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Oldhoff, M.C.L.

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MARTINE OLDHOFF

## Pauline Mindfulness? Paul's Interaction With Trichotomic Anthropology

### PAULINE MINDFULNESS

The current paper aims to contribute to our understanding of Paul's anthropology and consequently his attitude towards his cultural context. Therefore, George H. van Kooten's thesis that Paul's anthropology incorporates a so-called Jewish trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* that is equivalent to the Greek trichotomy of *nous-psyche-sōma* is evaluated. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, it is argued that Van Kooten's thesis of a Jewish trichotomy cannot stand. On the contrary, it is probable that Paul employed the Greek trichotomy by interpreting it in a 'Christian' manner. In Paul, the *nous* receives the Spirit that transforms the believer. Thus, Paul interacts with an anthropology that was common in his cultural context, but qualified it by emphasising the role of the Spirit of God.

### PAULUS' INTERACTIE MET EEN TRICHOTOME ANTROPOLOGIE

Dit paper poogt bij te dragen aan het begrip van Paulus' antropologie en daarmee zijn houding ten opzichte van zijn culturele context. Daarom evalueer ik Geurt Henk van Kooten's hypothese dat Paulus' antropologie een zogenaamde Joodse antropologie van *pneuma-psyche-sōma*, een equivalent van de Griekse trichotomie van *nous-psyche-sōma*, bevat. Op basis van 1 Korinthe 2 en 1 Korinthe 14 betoog ik dat deze Joodse trichotomie niet overtuigend is. Het is echter wel waarschijnlijk dat Paulus een Griekse trichotomie op een 'christelijke' wijze vorm heeft gegeven. De Heilige Geest werkt in de *nous* om de gelovige te transformeren. Paulus verhiel zich dus tot een gebruikelijke antropologie in zijn culturele context door deze antropologie te kwalificeren met zijn nadruk op de rol van de Geest van God.

In what way does Paul relate to his cultural context in terms of his anthropology? Is his implicit anthropology comparable to those found among his Greco-Roman contemporaries? In order to obtain more knowledge of the context of Paul's anthropology, I shall examine in this article the possibility of a Hellenistic trichotomy in Paul.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, I will analyse George H. van

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is based upon my Master's thesis (Utrecht University) that I wrote under the supervision of Peter-Ben Smit. Eric Ottenheijm was the second supervisor. I have continued the research under the

Kooten's hypothesis on the trichotomous anthropology of Paul, which is found in chapter 5 of his monograph *Paul's Anthropology in Context* (2008).<sup>2</sup> Secondly, I will develop the alternative hypothesis that Paul related to the Hellenistic trichotomy by his particular theological emphasis: the Spirit needs to renew the mind. One may call this Jewish-Christian, although we will see that Paul is not to be pinned down in one contextual category.<sup>3</sup> His particular theological emphasis, thirdly, has implications for the way in which Paul related to his context, as I will discuss in the final section. We shall now start our inquiry with the question: what does Van Kooten contend concerning Paul's anthropology?

### Van Kooten's Thesis Unraveled

The hypothesis of Van Kooten is that Paul of Tarsus, like Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus, assumes a 'Jewish' anthropological trichotomy consisting of *pneuma-psyche-sōma*, an equivalent of a Hellenistic trichotomy of *nous-psyche-sōma*, which is based on Plato. Trichotomy here indicates a view of the human being in which the body and soul are differentiated and the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) or mind (*νοῦς*) is the most prominent part of the soul. Such a perspective on the human being was very common in the Hellenistic culture(s) of Paul's days.<sup>4</sup>

Van Kooten traces this idea back to Plato's differentiation between body and soul developing into a trichotomy in which the soul divides itself into soul

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supervision of Annette Merz (PThU). I have presented most of this paper at the fourth meeting of *χρονίσαντες*, Groningen New Testament & Early Christianity Seminar of the RUG and PThU (13-02-2015), which Geurt Henk van Kooten also attended. I am grateful for the comments of all who participated. I also want to thank the editorial board of *NTT* for their reviews and patience, Peter-Ben Smit for his insightful guidance as to editing the article and William Hardin for his feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Anders Klostergaard Petersen, 'Review of George van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity*, WUNT 1/232, Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck 2008', 112-4, *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 42 (2011), 112-4.

<sup>3</sup> When the words 'Christian(s)' and 'Christianise' are used in this article, that segment of First Century Judaism is meant in which Jesus Christ was confessed as Lord. The intention is not to demarcate a 'Christian' strictly from a Jew or Pagan, but to indicate that possible differences are related to the confession of Christ as Lord.

<sup>4</sup> There were many different early Jewish and Christian anthropologies, such as the holistic anthropology. L. Roig Lanzillotta, 'One Human Being, Three Early Christian Anthropologies: An Assessment of AA's Tenor on the Basis of its Anthropological Views', 414-444, *Vigilae Christianae* 61 (2007), 421, affirms that the view of the bipartite human being (the way in which trichotomy is defined and considered in this article fits Roig Lanzillotta's definition of a bipartite anthropology) was almost the 'natural' view of the human being in Antiquity. It was found everywhere, even in Judaism, although the view of a holistic individual was more dominant there.

