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What is theological about theological anthropology?

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to provide a brief overview of the field of theological anthropology. It emphasises the need to gain clarity on the distinctively *Christian* content of theological anthropology. It explores different ways of distinguishing current contributions to theological anthropology, i.e. in terms of an identification of current theological schools, with reference to the typical questions that are raised in theological anthropologies and various aspects of Christian doctrine that may be used as a point of departure for an adequate theological anthropology. The essay concludes that there is a need for a thorough reintegration of the doctrines of creation, sin, providence, redemption and consummation and that eschatology is the theological locus where such an integration has to take place. Anthropology may be viewed as one particular lens through which the whole of Christian doctrine may be focused and filtered.

1. THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

What is theological anthropology? More importantly, what is theological about theological anthropology? Or, more specifically, what is distinctively Christian about theological anthropology? These questions are obviously of crucial importance for any theological anthropology. However, they are not easy to answer and any such answers will probably remain controversial.

These questions suggest that it is possible to distinguish theological anthropology from other forms of anthropology. It is indeed important to clarify the similarities and differences between Christian anthropology, Old Testament anthropology, New Testament anthropology or, more specifically, the anthropology of the Jahwis, of Paul, of Augustine, of Luther, of Teilhard de Chardin or of contemporary feminist theology, to use a few random examples. Likewise, it will be important to distinguish theological anthropology from other discourses about the human condition – ranging from biology, anatomy and physiology, the neurosciences, psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, the arts and the full spectrum of other disciplines in the humanities.

Any distinctions between theological anthropology and such other discourses will inevitably be undermined by the plurality of approaches and schools of thought in each discipline, by rapid developments in such disciplines, by shifting boundaries between disciplines and by the quest for inter-disciplinary discourse. Moreover, there are opposing theological views on the legitimacy of such inter-disciplinary discourse and the desirability of drawing insights from other disciplines. The difference between theological positions may be illustrated with reference to the approaches to theological anthropology of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Barth's strictly Christological approach to the doctrine of humanity stems from his insistent critique of natural theology and a clear demarcation of the boundaries between theology and the other disciplines¹. By contrast, Pannenberg's major work, entitled *Anthropology in theological perspective*, seeks to describe, assess and challenge

anthropological insights emerging from other discourses from a theological point of view².

2. THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

In theological discourses strongly influenced by the modern (Renaissance, Cartesian and Kantian) turn to the subject, there is a tendency for anthropology to become the point of departure for the whole of theology instead of it being one topic of theological interest among many others. In such contexts one may argue that theological anthropology has become anthropological theology³. The effect of this sometimes subtle shift in theological methodology is that knowledge of God could now be derived from our knowledge of humanity. For many theologians, at least since Schleiermacher, the object of theological reflection is no longer God or God's revelation but *human* piety and spirituality, *human* religious experience, *human* faith, *human* existence and *human* ecclesial practices. Theological attention shifted from God to the being who asks questions about God and to a transcendental analysis of the conditions for the very possibility of raising such questions⁴. Theological inquiry, following the turn to the subject, became focused on the possibility of the religious experiences of the subject. If the legitimacy of human religiosity could be defended (or denied), Christian experiences and witnesses may be regarded as particular expressions of such (universal) human religiosity. This also invited comparisons between Christian and other forms of religious expression.

This turn to the subject in modern theology is based on the crucial hermeneutical insight that all thinking and language about God is inevitably *human* thinking, *human* language, *human* metaphors and symbols, *human* projections, *human* imaginative constructions. It is of course true that all language about transcendence comes from below. In this way every statement about God becomes a statement about being human (Bultmann). Theology becomes a function of the self-understanding of the human subject. Not the natural world, but human experience of the natural

1 See Barth (*CD III/2*, 1960:79-96). While Barth shows remarkable appreciation for insights from the empirical sciences, he argues that theological arguments drawing insights from the sciences are based on naturalistic arguments and that this allows their opponents to determine the formulation of the question (90-91). He suggests that those theologians who no longer sense the need to prove the existence of God have, focused (with Schleiermacher) on the task of at least proving that an analysis of human religiosity can contribute towards a better understanding of the human condition (84). Instead, Barth suggests, theology should focus on God's relationship with humanity, epitomised in Jesus Christ. While scientific insights may be valid they have a limited scope. Christian theology, by contrast, helps us to understand humanity as God's beloved creature. In response to Barth's approach many have argued that theological anthropology in this mode does not appear to have any connections with what we know otherwise about being human.

