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Paul and the Person

Discussions of Biblical anthropology inevitably lead to the question as to whether it is fundamentally monist or dualist in form. In his recent article 'Scripture and the Human Person: Further Reflections' Joel Green put forward the modest proposal that anthropological monism is at least consistent with several New Testament passages which have often been interpreted in dualist fashion. This article takes this discussion a step further and interprets the Pauline data in the light of Paul's soteriological purposes. The conclusion is that Paul deliberately varies his anthropological ontology in order to defend more central anthropological themes. It is argued that following Paul's anthropology means more than accepting his ontological conclusions, it means adopting a method. This is shown to have implications for the contemporary use of biblical ontologies of the person.

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, in an admirable burst of economy, A.B. Davidson announced a reduction in the number of component parts of the human person from three to two. In direct opposition to the dominant anthropological trichotomy (body-soul-spirit) of the nineteenth century he argued that the Old Testament, "gives special prominence to the fundamental *dualism* of man's nature. He is a compound of matter and spirit.... It is impossible to eliminate ...the belief in the dualism of human nature."¹ By the middle of the twentieth century economic processes had continued their work and the two component parts were reduced to one. It was by then generally accepted that humanity was best understood in terms of a fundamental unity. The many biblical words used to describe the person were all there, as J.A.T. Robinson expressed it, "to express the unity of the personality".²

1 A.B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), 202-3. He defended a dichotomous view of human nature against what has "generally been much insisted on", namely "that the Bible teaches a trichotomy, or threefold division of human nature, body, soul and spirit." Trichotomous interpretations of the constitution of the human person had been taught in the nineteenth century by writers such as Franz Delitzsch [*A System of Biblical Psychology*, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867)] and J.B. Heard, for whom the three parts of human nature, the sense-consciousness, or animal body, the self-consciousness, or rational soul, and God-consciousness, or spirit, were so separable that, "It is conceivable, that any two of these forms of consciousness could exist without the presence and co-operation of the remaining third ... We can understand that though the body dies, yet, if the union of spirit and soul is still undissolved, there is ground for supposing that consciousness will survive this first death." *The Tripartite Nature of Man*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866) 268.

2 J.A.T. Robinson *The Body: A study in Pauline Anthropology* (London: SCM, 1953), 16. Of course Wheeler Robinson [*The Christian Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911)] had also been profoundly influential, writing at about the same time as Davidson but it took some time for his view to prevail.

Theologians handled this ontological reductionism from three to two and then to one in different ways. Many felt that it was a positive move. Edmund Hill said, "Our culture has been shifting back to a dominance of the 'unitary' self-experience... I think this is a good thing; it is certainly an inevitable thing. We cannot live for ever with that Rylean sneer, 'that ghost in the machine'. Should we then scrap the word 'soul'? I myself think it would not be a bad idea; there are plenty of good substitutes, 'self', 'person', even 'personality'."³ But others wondered if the process had not gone too far, to the point where the essential self completely disappeared and so they bemoaned the 'loss' or the 'death' of the soul in morality and philosophy.⁴ Biblically, monism did not have all its own way either, as the dualist option has retained scholarly support. R. Gundry concluded "that Paul, along with most Jews and other early Christians, habitually thought of man as a duality of two parts, corporeal and incorporeal, meant to function in unity but distinguishable and capable of separation"⁵ and John.W.Cooper devoted his *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*⁶ to defending dualism. Many others have also added their names to the dualist cause.⁷

Other evidence that monism has not been able to completely sweep dualism away is found in the way that even convinced monists have to explain the historical appearance of anthropological dualism as a Christian option. It is generally put down to the corruption of an holistic Hebrew anthropology by the influence of Greek philosophy.⁸ These dualisms, it is argued, are then read back into the Old Testament as well.⁹ There remains though, a certain level of disagreement as to exactly where these influences are found and how intentionally they are adopted. Monism's inability to completely capture the scene can also be observed in the modest claims of monists like Joel Green in a recent edition of *Science and Christian Belief*.¹⁰ Green says that those holding to a monistic anthropology view can at least be "assured that this position actually places them more centrally within the biblical material than has usually been granted over the past two millennia". He only