(*psyche*) and mind (*nous*), with the body (*sōma*) remaining as the third element.<sup>5</sup> The *nous* became rather dominant in Plato's anthropology, according to Van Kooten.<sup>6</sup> This tripartite anthropology would then have been adopted and adjusted by Philo, Paul and Josephus. Van Kooten argues that this anthropology has left a very deep imprint on Paul and Philo's understanding of the human being.<sup>7</sup> From the idea that *nous* is the highest part of the soul in Philo, as was a common perception in Greek philosophy of Paul's day, Van Kooten builds the thesis of a Jewish trichotomy.

The basis of his argument for the existence of a specifically Jewish trichotomy is the supposed shared interpretation of Genesis 2:7 ('then the Lord God formed the human being from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (πνοήν ζωής); and the human being became a living being (ψυχὴν ζῶσαν)<sup>8</sup>) that Van Kooten claims can be found in Philo, Josephus and Paul. The 'breath of life' (Gen. 2:7) demands exegetical attention. Philo replaces πνοή with πνεῦμα, because this term suits his anthropological interest better.<sup>9</sup> In his exegesis of Genesis 2:7, Philo combines *nous* with *pneuma*. The *nous* is not identical to *pneuma*; *pneuma* is greater than *nous*. The *nous* is the 'receptacle' (for which I will use the word 'receiver'), the part in which *pneuma* is received. *Pneuma* is mediated by *nous* to the rest of the soul. Consequently, *pneuma* dominates both *nous* and *psyche*: 'If the *nous* is indeed inbreathed by and filled with the divine *pneuma* it becomes synonymous with the *pneuma*'.<sup>10</sup> In this way, Philo knows both the Greek philosophical triad of *nous-psyche-sōma* and its Jewish equivalent *pneuma-psyche-sōma*.<sup>11</sup> According to Van Kooten, Paul and Josephus worked with the Jewish trichotomy as well, since they interpreted LXX Gen. 2:7 in similar fashion to Philo:

This shows that the triad *pneuma, psychē and sōma* is the Jewish equivalent of the Greek tripartite division of man in terms of *nous, psychē and sōma*, which is read from the perspective of Gen. 2:7. Since this passage from Genesis is

<sup>5</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 269.

<sup>6</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 269–270.

<sup>7</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 269.

<sup>8</sup> NRSV. LXX: 'καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν'.

<sup>9</sup> George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 232), Tübingen 2008, 276.

<sup>10</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 279.

explicitly quoted by Philo, Paul and Josephus, their interpretation seems to reflect a common understanding of Gen. 2:7 LXX in the 1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD.<sup>12</sup>

Van Kooten attempts to substantiate this claim through his interpretation of *pneuma* and *nous* in Philo and Paul.

He argues that *nous* and *pneuma* become synonymous in both ancient writers, just as he considers the words ‘mind’ (*nous*), ‘reasonable soul’ (*logike psyche*) and ‘spirit’ (*pneuma*) in Philo ‘near-synonyms’, without defining what he means by ‘near-synonyms’.<sup>13</sup> What, however, is the underlying argument? How do *nous* and *pneuma* relate to each other? This will appear to vary greatly in Van Kooten’s understanding of these concepts. However, this relationship is vital in understanding Paul’s theology. There are two principal problems with regard to Van Kooten’s interpretation of Paul’s usage of *nous* and *pneuma*. Let us discover these problems in order to evaluate Van Kooten’s argumentation for the alleged trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* in Paul.

### The Relationship *Nous - Pneuma*

The first problem is that Van Kooten writes in two conflicting ways about the relationship of *nous* and *pneuma*. His definition ‘near-synonyms’ covers these two ways of writing. The foundation of the argument in favour of a Jewish trichotomy is the idea that the *nous* is the receiver of the *pneuma* in Philo (figure 1).

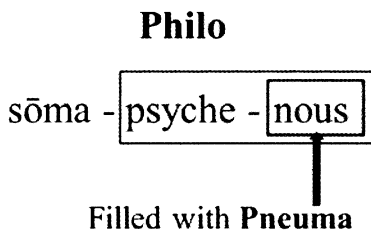


Figure 1

The basis is the Greek trichotomy. At the very beginning of the argument for a Jewish trichotomy, *nous* and *pneuma* are not synonymous. This presupposition is present in Van Kooten’s argumentation for the degeneration and restoration of the human being in Philo, on which the comparison with Paul is modelled. When he writes about the degeneration and fall of humans in Philo, he observes that the degeneration of the descendants of the first earthly human being is mainly due to the downfall of the human mind. Philo sketches the downfall of the human being as a natural process for physical and moral reasons. The heavenly human being has a perfect *nous*,

<sup>12</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 280.

<sup>13</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 277.

which contrasts with the earthly human who needs commandments and instruction. The earthly *nous* may degenerate if it does not follow God's commandments.<sup>14</sup> The earthly *nous* needs God's breath, *pneuma*, to become a living soul that has a real *nous*. The mind can only be properly restored by the inbreathing of God's *pneuma*.<sup>15</sup> Although Van Kooten describes the process of the downfall of the human mind as a loss of the human being's *pneumatic-noetic* identity, tying the concepts *pneuma* and *nous* closely together, his description and interpretation of Philo shows that *pneuma* and *nous* indeed function as different concepts in Philo, as is acknowledged in Van Kooten's interpretation of him.<sup>16</sup> The *nous* first needs to be filled by the *pneuma*.