2 Pannenberg (1985) famously argued that theological anthropology and the anthropologies emerging from the social sciences have to be integrated with one another in order to avoid a sectarian theological self-isolation from other disciplines. His monumental study on anthropology subsequently offers theological perspectives on such anthropological discourses (as reflected in the title of this work, *Anthropology in theological perspective*). While Pannenberg's approach is a legitimate corrective to Barth's failure to address the hermeneutical problems raised by his own approach, Pannenberg retains Barth's "missionary zeal" to put the other sciences in a Christian theological perspective. He also does not depart from Barth's vigorous attempt to discern the contours of a distinctively Christian anthropology.

3 See Durand (1982) for an excellent critique of the anthropocentric turn in modern theology.

4 This turn to the subject is especially evident in Karl Rahner's oeuvre. Vanhoozer (1997:171) comments: "Rahner accepts modernity's turn to the subject and claims to discover therein the conditions for the possibility of God's self-communication."

world thus supplies a point of departure for discourse about God⁵. God could only appear at the limits of our self-understanding. In some such approaches to theological anthropology God becomes nothing more than a human construct. God is an idea, albeit a *good* idea: at best the construction of a God of love and justice who symbolises solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the marginalised, women and children and the many victims of environmental destruction⁶.

Despite the legitimacy of this hermeneutical insight, the critics of this theological turn to the subject have argued that if the human is the centre from which we humans necessarily begin, it is not a centre in which we have to end. They maintain, with Calvin, that the knowledge of humanity and of God cannot be separated. Without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of the self. Humanity is a theme in theology not in spite of, but *because* God is the theme of theology⁸.

An theological anthropology cannot simply take human self-consciousness as a point of departure. The perennial danger of modern theology is that it reduces Christian theology to anthropology on precisely this basis, that is, an assessment of the possibility and structures of human religiosity, the human 'feeling of absolute dependence' (Schleiermacher), or our 'ultimate concern' (Tillich). This can only lead to a diluting of Christian theology into a shallow form of natural theology that cannot do justice to the soteriological thrust of the gospel. An authentically *theological* anthropology cannot emerge on such a basis.

3. A CONFLICTING DIVERSITY OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGIES

Theological anthropologies are as diverse as the many schools of Christian theology that have emerged during the last hundred years or so. This is hardly surprising, given the very different assessments of the human condition in these theological schools. It is also not surprising that scholars have tried to map the field of theological anthropology by identifying various typical approaches in this regard. Kevin Vanhoozer, for example, has suggested in a stimulating essay that anthropology may be approached from below" (Rahner), "from above" (Barth), "from the end" (Pannenberg), or "from the Three" (Gunton)". For the sake of simplicity, one may simply recall some of the many schools of theological discourse and a few examples of major contributions to theological anthropology within each of these schools.

- In each of the main confessional traditions (Coptic, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, reformed, also Anabaptist and Pentecostal) there are theologians who have continued to re-

5 Pannenberg (1985:11-12).

6 These observations raise a complex and age-old set of philosophical problems related to the referent of the language that we employ, including God-language (a debate that had its roots in the realist-nominalist controversies). Put in Cartesian and Kantian terms: How do we know that there exist anything outside of our own minds? Is it an act of trust to believe that the food that I am eating or that the mother who gave birth to me is somehow "real"? Is it a matter of religious belief to trust that there is a God who created me and my thoughts in the first place? These debates cannot be addressed here for obvious reasons.