3 Edmund Hill, *Being Human: A Biblical Perspective*, (London; Geoffrey Chapman, 1984) 106.

4 Keith Ward, *The Battle for the Soul*, (London: Hodder and Stoghton, 1985); William Barrett, *The Death of the Soul* (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1987)

5 R.H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 154.

6 John. W. Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

7 See J. Osei-Bonsu's discussion of the origin of dualism in "Anthropological Dualism in the New Testament", *The Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.40 (1988) 588–589. Others who insist that a genuinely dualist theoanthropological ontology can be found in Hebrew and/or early Christian theology include P. Badham, C.E.F. Evans, G.R. Gillett, R.L. Hall and M.J. Harris.

8 The problems inherent in this kind of analysis are frequently overlooked. "Greek philosophy" is usually treated as a whole, the various traditions being subsumed under one heading and conveniently treated as platonic. This may result in a convenient antithesis but it is hardly the whole story.

9 Another example is J.R. Nelson who says, "We might say today then that the "soul" is an essential but not separable by mention of a person's whole life. It is real enough; but it is not some external vitalizing force which serves to animate the flesh or body. Dualism is a Hellenistic philosophical intrusion into late Jewish and early Christian concepts of humanity." J.R. Nelson, "A Theologian's Response to Wilson's 'On Human Nature' ", *Zygon*, Vol 15 (1980) 400.

10 J. Green, "Scripture and the Human Person: Further Reflections" in *Science and Christian Belief*, (1999), 11, 51-63.

claims the possibility of consistency between monism and biblical teaching in certain passages traditionally interpreted dualistically. His proposal does not either definitively disprove dualism or prove monism.

This paper examines the way Paul uses ontology and argues that the diverse interpretations of his theoanthropological¹¹ material can be explained by reference to his overall theological method which does not begin with ontological presuppositions and move to deductions concerning anthropological and soteriological themes but which rather moves from the necessities of discipleship and ethics back to an appropriate ontology, or even ontologies, of the person. This calls into question the common procedure of assuming that there is such a thing as complete ontological consistency and then taking Paul's ontological conclusions as definitive and prescriptive for use in contemporary theological and ethical discussions such as genetic engineering, cloning, euthanasia and mind-brain interaction. This process fails to account for either the variation in Pauline ontology or the theological method he uses. I argue that following Paul means more than accepting his specific ontological conclusions, it means adopting a particular method and embracing a reflexive approach to theology which gives priority to soteriologically related themes rather than to ontology.

The Status of Pauline Anthropology

The place and function attributed to anthropology in Pauline thought has varied considerably. Bultmann took the view that Paul's anthropology was foundational and that it summed up his theology.¹² Others have argued that anthropology is of little consequence to Paul because the language and terminology used is "neither consistent nor original", or because there is a certain "looseness" about them, or that anthropological terms are used by Paul "in a quite careless way".¹³

11 'Theoanthropology' is a term I have created from 'theological anthropology'. It has two advantages. (1) Theoanthropology includes that area of study previously referred to as 'the doctrine of man' but the non gender-inclusive form of that term has made it unsuitable for use and an alternative term is needed. (2) The substitution of 'the doctrine of humanity' or some such expression is far from satisfactory as it does not provide any conveniently usable noun or adjective. 'Anthropology' and 'anthropological' are possibilities, but these, of course, refer to the study of humanity in the widest sense and without the adjective 'theological' being used are generally taken to refer to what is more properly called 'cultural anthropology'. The conflation of 'theological anthropology' into 'theoanthropology' means that it is possible (for example) to speak of 'theoanthropological ontology' when the only alternative is to use the cumbersome 'theological anthropological ontology'. These two advantages seem to justify the use of the term but there is also the benefit that in contemporary theology, theological reflection on the person has become an indispensable part of theological prolegomena. 'Theoanthropology' has the advantage of pointing to this intimate connection of thought.

12 "Every assertion about God is simultaneously an assertion about man and vice versa. For this reason, and in this sense, Paul's theology is, at the same time, anthropology Thus, every assertion about Christ is also an assertion about man and vice versa; and Paul's Christology is simultaneously soteriology." Bultmann *Theology of the New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1968) Vol 1, 1952, 191.