Not only is Philo's use of *nous* and *pneuma* declared synonymous by Van Kooten, he also claims that Paul uses the words as synonyms. To connect the *pneuma* and the *nous*, he emphasises the importance of 1 Corinthians 2:13–3:4, in which the *pneumatic* human being, in contrast to the *psychic* human being, has the *nous* of Christ. Apparently, the *pneumatikoi* have their *nous* restored and are modelled on the heavenly human being, Christ, whose *nous* they possess.<sup>17</sup> In this way Van Kooten equates *nous* and *pneuma*, to be able to conclude that the differentiation between the *pneuma* and the *psyche* in Paul is the same differentiation as the *nous* and *psyche* in Greek philosophy.<sup>18</sup> He then makes explicit what was already implied in this argument, namely that since *nous* can refer to the human *nous* (1 Cor. 1:10; 14:14–15, 14:19) and to the *nous* of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and *pneuma* to the divine *pneuma* (1 Cor. 2:4, 2:10–14, 3:16) and to the human *pneuma* (1 Cor. 2:11), *pneuma* and *nous* can be synonymous in Paul: 'These passages also show that, as in Philo, in Paul too the words 'pneuma' and 'nous' can be synonymous.'<sup>19</sup> Both words, *nous* and *pneuma*, are said to have a human and divine function and are therefore declared possibly synonymous. But is this argument from analogy really sufficient to conclude that these words are synonyms?

It is indeed probable that the *nous* of Christ presupposes a human mind, as van Kooten assumes in this argument.<sup>20</sup> However, with regard to 1 Corinthians 2 it is problematic to hold that these words are synonymous. In this passage, Paul argues that God revealed the wisdom of the cross through his Spirit (2:10). He asserts that the human spirit knows the human being, and the

<sup>14</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 288–9.

<sup>15</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 292.

<sup>16</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 287.

<sup>17</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 306.

<sup>18</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 307.

<sup>19</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 307.

<sup>20</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 306.

divine Spirit knows the divine being, God, (2:11) and contends that ‘we’ have received the Spirit of God and are therefore able to know (οἶδα) what God has given to us (2:12). The Spirit of God, which is apparently not given to all human beings (2:14), teaches us what we have received from God (2:13). The one who possesses God’s Spirit is able to judge (ἀνακρίνω) all things (2:15). From this text follows the notion that ‘we’ know the mind of God, because ‘we’ have the mind of Christ (2:16). It is apparent that the ‘we’ who have received the Spirit, are contrasted to those who have not. The ‘we’ who have received the Spirit, have the mind of Christ. There is a certain parallel between the *nous* of Christ and the Spirit, but *how* are they related?

Firstly, in 2:12 the cognitive activity (οἶδα) of the human being is connected to the Spirit of the Lord. Those who have the Spirit of God are able to know what they have received from God (2:12,13). The second privilege of those who have this Spirit is that they can examine ‘all things’. Given the cognitive aspect mentioned in 2:12 and the ‘mind of Christ’ and the further context of this letter, in which Paul in chapter 14 (:14,15) assumes a personal mind (see also below), it is very probable that a *nous* as personal anthropological trait is presumed.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the subject of these verses is an antithesis between the wisdom of this present age (αἰών) and the wisdom of God. Therefore, there is a contrast between the human being who does not receive wisdom of the Spirit of God and the human being who is revealed wisdom through God’s Spirit (2:12).<sup>22</sup> Consequently, there is also a distinction between those who have the mind of Christ (2:16) and those who do not have it. It is indeed implied that the Spirit of God runs parallel to the mind of Christ; both are to be received and shared in. But are they synonymous? From the (pre)supposed personal *nous* as an anthropological trait and the Spirit as an actor which some human beings have (the ‘we’ in 2:12) and some do not have, it follows that the human spirit and human mind are not identical to the divine Spirit and divine mind, because not everyone has access to the latter two. Apparently, both are to be received through Christ.<sup>23</sup> Since the Spirit leads to the sharing in Christ’s mind, the Spirit can transform the human *nous* by the continuous orientation on the right *nous*. There is a bridge to be built between the human *nous* and that of Christ, because the passage deals

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 306 (1 Cor. 2) and 309 (1 Cor. 14). For other instances of *nous* as a personal anthropological trait see Rom. 1:28, 12:2, 14:5, Phil. 4:7. Early interpreters of Paul also considered the *nous* to be a personal anthropological trait: Col. 2:18, 1 Tim. 6:5, 2 Tim. 3:8, Tit. 1:15

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Harm-Jan Inkelaar, *Conflict over Wisdom: The Theme of 1 Corinthians 1-4 Rooted in Scripture* (CBET), Leuven 2011, 311.

<sup>23</sup> There is definitely also a communal dimension to what I describe here, but it is beyond the scope of this article to pay more attention to it.

with different groups of people who have distinctive sorts of minds—those that are guided by the Spirit and those that are not. The Spirit thus bridges the gap between the human *nous* and the *nous* of Christ, which implies that none of these concepts is to be identified with any of the other. To attain the *nous* of Christ, the Spirit is needed: to attain a well-functioning *nous*, the Spirit is needed. All concepts (God's Spirit, Christ's *nous*, human *nous*) are thus to be distinguished, although they relate closely to each other.