7 Although Barth needs to be credited for his insistence on such insights, his own theology may be criticised for falling unwittingly into the very same trap. Pannenberg (1985:16) argues that: "[Barth's] very rejection of anthropology was a form of dependence on anthropological suppositions. That is, when Barth, instead of justifying his position, simply decided to begin with God himself, he unwittingly adopted the most extreme form of theological subjectivism." Shults (2003:118) adds: "The implication here is that Barth, without realizing it, started with a quasi-Buberian anthropology of I-Thou personalism, and then projected it unto God."

8 Durand (1982:142-143).

9 See Vanhoozer (1997:171f).

articulate the convictions of their own tradition and their implications for Christian anthropology. In such anthropologies classic themes such as the nature of human personhood and the relationship between body and soul, the image of God, human sin, human dominion and human (im)mortality are typically investigated, often studiously and sometimes doggedly. In the reformed tradition, the contributions by GC Berkouwer (1962), Hendrikus Berkhof (1963), Anthony Hoekema (1986) and South African reformed theologians such as Jaap Durand (1982), Johan Heyns (1974) and Adrio König (1988) may be mentioned as examples of such a confessional approach to theological anthropology¹⁰. More recently, and in a hermeneutically and philosophically informed mode of doing reformed theology, LeRon Shults published a volume on *Reforming theological anthropology after the philosophical turn to relationality* (2003).

- It may be argued that God in Jesus Christ, not the human subject, was the primary focus of Karl Barth's form of dialectical theology. Nevertheless, the the-anthropology structure¹¹ of Barth's theology led to a theology where every statement about God had direct implications for an understanding of the human condition. The human subject's freedom and responsibility before God is emphasised in the personalist theology of Emil Brunner, especially in his classic work *Man in revolt* (1939). In his two volume classic *The nature and destiny of man* (1941, 1943) Reinhold Niebuhr describes human beings as finite creatures who in pride and sin seeks to overcome their creaturely limitations. In the existentialist theologies of Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and John Macquarrie human existence is characterised in terms of the sense of guilt, loneliness and meaninglessness that follow from our estrangement from ourselves. Hendrikus Berkhof's excellent study, *De mens onderweg* (1963), also emphasises human responsiveness as a distinctly human feature. We are able to hear God's Word and to respond to it within the context of a relationship of love.
- In Roman Catholic circles several contributions to theological anthropology have followed the path of a transcendental analysis of the very possibility of human knowledge and, more specifically, religious experience. The oeuvres of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan may serve as examples in this regard. Karl Rahner suggested that we human beings are unique in that we are "open to transcendence." When we realise our own finitude, we inquire beyond that finitude to that which transcends it (God). Our horizons are therefore infinite. Rahner calls this human capacity for self-transcendence, the capacity for God. The pathos of the

¹⁰ See also the chapters on anthropology in Anderson (1982), Berkhof (1985), Hall (1993) and Van de Beek (1996) and the essays by Van de Beek (1995, 1996).

¹¹ See the description of Barth's theology by Paul Santmire (1985, 2000). Santmire argues that such a narrow theological interest in the relationship between God and humans only cannot and does not escape from the anthropocentrism that characterises the modern turn to the subject. For Barth, despite several qualifications, man (sic) remains the central object of the theological doctrine of creation. This is indicated by the very opening sentence of Barth's volume on theological anthropology (*CD III/2*, 1960:3). "In practice", Barth says, "the doctrine of creation means anthropology – the doctrine of man (sic)." (ibid). He adds that: "The universe was created for the sake of God's gracious plan. Hence its goal and centre is man; its reality stands or falls with the fact that there is a human reality within it." (*CD III/2*, 1960:14). Although Barth's anthropology is clearly not individualist (he pioneered an emphasis on social relationships) and although he often discusses the distinction between humans and otherkind, it is difficult to avoid the impression that man's relationship with God is viewed solipsistically in distinction from the rest of the earth community. Humans and humans only hear the Word of God and are elected by God through God's grace. This leaves human beings rather alienated within the earth community.

