but concrete wholes functioning in richly diverse ways. The Scripture always deals with the whole person in relation to God, and not with only "parts" of the human person.[43] The use of the terminology of "inward-outward" in Scripture provides us with the basis of an anthropology which is neither dualistic nor monistic. This inward-outward approach speaks of human nature as looked at from different angles, rather than as composed of different parts (as in body-soul terminology). Humans then are complex and dynamic configurations of a variety of functions, centrally religiously directed in all their actions,[44] being constituted by God's creative act, formed to respond to God and to have communion with him in the fellowship of all humankind. We are created for a task, to care for and develop in a stewardly manner the creation entrusted by God to our care, and that task is inherent in what it is to be human. Because of our sin, resulting in alienation from God, that task is carried out in rebellion and in violation of the norms which God has prescribed for this task: the norms which govern human life itself.

The diverse modal ways in which we function are not instruments or vehicles for a higher component of human life, but rather themselves constitute human life. That is, human life is not separable from the modal ways of functioning: it is the modal ways we function, bound together as a coherent concrete unit - the structural whole which functions as subject in each of these aspects. Dooyeweerd uses subject-object in a unique way: the subjective is active involvement in one of the aspects, the objective is passive

placed. See for instance the views of Gordon Kauffman. **God the Problem**. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972. **The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God**. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981.

43 B J van der Walt. **Being human: a gift and a duty**. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1990, p. 6. See also by the same author, "Radical Biblical Anthropology." In: **Horizon: Surveying a route for contemporary Christian thought**. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1978, pp. 101-119.

44 B J van der Walt. **Being human: a gift and a duty**. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1990, p. 11.

involvement in one of the aspects. Human beings are subjects (active) in every aspect, while other creatures are subjects (active) in only some of the aspects. Thus non-living things are subjects only in the first four (from the bottom of the modal scale), plants are subjects in the first five, and animals subjects in the first six. In all remaining aspects, non-human creatures are objects, that is, they have only a passive involvement in those aspects of reality. A stone, a plant and a bird all function as aesthetic objects, in that human beings can appreciate that aspect of their being, but they are not aesthetic subjects since they are not actively, i.e. intentionally, expressing themselves in the aesthetic aspect. There is therefore a marked difference between human and non-human creatures: only humans have responsibility and accountability for every aspect of their being.

Since the human person therefore encompasses all the aspects of reality as subject, that which the Patristics distinguished into two entities, body and soul, form the one creaturely reality of the human person, and thus the whole person must stand before the judgement. This necessitates a resurrection, since apart from the restoration of the person as an entity functioning in all aspects, including the physical and biotic, the person cannot exist. One of the problems of non-Christian philosophy is that it is almost invariably reductionistic, so that the body is seen solely as a living physico-chemical entity. In a reformational perspective, the human person expresses its life as a subject in each of the aspects: the human body is the free field of expression of the religious centre of existence:[45] the heart. Our bodies are not just physico-chemical and biotic subjects, but ethical, economic, aesthetic, juridical subjects. That is, without acting as subjects in all the modal aspects, we would not be human. Therefore a human being does not have a body, he or she is a body, as long as it is understood that in this context “body” means the concrete entity which functions subjectively in every aspect of reality, including that of faith. Dooyeweerd speaks of “bodiliness” by which he means the whole person in the whole diversity of functioning. Bodiliness is not to have a biological-physical part to our being. It is rather the entire being of humans in this world: our faith-life, our aesthetic appreciation, our economic activity, our thinking, our dreaming and our loving are all bodily activities. There are no “out of the body experiences” for human beings, whether in life or in death, since we cannot be divorced from the body without destroying the

45 L Kalsbeek. **Contours of a Christian philosophy: An introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's thought**. Toronto: Wedge, 1975, p. 293.

person, the human being. So then our economic or legal activities are not separate from our bodies but are acts of our bodies: since there is no other way in which we can act except as bodily beings. We are not embodied beings or beings with bodies, but bodily beings. We cannot be disembodied and still remain in being, nor is there a being which "has" the body which is not intrinsic to the body.

The dualistic distinction of the human person into a dichotomy of body and soul (or less commonly a trichotomy of body, soul and spirit) which was common in the Patristic era, and is still continued today, separates what has been discerned as the aspects of the modal scale into two substantial entities, usually drawing a separation on the scale between the biotic and sensitive aspects, although this can vary.[46] Thus the aspects are allocated to two substances, rather than being seen as the functions of the one entity. The Scriptures do not use the terms soul, spirit and body for parts of the human person, but for the whole person seen from different angles. We do not therefore have a soul or spirit or body, but we are soul and spirit and body.

That entity has at its root a centre of existence which directs and unifies the modal functions and stands behind their diversity: the religious centre or selfhood. This is understood in terms of what is spoken of in Scripture as the "heart."[47] It is from the heart that human persons exist and live, and the heart as the religious centre determines the orientation towards God: in either obedience or rebellion.[48] Our God-relatedness is

46 Non-Christian or partially-Christian (synthesis) thought-systems arbitrarily focus on one or other aspect of human life (or sometimes several in combination) and in a reductionist manner define human life in terms of those aspects. Mediaeval scholasticism conceived of human nature as basically rational and moral, while reductionistic scientism conceives of human nature as basically physico-chemical. Marxism sees human nature as fundamentally economic. While these are genuine aspects of human nature which cannot be denied, the non-Christian religious root of these thought-systems reveals its idolatrous character in such conceptions, since they focus not on our all-of-life-embracing covenantal relationship with God, but on an aspect of our creaturely life, elevating that to the source of meaning and significance for humankind in an idolatrous fashion.