### **Divine *Pneuma* = Human *Pneuma*?**

The second problem in Van Kooten's argumentation for a Jewish trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* is his assumption that the divine *Pneuma* equals the human *pneuma*. This identification, however, is questionable. *Pneuma* in Paul, according to Van Kooten, refers to the human *pneuma* fused with divine *Pneuma* that restores the human *pneuma* and therewith the human *nous*. In Paul, the divine spirit would be infused in the human being when he or she is created. In this way, the human spirit is a consequence of the divine one. Since human beings degenerate, this spirit in them needs to be restored by the divine *Pneuma*.<sup>24</sup> Christians can have their *pneuma* restored through the Spirit of God, the *Pneuma*. They need to be unified with Christ, the second human being from heaven.<sup>25</sup> Van Kooten's assumption is that Paul also thinks that *pneuma* is corrupted. Paul, however, never mentions this. Nevertheless, Van Kooten's interpretation of Paul underscores what he means by *pneuma*: the human *pneuma* that is in contact with the divine *Pneuma*. These two are intertwined: 'The human *pneuma* is called *pneuma* because it has been bestowed by, and, for this very reason, corresponds with the divine *Pneuma*. It is both simultaneously.'<sup>26</sup> Divine and human *pneuma* are thus hard to distinguish, according to Van Kooten. Therefore, from the idea that *pneuma* and *nous* can be synonymous, it also follows that God's Spirit can be a near-synonym of the human mind.

The first counterargument to the idea that the divine and the human spirit are to be regarded as synonymous, would of course be that 1 Corinthians 2:10–12 makes sufficiently clear that the human spirit is something different from the divine Spirit.<sup>27</sup> In 2:11 the spirit of the human being and the Spirit of

<sup>24</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 303–4.

<sup>25</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 303.

<sup>26</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 307.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Inkelaar, *Conflict over Wisdom*, 311; H. Merklein, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther. Kapitel 1–4* (ÖTK 7/1), Gütersloh 1992, 236–7; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther. 1. Teilband* (EKK 7/1), Zürich 1991, 258; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000, 258–9.



God are explicitly distinguished: ‘For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God.’<sup>28</sup> A second argument is Romans 8:16, in which they are explicitly distinguished as well: ‘it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God’.<sup>29</sup> For a third argument we turn to 1 Corinthians 14. This chapter deals with speaking in tongues and prophesying (14:1–2). It is important to avoid the fallacy of thinking that the spirit in this text is God’s Spirit. The two types of spirit might be in contact, but should be distinguished. It is precisely the question of *how* the Spirit is involved in the activities during congregational worship that is addressed by Paul in chapter 14.

The spirit in 14:14–15 (‘(14) (For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. (15) What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.’<sup>30</sup>) denotes the non-cognitive or ‘spiritual’ human capacity.<sup>31</sup> If one considers the spirit to be the Spirit of God, one falls into the same trap as the Corinthians: associating the work of the Spirit very closely with non-cognitive spontaneous phenomena, while 14:23–25<sup>32</sup> points to the operation of the Spirit as the self-critical reflection upon the word of God that addresses understanding and in that way transforms the heart.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the suggestion that ‘my’ spirit in 14:14 should be read as the Spirit of God is unconvincing and unpauline.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the text immediately following 14:14 clarifies its meaning. One can observe that ‘my spirit’ and ‘the mind’ are opposed in 14:14. The mind is unfruitful when ‘my spirit’ prays. It would be highly peculiar if this spirit would be God’s Spirit. In the following verse (14:15), Paul strengthens his argument by stressing the contrast between the two different types of praying that are possible. He twice

<sup>28</sup> NRSV. NA28: ‘τίς γάρ οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ; οὕτως καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδεὶς ἐγνώκεν εἰ μὴ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ.’

<sup>29</sup> NRSV. NA28: ‘αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ’.

<sup>30</sup> NRSV. NA28: ‘(14) ἐὰν [γάρ] προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν. (15) τί οὖν ἐστίν; προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοί: ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοί.’

<sup>31</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1112–3.

<sup>32</sup> NA28: ‘(23) Ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε; (24) ἐὰν δὲ πάντες προφητεύωσιν, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων, (25) τὰ κρυπτά τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερά γίνεται, καὶ οὕτως πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον προσκυνήσει τῷ θεῷ, ἀπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν.’

<sup>33</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1112–3.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black’s New Testament Commentaries), London 1968, 320.

uses δὲ καὶ adversely (to express an opposition); he sets up an argument and therefore emphatically distinguishes praying with the spirit from praying with the mind. The mind and the spirit are clearly not synonymous here.<sup>35</sup> Praying with the human spirit is simply different from praying with the mind, as 14:16–19 affirms, in which Paul writes that thanksgiving through the spirit is not beneficial for those who do not understand *glossolalia*. These two ways of praying cannot be integrated into one way of praying, and Paul prefers praying with the mind for missionary purposes. The ultimate consequence of praying in ‘my spirit’ that is presented in 14:23 should underscore this argument: Paul speaks of outsiders (ἰδιώτης) who would say that those praying in the spirit are raving and out of their mind (μαίνομαι). In Thiselton’s words: ‘(...) the term carries the double meaning of emotional lack of self-control, expressed as raving, and an unattractive, even frightening loss of rational sanity’.<sup>36</sup> This emphasises the contrast between the two ways: that of ‘my spirit’ and that of ‘the mind’ and therewith supports the first reason why Van Kooten’s argument is flawed: *nous* and *pneuma* are clearly not necessarily synonymous.