human condition is that we sometimes want to flee from the *Unheimlichkeit* of the infinite to find solace in the familiarity of everyday life. Yet, this awareness of the infinite soon infiltrates our daily lives so that we cannot help but to ask questions about that which transcends us, about the infinite. Our intuition is that the holy secret (heilige *Geheimnis*) of the indefinable Infinite provides the clue of finding a true home (heim) for ourselves¹². We can discover such a home if we realise that we derive from the infinite God and are on our way to be with this God. Human existence is therefore itself a secret (*geheimnis*) that is searching for the *Geheimnis* that is called God.

- In the 1960's both Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann introduced theological programmes in which eschatology was the leitmotiv. Both produced smaller volumes on theological anthropology in which a human openness to the future (homo sperans) was emphasised (Moltmann 1971, Pannenberg 1970). Pannenberg followed his earlier contribution up with his magisterial *Anthropology in theological perspective* (1985), while Moltmann published *On human dignity* (1984). His *God in creation* (1985) offered an ecological doctrine of creation and of the place of humanity in creation.
- Various contextual theologies such as liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology,¹³ womanist theology, various indigenous theologies and ecological theology raised important new questions about the human condition. While these questions will be mentioned in the next section, it is perhaps fair to observe that these insights, often on the malaise of modern society, have not yet been developed towards book-length contributions to a theological anthropology. The exception is ecological theology where the recent contributions by Richard Fern (2002) Sallie McFague (1993), Jesse Mugambi (1987) and Anna Peterson (2001) may be mentioned¹⁴.
- A number of important contributions to theological anthropology have been published within the context of recent dialogues between theology and the sciences, especially cosmology, evolutionary biology and the cognitive sciences. Within this context Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's classic study, *The phenomenon of man* (1959), may be mentioned. Several contributions draw explicitly on process theology, including, for example, the work of Ian Barbour (1997, 2002) and Arthur Peacocke (1993, 1996, 2001). Other important contributions have been made by George Ellis and Nancy Murphy (1996), Phil Hefner (1993), Colin Gunton (e.g. 1998), Gregory Peterson (2003) and in the form of edited volumes on anthropology, including contributions edited by Du Toit (1996), Brown, Murphy and Malony (1998) and Gregersen, Drees & Görman (2000).

4. ANTHROPOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Another way of distinguishing between various approaches to theological anthropology is to focus on the questions that are typically raised. The way in which such questions are put, and the contexts within which such questions typically emerge, suggest the need for some hermeneutical suspicion since the questions may well determine the answers and perspectives that ensue from theological reflection on such anthropological questions.

12 I draw here gratefully on the helpful discussion of Rahner's theological anthropology (and anthropological theology) in Durand (1982:137).

13 In the South African context, see especially the contribution by Ackermann (1998).

14 See also my forthcoming contribution in this regard Conradie (2004).

Many classic anthropologies focused on questions such as: What constitutes the human person¹⁵? What distinguishes human beings from other animals? The lack of specialisation in the human physique? The ability of humans to develop tools (fire!) for themselves? Human labour? The capacity of the human brain? Human reason (and control)? Self-consciousness? Selfhood¹⁶? Human freedom and self-determination? Imagination? Culture¹⁷? Human laughter, that is, the willingness of humans to laugh at themselves¹⁸? Morality? Language? The human soul? Religion? How should the notion of being the image of God be understood (often evoking the same range of possible answers)? How should the relationship between body, mind and soul be understood¹⁹? Are human beings created as mortal beings and can any suggestion of human immortality (of the soul) still be entertained?