13 The three quotations come, respectively, from E. Schweizer, ['pneuma' in G. Kittel, (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (trans. G.W. Bromily; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) Vol.VI, 434]; W. Stacey, "Man as a Soul" *Expository Times*, (1961) 72, 349-350 and W. Kummel, *Man in the New Testament*, (London: Epworth, 1963), 38.

This latter approach is one which many interpreters find difficult because it suggests that Paul was confused about his own theology whereas they prefer to seek an anthropological ontology which is not only consistent within Paul but which is congruent with the whole of scripture. My intention is to achieve a position in between those who view Paul's anthropology as fundamental and those who argue that his anthropology is confused, by suggesting that there is an element of truth in both. Anthropology has been a fruitful area of study ever since Bultmann described Paul's theology as anthropology but this interpretation of Paul must be modified by the claim that while Paul's anthropology is certainly unique in its depth and intensity and in its focus upon the individual it is not this which controls his theology. On the other hand, those who observe a fluidity or even an inconsistency in Paul's terminology have, I believe, a valid point. But this view must also be modified because this variation in terminology and usage does not represent a confusion of thought or simple carelessness. He may have a variable ontology but his central anthropological concepts are consistent and important to his theology and the variations which produce interpretive difficulties are there to serve his overall theological purposes. Put positively, Paul's anthropological ontology varies precisely in order to defend his most important point which is his understanding of the eschatological action of God in Christ which brings about radical change in the nature of the entire cosmos and which centres upon salvation.

Surrounding his central hypothesis of the gospel as "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16) are several levels of supporting theses which emerge as both implication and proof of this gospel of salvation. For example, at the closest level there are three important anthropological convictions. The first is that it is possible for every person to have a direct relationship with God, something made possible only by the power of salvation which is mediated only through Christ. The second is the belief that people have unique moral value and must be treated as such. This too comes about as a result of the work of Christ in redemption. The third conviction is that as the result of the death and resurrection of Christ there will be a future, resurrected life with God. These three anthropological convictions concerning human relationship, status and future hope are intimately related to the eschatological theology of salvation brought about by Christ which is central to Paul's theology. On the one hand they are direct implications of it, and on the other hand their presence in the faith, life and hope of the believer is proof of what is yet to be completed. These anthropological convictions, along with a number of other important beliefs, constitute part of the matrix of Pauline theology which surrounds his soteriological core.

These anthropological beliefs which lie very close to the centre of Paul's theology are expressed through known concepts such as *psyche* and *pneuma* which involve certain ontological perspectives. If we consider that soteriology is theologically central and that it is supported by anthropological convictions which might be described as second level doctrine then we can say that anthropological ontology involves a third and lesser level of theological conviction. Paul is willing to use different ontologies in different contexts, providing that

they contribute to supporting an anthropology which is consistent with the indisputable and soteriological core of his theology. Any ontological 'inconsistency' is not the result of carelessness or of a fundamentally inconsistent theology. He chooses and uses his theoanthropological terms carefully and with regard to their usage in other writings but primarily in accordance with his own theological requirements. This leaves a degree of fluidity in the ontological situation and is the reason that the monist-dualist debate has not been resolved decisively in favour of one or other position. In addition to this, I argue that the fact that Paul's theoanthropological ontology is aimed at defending and explicating other, more significant, soteriological doctrines should be a methodological guide in contemporary discussions of anthropological themes. That is, it should lead us to follow a reflexive procedure similar to that which Paul adopts, rather than a routine application, in every context, of precisely the same ontological answer. The more common procedure however, for both monists and dualists, has been to begin with whatever the biblical ontology is determined to be and to apply this to specific issues, especially eschatology. It is obvious, for instance, that a dualistic view of the person is more likely to lead to an affirmation of the intermediate state¹⁴ and its necessary separation of body and soul, while a monistic anthropology would point to immediate resurrection¹⁵ and a more integrated view of the person. But it is not only eschatology which is affected by this procedure, in recent years it has become obvious that Christian views on ethical matters as diverse and important as cloning, genetic engineering, mind-brain relationships, euthanasia, embryo experimentation and psychology are as dependent on anthropological ontology as eschatology is. Green, for example, is a monist because that is how he interprets the biblical material and his recent article makes brief reference to the implications of a monist anthropology in the light of the monist and reductionist challenge put forward by Francis Crick and others. The positive theological implications of monism, in the form of non-reductive physicalism, are developed more in the colloquium *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* to which Green also contributed and which argues that in discussions of evolution and ethics, genes and personality, brains and behaviour and soul and spirituality that anthropological monism is more helpful than dualism both in interpreting recent scientific developments and in establishing ethical guidelines for future action. On the other hand, Cooper is a dualist because he believes that is the position most congruent with the biblical data and although his work is primarily concerned with eschatology he does deal with the fact that a dualist anthropology has implications for the way states of consciousness and mental events are interpreted. Consequently he takes a chapter to show the implications of an anthropological dualism of body and soul for brain physiology and psychology.¹⁶ The implications of substance dualism for personhood and medical ethics, psychoanalysis, mind and emotion and other aspects of