How is the mind depicted in 1 Corinthians 14? In 14:19 Paul speaks in the first person and uses ‘my mind’ (τῷ νοῦ μου), which reveals that he also considered the mind to be a personal capacity. The dative used is a *dativus instrumentalis*, as the textual variant in P<sup>46</sup> that inserts ἐν before τῷ νοῦ μου, supports as well. Verse 20 in chapter 14 is of importance too, because this is the only occurrence of the noun φρήν in the New Testament.<sup>37</sup> In Plutarch and Philo, φρήν denotes the sphere of thinking, judgment or understanding.<sup>38</sup> In the dative plural it can be translated as ‘in matters of the mind’, so Paul admonishes the Corinthian Christians to be wise in matters of the mind.<sup>39</sup> Although *nous* is not used, in the context of the preceding verses, it can be safely assumed that Paul in 14:20 makes an appeal to the mind that they all are supposed to have. With regard to 1:10 and 2:16, this admonition can also be a call for a reorientation around the *nous* of Christ.

The idea of the *nous* as a personal trait with an instrumental function is furthermore assumed in 14:14–19, because everyone, even non-Christians, are able to follow what happens when one prays or sings with the mind. This is significant to notice, because it might point to the idea that Paul considered

<sup>35</sup> Contra Van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology*, 307.

<sup>36</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1126.

<sup>37</sup> NA28: Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσὶν ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶν τέλειοι γίνεσθε’.

<sup>38</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1120.

<sup>39</sup> Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1119.

the *nous* to be a general human feature, a part of the human make-up, part of Paul's anthropology. There is however, at the same time a difference between the *nous* of the Christian and the *nous* of the non-Christian that can be persuaded during the gathering of praise and prayer (14:23–25). The *nous* of the Christian is able to sing and praise God and 2:10–16, as we saw above, explains why—it is guided by God's Spirit. The Spirit of God makes the difference in maintaining the right *nous*.

Thus, the question addressed in 1 Corinthians 14 is how the Spirit operates in congregational worship. If Paul thus favours the mind and continues further on (14:23–25) that prophecy impacts outsiders most, it can be concluded that the working of the Spirit through the mind instead of through 'my spirit' is preferred here by Paul. This operation of the Spirit is deemed to have most effect on outsiders. Apparently, *glossolalia* are not communicative and do not necessarily build up the community; they are only related to the person speaking.<sup>40</sup> For the unity and the growth of the community the use of the *nous* in praising God is thus preferred. Whether the Spirit works through one's mind or one's spirit, all these concepts (*nous*, *pneuma*, *Pneuma*) are to be distinguished. Hence, we may conclude our counterargument: the Spirit of God is thus not automatically involved with the human spirit.

### Concluding Reflections on Van Kooten's Thesis

We have discussed two problems in Van Kooten's interpretation of Paul. It can be concluded that *nous* and *pneuma* are not synonymous in Paul's thought, as was especially shown in the discussion of 1 Corinthians 2:10–16 and 1 Corinthians 14:14–15. The relationship between *nous* and *pneuma* is not one of synonyms.<sup>41</sup> From these texts it also followed that it is not convincing that God's Spirit is equal to the human spirit. What does this mean for Van Kooten's line of reasoning? His argumentation for a Jewish trichotomy is based on the assumption that there was a common exegesis of Genesis 2:7 LXX in the first century AD, which Philo, Paul and Josephus shared, as cited above.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Oda Wischmeyer, *Paul: Life, Setting, Work, Letters*, translated by Helen S. Heron, London/New York 2012, 167.

<sup>41</sup> The writer of 2 Thessalonians, as early interpreter of Paul, also distinguished *nous* and (the human) *pneuma* (2:2). An interesting example of an 'enthusiastic' interpretation of Paul is found in Eph. 4:23 in which the *pneuma* has settled in the *nous*. This possibly illustrates the way of the gnostic forms of Christianity in which *pneuma* replaced *nous*.

<sup>42</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 280.

He builds his interpretation of Paul on this assumption, yet fails to substantiate it. The problem is that Van Kooten does not support his claim of a shared interpretation of the explicit citation of Gen. 2:7 in which all these terms (*nous*, *psyche*, *sōma*, *pneuma*) would be mentioned, as in Philo's case. We have seen the exegesis of Genesis 2:7 in Philo, in which the two trichotomies were demonstrated. Van Kooten also mentions how Josephus understands Genesis 2:7 in terms of the dichotomy of *pneuma* and *psyche*.<sup>43</sup> It is remarkable that he does not give an example of Josephus interpreting Genesis 2:7 with a reference to the *nous*. Of interest for our subject, Paul's anthropology, is his treatment of Paul. For the occurrence of the triad in Paul, Van Kooten directs the reader to the second section of his chapter.<sup>44</sup>

In this second section, there is no discussion of the relationship between Paul's only explicit mentioning of the triad in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (*pneuma-psyche-sōma*) and Genesis 2:7. Instead, Genesis 2:7 is connected with 1 Corinthians 15, by mentioning that Genesis 2:7 was interpreted as a passage about the human soul by Philo and Josephus.<sup>45</sup> Firstly, it is very peculiar that Van Kooten leaves unmentioned the fact that the only explicit trichotomy in Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:23) has no connection with Genesis 2:7. Secondly, Van Kooten has not demonstrated how Paul's citation of Genesis 2:7 in 1 Corinthians 15:(45) would explicitly mention the *nous* as well, so that this would indeed point to a new trichotomy. The same holds for Josephus. Where do Paul and Josephus mention all the possible components of the tripartite being in relation to their citation of Genesis 2:7? Van Kooten has not shown how Paul or Josephus speaks of the *nous* as one of the highest parts of man.<sup>46</sup> This, however, is necessary in order to prove that the *pneuma* can be either a 'synonym' or a component that replaces the place of importance of the *nous*.