Following the modern turn to the subject, a different set of questions emerged: How can we come to authentic self-knowledge²⁰? Can we still speak of ourselves as self-determining autonomous subjects, whether in a Renaissance, humanist, Cartesian or a Kantian sense²¹? How is a human person constituted given the multifaceted emphasis on the material situatedness of human existence in terms of cosmological (Copernicus), ecological, biological (Darwin), gendered (feminism), psychological (Freud & Jung), economic (Marx),²² linguistic (Saussure, Wittgenstein, Derrida), socio-biological (EO Wilson) and neurological contexts? Formulated in more explicitly theological categories: What makes it possible for us as human beings in our finitude to know the infinite God²³? Or: who are we as human beings that God considers us? Or even better: Who is the

15 For a recent discussion of this question see McFadyen (1990).

16 See the major study by Taylor (1989) on the “sources of the self” in the Western tradition.

17 Clifford Geertz, for example, refers to human nature as “unfinished”: we require culture, expressed through various symbols, to complete us, to make us fully human. Humans are unfinished because they are born with so few instincts and so much flexibility. We can be “complete” as human beings not by culture in general but only by a particular culture in a particular time and place. Humans have a special status through their ability, through discourse and the construction of symbols, to construct meaning. See the discussion by Peterson (2001:52-53).

18 Karl Barth (*CD III/2*, 1960:83) chided Christian apologists trying to defend human distinctiveness for not mentioning human laughter (and smoking!) in their lists of distinctive human traits.

19 This remains one of the classic questions in philosophy and theology. It is also the focus of recent dialogues on anthropology between Christian theology, neurosciences and cognitive sciences. See especially Peterson (2003) and the volumes of essays edited by Brown, Murphy & Malony (1998) and Gregersen, Drees & Görman (2000).

20 Berkouwer (1962:19) notes that the imperative “Know yourself!” issued by the oracle of Delphi already implied that such self-knowledge was not so simple and obvious that everyone would possess it. The search for self-knowledge is hampered by the ubiquitous danger of self-conceit. John Calvin may therefore be on the right track to suggest that knowledge of the self cannot be isolated from knowledge of God. The crucified is the mirror in whom we recognise, at the same time, who we are ourselves and who God is (Moltmann 1971:30).

21 The anthropology of Western modernity is characterised by the “turn to the subject” in which it is assumed that to be a human person is to be a centre or “subject” of consciousness who is both a knower of “objects” and an autonomous self-constituting moral agent (i.e. one who is not subject to another “heteronomous” law) (see the formulation of Kelsey 1985:178-9). Kelsey (1985:192) adds that “theological anthropology will be unable to do justice to the material dimensions of human life until it has recovered a full-blown doctrine of creation as a mode of relation to God other than a relationship in consciousness.”

22 Moltmann (1971:65) notes that Marx was the first to interpret the rise of industrial capitalism anthropologically. The products of human labour offer a mirror in which we can discover who we are. Our being is evident from what we produce and how it is produced. Humans are both producer and product of human labour.

God that takes notice of us?

With the post-modern deconstruction of the autonomous subject the 'death of the subject' has been announced²⁴. This raised the question as to whether we can still speak of ourselves as self-determining autonomous subjects, whether in a Renaissance, humanist, Cartesian or Kantian sense? In response to this question, Michael Welker argues that, despite its considerable strengths, the modern notion of the autonomous subject '... fails to grasp the authenticity of the unique corporeal and sensual person. It also underestimates the contextuality of morality and the mutability of rationality'²⁵.

Various contextual theologies have also insistently criticised the preoccupation with the subject in modern theology as fatally flawed because '... it reflects a Western, male, bourgeois status that has the requisite surplus of time beyond what is needed to sustain life, but only as the fruit of other people's oppression'²⁶. In the context of liberation theology, feminist theology, indigenous theologies and ecological theology another set of anthropological questions have been articulated: How are human beings constituted by the structures of society and how can they transform such societies from within? How should the relationship between different human genders be constructed²⁷? How can a sense of community to which all humans belong be retrieved²⁸? How should the relationship between humanity and nature be understood? Or, more precisely, what is the specific place of humanity within the earth community? Or more theologically: What is the place of humanity in the household of God²⁹?