14 That is, whether there is a temporary state of disembodied human existence which occurs after death and prior to the final resurrection of the body.

15 That is, it would require the complete transformation and resurrection of the whole person at the point of death without any separation of body and soul.

16 Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*, 225.

human life are explored in more depth in the multidisciplinary *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*.¹⁷

Arguments of this form, whether beginning with monism or dualism, give a logical priority to ontology which it may not deserve and follow a process which is probably more reflective of western philosophy than Pauline reasoning. If we follow a Pauline method we will, first of all, hold to his central soteriological-eschatological thesis concerning Christ in the way that he does. Secondly, we will defend those anthropological implications which emerge from this and then will utilise any ontology which will defend such things as the possibility of a human-divine relationship, the moral status of the person and the future life of the redeemed. This is not to say that Paul simply reflects or uses just any pattern of ontological thought. In fact, he is, at times, quite determined to alter the usual mode of thought. But it is to say that he is more concerned with his own theological agenda than other people's ontological presuppositions. If we are to imitate Paul's method in this we will not simply utilise the anthropological ontology with which he worked unless it works to support second level anthropological convictions today. Like Paul we will use all concepts thoughtfully and carefully but will always be open to new ways to defend those dimensions of the Christian life and experience which are truly central. In short, to follow Paul's anthropology means more than accepting his ontological conclusions, it means adopting his method.

This approach, which is more Kantian than scholastic in general form,¹⁸ reflects Paul's theological method by giving a priority to soteriology, ethics and discipleship ahead of ontology. In so doing it accounts for the varying dualist and monist interpretations of the person and has the potential to move beyond the situation where biblical examinations of anthropological ontology have been controlled by Cartesian assumptions with, in particular, the monist-dualist debate dominating. The simple alternative – monist or dualist – does not deal with the fact that both are usually interpreted in Cartesian and substantialist terms when, philosophically, there are more fundamental ontological options to be considered. Alternatives such as process ontologies¹⁹ are occasionally involved in this debate, but usually as a contributor to the purely dualist-monist contest (process views usually being seen as more amenable to monist interpretations). However, the more

17 J. P. Moreland and D. M. Ciochi (eds), *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993)

18 It is Kantian in the sense in which Kant opposed the scholastic theological movement from rational proofs for the existence of God (and especially the a-priori logic of the Ontological Argument) to conclusions relating to the appropriate form of Christian life and discipleship. Kant preferred instead to move in the opposite direction from the moral necessities of life back to faith in God. In this particular case the theological movement should not be from an ontology of the person to ethics but from the necessities of Christian ethics and discipleship to anthropological ontology.

19 In process thought the ultimate entities of the world are not continuously existing substances (as in substantialism) but momentary occasions or experiences. This way of thinking of personal existence is derived from some interpretations of the behaviour of sub-atomic particles where existence does not seem to involve a continuous flow of some substance but rather a series of existences in multiple forms in different places. It is argued that human existence belongs to the same category of existence.

fundamental issue is whether theology should proceed with substantialist or process anthropologies or both or neither. Far too often the implicit assumption has been that biblical ontology is substantialist in nature and that the only debate is whether it is dualist or monist in form. The analysis of Pauline theological method presented above questions this assumption and places the focus on other themes which are more important to Paul.