In fact, Van Kooten needs to presuppose the idea of a Jewish trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* in order to contend that Paul holds such a trichotomy.<sup>47</sup> He moves from Philo's Greek position of *nous-psyche-sōma* to Philo's Jewish position of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* on the basis of the importance of *pneuma* for *nous*. When he introduces this second trichotomy he refers to Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 1,34; cf. 3,260) and Paul, without having dealt with Paul yet.<sup>48</sup> When he discusses Paul, he grounds the trichotomy in a supposed parallel with Philo: 'In Paul's triad *pneuma*, *psyche*

<sup>43</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 279–280.

<sup>44</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 279.

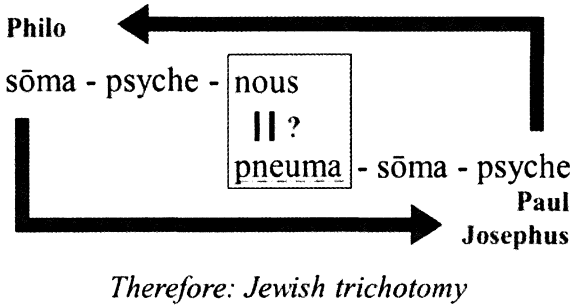
<sup>45</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 301–2.

<sup>46</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 306.

<sup>47</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 294–5.

<sup>48</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 279.

and *sōma*, the *pneuma* is a component of man, as the comparisons with Philo unequivocally show.<sup>49</sup> Van Kooten's confusion of *nous* and *pneuma* as synonyms, in which *pneuma* both signifies the divine and human spirit, is at the centre of his argument for a Jewish trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma* as



the equivalent of a Greek trichotomy of *nous-psyche-sōma*. Hence, the hypothesis of a Jewish trichotomy seems to rest upon circular reasoning, *petitio principii* (figure 2).

Since neither Paul nor Josephus mentions the *nous* explicitly in their interpretation of Genesis 2:7, the circle consists of a reference to Philo's interpretation and is fuel-

Figure 2

led by the idea that *nous* and *pneuma* are synonyms, in which *pneuma* is understood as both human and divine.

Van Kooten's argumentation for a Jewish trichotomy has not proven successful. Meanwhile, it has become evident that a relationship between the *nous* and the divine *pneuma* exists in 1 Corinthians 2:10–16 and 1 Corinthians 14. The divine *pneuma* needs to fill the *nous* in order for it to work properly. Van Kooten seems to disregard the possibility that Paul also departed from the triad *sōma-psyche-nous* as an existing triad in which the divine *Pneuma* receives a pivotal place thanks to the *nous* that is the receiver (figure 3). However, Van Kooten remains open to the possibility of *nous* functioning as receiver of *Pneuma*, as his comments on 1 Corinthians 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 demonstrate. With regard to 1 Corinthians 2, the *pneumatikoi* have their *nous* restored, as was already explained above. In 1 Corinthians 14, after Van Kooten has declared *pneuma* and *nous* to be synonyms, he writes that the ideal *pneumatikos*-type of human being in 1 Corinthians 14 does not annihilate his *nous*, but receives the *pneuma* within it.<sup>50</sup> In this way he both acknowledges that Paul discerns *nous* and *pneuma* in 1 Corinthians 14 and alleviates the distinction between the *nous* and the *pneuma*. Why, instead of erasing the distinction that is evident in 1 Corinthians 14:14–15, does he not

<sup>49</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 295.

<sup>50</sup> Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 309.

further explore the idea of the *nous* as a receiver, as the starting point of his hypothesis, Philo, suggested? The reason must be his identification of the human spirit with the divine one. Fortunately, this does not prevent us from exploring the idea of *nous* as the receiver of *Pneuma*.

**An Alternative Proposal: *Nous* as Receiver of Divine *Pneuma***

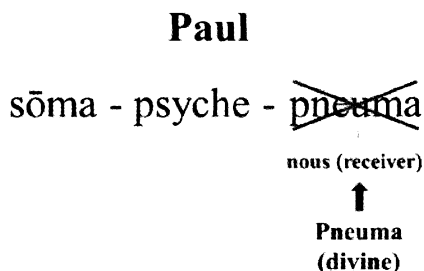


Figure 3

Inspired by Van Kooten’s argumentation, I propose to explore the possibility of *nous* as a receiver (figure 3). This means that I argue for the possibility of an underlying Greek trichotomy of *nous-psyche-sōma* in Paul. I have already shown that the *nous* in 1 Corinthians 2 and 14 functions as a receiver of the Spirit. Therefore, the use of *nous* and its relation to the Spirit in the Pauline writings needs to be examined further. A notorious occurrence of *nous* in Paul is Romans 7:23. What does an analysis of Romans 7–8 teach us about the relationship between the mind and the Spirit?