The sheer multiplicity of these questions also suggests that we remain a mystery unto ourselves. We are a curious kind of animal. We are our own most vexing problem (Niebuhr)³⁰. As Daniel Migliore observes, "We human beings are a mystery to ourselves. We are rational and irrational, civilized and savage, capable of deep friendship and murderous hostility, free and in bondage, the pinnacle of creation and its greatest danger"³¹.

5. WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE DOCTRINAL LOCUS FOR THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY?

The malaise of many earlier Christian anthropologies has been that an understanding of human existence has all too often simply been derived from a particular position in other disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology or cultural anthropology. To these disciplines one may now add evolutionary biology, cosmology and the cognitive sciences. It should be clear that a

23 For the formulation of this question, see Kelsey (1985:167).

24 See, for example, Vanhoozer (1997:162, 167f).

25 Welker (2000:104-105). For a critique of the notion of a free and autonomous person from a Latin American, ecofeminist perspective, see Gebara (1999:71-76).

26 Kelsey (1985:191).

27 This is the dominant question in several ecofeminist Christian anthropologies. See especially Ruether (1983).

28 This is perhaps the dominant question in contributions to an African Christian anthropology. Such contributions typically emphasise that a human being is constituted through other human beings. This is expressed in the notion of ubuntu and in the well-known African proverb that "A human beings becomes human through other human beings." See especially Maimela (1991), Mugambi (1987), Pato (1997) and Setiloane (1986).

29 These questions form the focus of my current research project on an ecological anthropology.

30 This is the opening sentence of Reinhold Niebuhr's classic study, *The nature and destiny of man* (1941:1).

31 Migliore (1991:120).

specifically Christian anthropology cannot emerge on such a basis. Hendrikus Berkhof describes the problem neatly: ‘So, throughout the centuries, Christian anthropology tended to combine biblical and contemporary thought patterns. The designers of such anthropologies felt that the former dominated while later generations felt that the latter actually dominated’³². Berkhof adds that this realisation calls for a theological anthropology that recognises the contributions to anthropology from such other disciplines and seeks to offer a specifically Christian and necessarily limited perspective on the human condition.

A Christian doctrine of humanity cannot simply be derived from the created order. It cannot be derived from a transcendental analysis of human self-understanding either. With John Calvin, Christian theology needs to insist that the knowledge of humanity and the knowledge of the triune God are inseparable, however difficult it may be to do full justice to both parts of this famous statement. Following Calvin, Karl Barth famously argued that we cannot know who we are and what a human being is, in the first place, by looking introspectively at ourselves, at human experiences or by listening to views on the human condition emerging from philosophy or the empirical sciences. A theological anthropology has to focus on the *Word* that God has addressed to us.

One underlying problem of all too many theological anthropologies is that they situate anthropology within the context of the doctrine of creation (only). Within many classic systematic theologies the doctrine of humanity is discussed in terms of the place of humanity within the unchanging structure of the cosmos that God created. It builds an anthropology on the position of humanity before the fall – a dispensation that no longer applies (if it ever did). The method that was employed in such anthropologies was to collect and rearrange biblical references which seem to refer to the “nature and composition of man.” Such references thus provided the building blocks for a doctrine of humanity but did not prevent such theological anthropologies from being kept in tow by Plato and Aristotle³³. In this mode, anthropology was often based on a form of natural theology where theological considerations did not play much of a role.

At its best, the doctrine of humanity, together with the doctrine of creation,³⁴ may be situated within the context of the doctrine of God in this way. This would allow for a *theological* anthropology in which the relationship between human beings and God is regarded as decisive for being human³⁵. This also indicates that a theological anthropology does not encourage an independent interest in the “nature of humanity” outside of humanity’s relationship with God. Whether such a narrow, often personalist focus on the relationship between human beings and God would be able to do justice to the social, economic, political and bio-physical situatedness of

32 Berkhof (1985:180) – translation EMC.

33 Berkhof (1963:14).

34 Kelsey (1985:169) notes that to interpret human nature within the context of the doctrine of creation expresses an extraordinary sense of security. Humans are not arbitrarily thrown into a world lacking any purpose or intrinsic value. They are truly at home in a structured cosmos that is ultimately intelligible, at least by God, and also morally acceptable. He also shows how the turn to the subject undermined this sense of being at home. If human personhood is understood in terms of a self-constituting autonomous centre of consciousness, then “human life is seen no longer as ‘at home’ in a beautiful and intelligible cosmos but instead cast into a world at best indifferent to human values and at worst antithetical to them.” (Kelsey 1985:181).