47 Cf. a similar view espoused by Karl Barth. **Church Dogmatics**. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, Vol. III, Part 2, pp. 435-436.

48 Because of this interest in anthropology in reformational thought, several Ph.D. theses have been written on the Biblical anthropology explicating such themes. These include: J H Becker. **Het begrip nefesj in het Oude Testament** (The concept of nephesh in the Old Testament). Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1942. F H von Meyenfeldt. **Het hart (leb, lebab) in het Oude Testament** (The heart (leb, lebab) in the Old Testament). Leiden: E J Brill, 1950. See also my thesis on this theme, **Shall the body strive and not be crowned? Unitary and instrumentalist anthropological models as keys to interpreting the structure of Patristic eschatology**. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Otago, 1993. Available online at

constitutive for human functionality: our very creaturely existence in all its diversity expresses the mystery of our relation to God, and because we are totally dependent on God we can only know ourselves as creatures in relation to God.[49] Von Meyenfeldt distinguishes various non-religious (i.e. pistic or faith-oriented) senses of the use of the term "heart": as biotic organ; as place of deep-seated emotion; in a noetic sense (memory, knowledge), in a volitional sense (ideals, desires, deciding) and in an ethical sense (character, conscience). These can be unified in the representative use of heart as the whole person. This is further deepened in the religious sense as the relation of the whole person to God, which determines the course of life and its origin. The heart is the maker of sin, the seat of conscious opposition to God, the source of idolatry and infection by sin. Thus Calvin referred to the heart as a "perpetual factory of idols."[50] It is also the pivot of conversion and centre of humility, producing the search for God and the fear of God. The sense of heart can be seen encapsulated in Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."[51]

The heart understood in this sense does not exist in itself, but is known and exists only as the concrete personhood which functions identically in all of the diverse aspects. The heart does not stand behind the aspects ontologically, that is, as a separate or separable entity, but it is distingished analytically from the modal aspects through which it functions. Thus when we ask what lies behind the diversity of modal functions, looking from the point of view of the distinctions between them, we see them concentrated in the religious root, the heart or centre of existence, the selfhood in relationship with God. But when we look at the human self as a concrete entity, the creature God formed, and how that creature functions, we see a diffraction of aspects from that centre which enables us to analyse more acutely the character of human life.

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academia.edu. The most extensive work done in this area was that by Antheunis Janse. See for instance his **Van Idolen en Schepselen**. Kampen: J H Kok, 1938

49 A H de Graaff. "Towards a new anthropological model." In: **Hearing and Doing: Philosophical essays dedicated to H Evan Runner**. Toronto: Wedge, 1979, p. 108.

50 John Calvin. **Institutes of the Christian Religion**, 1.11.8. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960. Library of Christian Classics Vol. 22. p. 108.

51 For other instances see for example: Proverbs 3:1, 5, 6:14, 18.

The whole human person then will be raised from the dead to face the judgement, and that judgement will examine all the actions of each one: the actions which arise in the heart and are directed by it either in obedience to God or in rebellion against him. Since we are bodily beings,[52] there can be no resurrection and no judgement if we are not raised from the dead. The reformational approach thus provides a genuine and commendable alternative to the traditional anthropological formulation of a dualism of body and soul, since it maintains the integrity of God's creation, the human being who is accountable to him in everything, and is able to wholeheartedly affirm the resurrection to come.

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For a detailed analysis of the development of Patristic anthropology and eschatology, see my thesis: **Shall the Body Strive and not be Crowned? Unitary and Instrumentalist Anthropological Models as Keys to Interpreting the Structure of Patristic Eschatology**. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Otago, 1993. Available online at academia.edu.

For further reading on the reformational approach (with reference to anthropology and eschatology) see the following:

Berkouwer, G C. **Man: The Image of God**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.

Berkouwer, G C. **The Return of Christ**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

Boliek, Lynn. **The Resurrection of the Flesh. A Study of a Confessional Phrase**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.

Hanhart, K. **The Intermediate State in the New Testament**. Franeker: T Wever, 1966.

52 Cf. Romans 12:1 which exhorts us to present ourselves, seen from the point of view of our bodies, as living sacrifices. It does not exhort us to present our bodies only as if they were a part of us that could be treated separately. Herman Ridderbos comments in connection with this verse that "Paul frequently speaks of the body as the concrete mode of existence, co-extensive with man himself." **Paul: An outline of this Theology**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, p. 116. Douglas Moo comments: "Body can, of course, refer to the physical body as such, and the metaphorical associations with sacrifice make it an appropriate choice here. But Paul probably intends to refer to the entire person, with special emphasis on that person's interaction with the world." **The Epistle to the Romans**. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 750-751. See also C K Barrett. **A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans**. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957, p. 231.

Marshall, P. **Heaven is not my Home. Learning to Live in God's Creation**. Nashville: Word, 1998.

Middleton, J R. **A New Heaven and a New Earth. Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology**. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014.

Ridderbos, H. **Paul: An Outline of His Theology**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

Schep, J A. **The Nature of the Resurrection-Body**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

Wright, N T. **Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church**. New York: HarperOne, 2008.