**Romans 7–8**

In the middle of a complicated discussion on the law, we find Romans 7:23–25:

(23) but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!<sup>51</sup>

In order to understand these verses, we should first ask: what does Paul argue on the ‘law’ in Romans 7 and 8? Rom 7:12 emphasises that the law is good and verse 13 that the law kills, when used by sin. In 7:14–25 Paul works with contrasting pairs. There appears to be a sort of dualism between ‘good’ and ‘evil’. In 7:14 he identifies the good with the law of the Spirit (ὁ νόμος

<sup>51</sup> NA28: ‘(23) βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατεύμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου. (24) ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος: τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου; (25) χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοί δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ, τῇ δὲ σαρκί νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας.’

πνευματικός) and the bad with the flesh (σάρκινος) and sin (ἀμαρτία).<sup>52</sup> In 7:23–25 ‘in my members’ (ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου), flesh (σάρξ), death (θάνατος) and sin (ἀμαρτία) are associated and opposed to the law in the mind (τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦς μου) (7:23), the law of God (νόμῳ θεοῦ) that is served with the mind (νοῦς) (7:25).<sup>53</sup> The section clearly deals with two opposites. Flesh and sin constitute the bad pole, and the law of God (in the inner person τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον/mind) (7:22, 25) as the good pole is equal to the law of the Spirit (7:14). This is underscored by the continuation in chapter 8, where flesh and Spirit are opposed as well. Paul plays with words in both chapters: the law of the Spirit (7:14, 8:2) and the law of God (7:22, 25, 8:7). Paul argues in Romans 7 and 8 that the law can have different manifestations depending on the actor that guides it.<sup>54</sup> This opposition between the law of God used by the Spirit and the law used by sin in the flesh, that is worked out in chapter 7:14–25 and 8:1–17, has at its centre the idea that the law of God is connected with the mind (7:23–25). It is also in 7:23–25 that the conflict in the believer reaches a climax.

The key to the ‘solution’ of the intense strife in the human being is given in the first part of 7:25: ‘But thanks [be] to God through Jesus Christ our Lord’.<sup>55</sup> After this exclamation follows the conclusion that one serves God’s law with the mind and the law of sin with the flesh. The conflict may not be dissolved, because the two manifestations of the law still exist in Paul. Nonetheless, a direction is given in this doxology, which becomes clear in the following chapter. Romans 8:2 reads: ‘The law of the Spirit of life through Jesus Christ, has set you free from the law of sin and death’.<sup>56</sup> This is an affirmation of the idea that the law of the Spirit in 7:14 is the law of God that is served with the mind (7:25). The fact that many copyists judged it necessary to add ‘who walked no longer according to the flesh, but according

<sup>52</sup> Even if one would translate ‘the law is spiritual’ instead of the law of the Spirit in 7:14, one cannot deny that spiritual here must imply belonging to the realm of God’s Spirit, given the fact that the rest of the passage that speaks of the law of God (Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament), Freiburg et al 2002, 229; and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (The Anchor Bible), New York et al. 1993, 473, explains ‘the law is spiritual’ as meaning that the law belongs to the sphere of God, the sphere of the Spirit of God. Therefore, it is opposed to what is *sarkinos*, belonging to the sphere of flesh. James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, (Word Biblical Commentary), Dallas 1988, 387, translates ‘the law is spiritual’, but writes that Paul wants the law to be associated with the liberating Spirit, as is expressed in 8:2-4.)

<sup>53</sup> These verses refer to the same law. Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 395; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 476–7.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Cambridge 1998, 157-8.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 410–1; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Minneapolis 2007, 473, although he (unconvincingly) considers 25bc to be gloss added by Paul himself.

<sup>56</sup> NA28: ‘ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου.’

to the Spirit' to 8:1, supports this interpretation that the law of the Spirit (of life) is the law of God and thereby associated with the *nous*.<sup>57</sup> These early readers apparently wanted to make the connection between the two 'chapters' more explicit by using 'flesh' and 'Spirit' as bridges in this verse. This law of the Spirit then, is effective because of Christ Jesus, which explains Paul's thanksgiving in 7:25. The Spirit of *life* instead of death assures that the believers will no longer be convicted (8:1–2). This stands in contrast to what happens when one is governed by the law of sin that leads to death (7:5,10,13).<sup>58</sup> However, only those who belong to Christ Jesus are led by the Spirit (8:9). Because God has accepted these believers in Christ as righteous before him, they will have life through the Spirit (8:10). It is thus *this* law of the Spirit that leads to life.<sup>59</sup>

This means that those who belong to Christ are guided by the Spirit. Paul acknowledges in chapter 7 that the law can be good, but only if it is guided by the Spirit. If not, sin takes over and the law leads to death. The *nous* of the believer is depicted as the serving instrument in which the Spirit needs to work to render the law effective. Romans 7 and 8, therefore, simply acknowledge and remind the believer of the very real tension that can be experienced as long as this life lasts, while trying to direct his or her thoughts in the right direction: faith in Jesus Christ that results in the working of the Spirit in the mind. Thanks to Romans 7–8, the role of the Spirit in this transformation of the mind is further clarified. There is no reason to suppose that the Spirit becomes identical to the human spirit or the human mind: the divine Spirit is to be distinguished from the human spirit.