35 See Barth’s programmatic statement: “Man (sic) is made an object of theological knowledge by the fact that his relationship with God is revealed to us in the Word of God. ... Anthropology confines its enquiry to the human creatureliness presupposed in this relationship and made known by it, i.e., by its revelation and biblical attestation. It asks what kind of a being it is which stands in this relationship with God. Its attention is wholly concentrated on this relationship. Thus it does not try to look beyond it or behind it ...” (Barth *CD III/2*, 1960:19). Berkouwer (1962:32, 194f) also stresses this requirement for

human existence is another matter. Moreover, this approach all too often does not allow for an authentically *Christian* doctrine of humanity. Through the re-emergence of trinitarian theology in the twentieth century this approach to the doctrine of God has been questioned repeatedly. For Christians, the knowledge of God (and, as Calvin recognised, the knowledge of ourselves) cannot be separated from God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. One may conclude that the doctrine of creation, if situated within the context of trinitarian theology, offers one legitimate but rather limited perspective from which one may view humanity. This becomes evident if one considers other possible approaches to a theological anthropology.

In his anthropological reflections Karl Barth famously used Christology as the (only) point of departure for understanding humanity³⁶. His intuition was that we cannot begin with a definition of human nature as if we already knew what it is and then say that Jesus shared in this human nature. It is the other way around: we may become human since Jesus was truly human. The strength of Barth's approach (and Calvin's) lies in the *noetic* insight that we cannot understand humanity apart from our relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Likewise, we cannot first understand human nature and only then discover human estrangement. And we can only know human estrangement if we come to know God's grace in Jesus Christ. For Barth, anthropology therefore has to be based on Christology. The main problem related to this position is that it does not take the uniqueness of Christ's position as *mediator* between God and humanity into account – a point which Barth acknowledges too³⁷.

It is also possible to locate anthropology within the context of pneumatology. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, has followed such an approach by developing a pneumatological doctrine of God's indwelling in creation³⁸. This may allow for a soteriological point of departure for Christian anthropology where a rich array of concepts may be employed, including justification, sanctification, reconciliation, redemption, liberation and victory over evil. Humans are forgiven sinners, they are God's own creatures who live by faith alone, who have been affirmed and acknowledged by God as persons from the outside (*ab extra*), despite the distorting impact of human sin and even if such personhood is denied by others or by oneself³⁹. Humans are beings who have been saved from self-destruction in Jesus Christ, through God's Spirit⁴⁰.

Others may find the key for a Christian anthropology in ecclesiology⁴¹. Christoph Schwöbel, for example, argues that, 'The church as the community of faith is the personal and communal

an authentically *theological* anthropology. Berkhof (1985:182), noting that there is little interest in humanity as such in the Biblical texts, recommends a theological asceticism that would refrain from the development of any detailed view of humanity independent of God's relationship with humans in history.

36 For Barth's rigorously Christocentric anthropology, see *CD III/2* (Barth 1960).

37 See Barth (*CD III/2*, 1960:71f). Anthropology cannot be based on or deduced from Christology if the focus is to be on the human being that is in need of being redeemed by Jesus Christ. In terms of *ontic* description, Jesus is not human in the same way that we are human. It is therefore the divinity of Christ that helps us to understand who we are, not so much his humanity. Moreover, the message of texts such as Philippians 2 and Hebrews 2 seems to be precisely that Jesus *became like us*, even though several other texts suggest that we have to become like Christ. König (1988:45f) subsequently argues that a Christian anthropology has to be *built* upon a doctrine of God and *tested* in terms of (i.e. not built on) the doctrine of Christ. See also Berkouwer (1962:89-97), Shults (2003:124-131).