### Additional Arguments for the Alternative Proposal

This interpretation of Romans 7–8 affirms the hypothesis that Paul considered the *nous* as a receiver of the Spirit.<sup>60</sup> Before moving to the final section, two different types of argument for the proposed interpretation of Paul can be added. Firstly, in Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, the *nous* also has a receptive dimension.<sup>61</sup> This is an argument from the Greco-Roman context in which Paul found himself. He drew on the receptive dimension of the *nous*,

<sup>57</sup> Some (A, D<sup>1</sup>, ψ, 81, 365, 629, *pc*, vg) added *μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν* and others (R<sup>2</sup>, D<sup>2</sup>, 33<sup>vid</sup>, Majority Text, ar, sy<sup>h</sup>, sa) *μη κατα σαρκα περιπατουσιν αλλα κατα πνευμα*.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 416–7, confirms with 8:1 and 2 that Paul is able to think of the law in two ways and that this is a (more positive) continuation of 7:7–25 because of the role of the Spirit.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 481, also interprets that in Christ the law has its proper function and leads to life instead of sin and death.

<sup>60</sup> This does not exclude other 'receivers' of the Spirit in Paul, nonetheless, the subject of this paper is the *nous*.

<sup>61</sup> Gerard Visser, *Niets cadeau: Een filosofisch essay over de ziel*, Nijmegen 2010, 50–1.



but not without critical interpretation. The *nous* is important, but the Spirit is necessary for its proper functioning. Thus, Paul's emphasis is on the Spirit of God. Only the Spirit can transform the *nous* into a suitable instrument for harmony in the human being.

Secondly, Paul's early readers also understood the *nous* as worthless unless the Spirit acts upon it, as testified in Ephesians 4:17, Colossians 2:18, 1 Timothy 6:5, 2 Timothy 3:8, Titus 1:15. This is an argument for the proposed interpretation of Paul based on the interpretation of Paul's early readers (Deutero-Pauline and Pastoral Letters). It supports that they also understood Paul in this way. In a Greco-Roman environment in which the *nous* was pivotal, Paul's ideas on the unfit mind (Rom. 1:28) in particular made an impact on his first interpreters. They, believing to think in a 'Pauline' way, also considered the *nous* to be in need of the Spirit. Furthermore, the fact that the *nous* is not an independent important part and practically worthless without the Spirit, explains why Paul does not dedicate much explicit attention to a Greek trichotomy.

### **Concluding Observations: Implications for Understanding Pauline**

#### **Anthropology**

Now that Van Kooten's thesis of a 'Jewish' trichotomy in Paul is examined and a different proposal argued for, let us summarise our findings in order to discuss the implications for the contextualisation of Paul's anthropology.

Paul did not set up or work with a trichotomy of *pneuma-psyche-sōma*, characterised as 'Jewish' by Van Kooten. From my counterarguments that demonstrated that Paul (1) does not necessarily consider *nous* and *pneuma* as synonyms and (2) distinguishes the human and the divine *pneuma*, another possibility of interpretation arose. Paul might very well have qualified the idea of a Greek trichotomy of *nous-psyche-sōma*, which was a generally accepted view on the human being in the surrounding Hellenistic culture, with the *nous* as an element that the Spirit renews. Instead of giving *nous* the highest place, the *nous* receives a stronger receptive dimension as an instrument, because of the role of the Spirit (2 Cor. 2, 1 Cor. 14, Rom. 7–8).

It is significant that *the Spirit* is able to achieve harmony in the human being, not the *nous* on its own. This implies that the transformation of the human being is predominantly *pneumatological* instead of ethical, as in Plato's thought. Paul has thus appropriated Greco-Roman ideas on the *nous* in his Jewish-Christian manner. Although the trichotomy is not mentioned explicitly, it can be assumed as an anthropology to which Paul relates, because (1) it was a very common idea in Antiquity that is not rejected by Paul and (2) Paul's 'Christianised' speaking of the *nous* supports it.

Returning to our initial question concerning the contextualisation of Paul's anthropology, these conclusions mean that Paul was able to relate to a common anthropology in his context. He moved within the multiplicity of images of the human being that were available in his context, while clearly walking his own theological path.<sup>62</sup> Thus, we encounter a subtle religious confrontation. By accepting the Greek trichotomy as a way of thinking about the human being, Paul could communicate with others and try to convince them of the fact that a very important 'surplus' was needed to become a good functioning human being: the Spirit of God. Hence, the development of a new and specific 'Christian' anthropology was unnecessary. Furthermore, this means that the distinction of a Jewish and a Greek anthropology is only relative. Paul works with what is present and adds what is needed. He is not to be locked in either a 'Jewish' or 'Greek' box. When it comes down to Paul's attitude towards a common Greek anthropology, we can conclude that he qualifies this anthropology by emphasising *mindfulness* through God's Spirit. My suggested interpretation of Paul thus entails that the Spirit of God is a distinguishable actor instead of an impersonal substance in the way Philo interpreted Genesis 2:7.<sup>63</sup>

Could these findings on Paul's anthropology be relevant in different contexts than his? In further research I would like to proceed with the question of whether it is possible to render Paul's treatment of the soul fruitful for speaking theologically about the controversial (concept of) soul in the Western context. What does Paul's *pneumatological* anthropology mean in dialogue with the ways of speaking about the soul in our context? In this way I hope to combine biblical studies with systematic theology with respect to our present society.

*Martine Oldhoff is PhD candidate at the Protestant Theological University (Amsterdam). m.c.l.oldhoff@pthu.nl*

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<sup>62</sup> I do not exclude other images of the human being in Paul, but their occurrence is not the subject of this paper.

<sup>63</sup> This is particularly relevant for discussions on the identity of the Holy Spirit in dogmatics.

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