38 Moltmann (1985:xii).

39 See Jüngel (1980, 2002:24) for an anthropology that takes its cue from the doctrine of justification and that emphasises the receptivity of faith instead of the responsiveness of moral life. See also Härle (1980), Webster (1986:93-103, 1994).

40 Hall (1993:248) observes that pneumatology is perhaps the most neglected aspect of Christian theology and that it is also crucial for anthropology. He then continues to discuss the role of the indwelling Spirit in the transformation of the human will.

expression of the recreation of humanity's created sociality as redeemed sociality'⁴². One may also find a cue for the doctrine of humanity in sacramental theology. Within the context of ecological theology this position is especially adopted by Eastern Orthodox theologians. Human beings are regarded as the 'priests' of creation, as the representatives of creation, offering the world back to the Creator⁴³.

6. CONCLUSION: A NEED FOR INTEGRATION

These comments call for further reflection on an appropriate point of departure for a Christian anthropology. In my view, there is a clear need to place the doctrine of humanity within the context of a far more thorough reintegration of the doctrines of creation, sin, providence, redemption and consummation⁴⁴. Perhaps anthropology may be viewed as one particular lens through which the whole of Christian doctrine may be focused and filtered. In particular, there is a need to relate the doctrines of creation and redemption to one another⁴⁵. As Joseph Sittler noted in his famous address to the World Council of Churches (New Delhi 1961): "A doctrine of redemption is meaningful only when it swings within the larger orbit of a doctrine of creation"⁴⁶. The appropriate context for this task of reintegration is that of eschatology. As Pannenberg notes, "Creation and eschatology belongs together because it is only in the eschatological consummation that the destiny of the creature, especially the human creature, will come to fulfilment"⁴⁷. We can only understand the place and vocation of humanity in the earth community if we have a sense of the destiny (*telos*) of creation and of humanity. Kevin Vanhoozer captures this point neatly: 'Theological anthropology understands the human creature neither from its past nor from its present, but above all from the perspective of its future destiny – fellowship with God – manifested by Christ'⁴⁸. In the eschaton, the goodness of creation is affirmed and the predicament of sin is addressed at the same time. This calls, as I have argued elsewhere, for an integrated vision of the triune God's creative, protective, nurturing and nourishing, hurt, enduring, corrective, salvific, innovative, vindictive and transformative love for creation⁴⁹.

41 See especially Zizioulas (1985). Such an approach may also be expected from within the context of post-liberal theology: see the title of Volf's study on ecclesiology, the trinity and personhood: *After our likeness: The church as the image of the trinity* (1998).

42 Schwöbel (1991:157).

43 See George (1990), Gregorios (1987), John of Pergamon (1992), Kallistos Ware (1997) and Zizioulas (1985).

44 In patristic Christianity such an integrated view on humanity was epitomised by Irenaeus. See also Berkhof (1963), Durand (1982:32), Gunton (1998) and Migliore (1991) who, among other reformed scholars, are also calling for such an integrated approach to Christian anthropology.

45 I have argued elsewhere that such a reintegration of the doctrines of creation and redemption remains one of the crucial tasks on the agenda of a Christian theology. We need to integrate (but not to confuse or to conflate) that which has become separated for too long: God and the world; creation and redemption; body and soul; reality and morality; matter, ideas and language; emotion, cognition and volition; animal and human; female and male; incarnation and ascension; cross and resurrection; creation and eschaton. The narrative of God's love for the world will lose its plausibility whenever it is allowed to disintegrate in any of these ways.

46 Sittler in Bakken & Bouma-Prediger (2000:40).

47 Pannenberg (*ST* 2, 1994:139).

48 Vanhoozer (1997:173).

49 See my proposal in this regard Conradie (2000:259f).

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