The inadequacy of the monist-dualist debate is also highlighted in Dale Martin's hierarchicalist interpretation of Pauline anthropology.²⁰ Martin's study of the Pauline, and specifically Corinthian, understanding of the person makes particular use of medical sources. He argues that most contemporary commentators have been overly influenced by a Cartesian dichotomization of body/soul, physical/spiritual, material/immaterial which was not present in the first century. While it has to be recognised that there was a variety of thinking, including a Platonic dualism of body and soul, the person was more commonly understood as a continuum of interacting substances²¹ in which a person could be bodiless and yet still 'material', that is, composed of a different 'stuff' and still occupying space. So, Paul can discuss the current temporal and future eschatological nature of the person in terms of body, flesh, soul, spirit and resurrected body as a hierarchy of essences of varying degrees of density or 'stuffness' or a continuum of interacting substances.²² This is not the ontological, material-immaterial dualism of Descartes.²³ Martin's interpretation of Paul moves away from a simple debate between monist and dualist interpretations of the person to a more complex set of interactions. The present argument agrees with Martin that many analyses of the biblical material have reduced the issue to a choice between two alternatives, which are actually united by Cartesian assumptions. Martin argues persuasively on historical grounds that this is an anachronistic simplification, a point readily accepted given the observation made above that a reduction of choice to either dualist substantialism or monist substantialism is a process which ignores Pauline methodology and overlooks more fundamental alternatives in the form of non-substantialist ontologies.

Psyche-Soma and the Human Experience of God

It is not the primary intention of this paper to adjudicate on the merits of monist, dualist and hierarchicalist interpretations of specific passages, the focus is more on the way in which ontological presuppositions are used. Nonetheless it is necessary to examine certain passages and the tension which exists between dualist, monist and hierarchicalist interpretations.²⁴ It is not possible at this

20 Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, (New Haven and London: Yale University press, 1995).

21 Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 21.

22 Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 15, 21.

23 Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 128.

24 While focusing on the complexity of hierarchicalism Martin accepts that ancient philosophy allowed for the elaborate use of both dualisms (providing that the modern reader avoids the assumption that it was an ontological dualism in which the soul was totally immaterial) and monisms (given that there were even forms of Platonism which had ideas of body and soul that were fundamentally monistic). Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 3, 14.

point to do more than briefly illustrate the claim that Paul is more concerned with anthropological themes which develop and validate his central soteriological concerns than with the formulation of an all-encompassing anthropological ontology. This will be done by brief examinations of his use of *psyche* and *pneuma* in relation to *soma* in the context of two of the anthropological dimensions which Paul affirms as intimately related to his central vision of redemption: the possibility of a human relationship with God and the eschatological future of the person. Of course, any discussion of the Pauline eschatological use of *psyche* must take into account the influence of Plato. Although there may have been other philosophers who asserted the immortality of the soul before Plato,²⁵ it was he who first systematically defended it and it quickly became one of Platonism's fundamental tenets and subsequently exercised a profound influence on consideration of the after-life. While, on the one hand, there are some obvious similarities with New Testament eschatological anthropology²⁶ and there is, undoubtedly, an obvious influence on some theologians²⁷ (largely because it provides Christianity with a logic for holding to the immortality of the soul), yet the earliest Greek interpreters of the Christian scriptures avoided a complete identification of Christian theology with neo-Platonic or Stoic philosophy.²⁸ Similarly, in Paul we find that the term *psyche* never appears with the meaning of the soul as an independent substantial entity. It appears with the meaning of the natural life of the person (1 Corinthians 15:45; also Romans 11:3; 16:4; Philippians 2:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 12:15) and sometimes it means more than simple physical life, but is a reference to the whole of the energy and endeavours of life (1 Thessalonians 2:8; Philippians 1:27). Thus it can be used as a description of the source of emotion (Philippians 1:27; Colossians 3:23; Ephesians 6:6) or as a synonym for 'person' (Romans 2:9; 13:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23). There is no evidence though, of a

25 The first indications of immortality are found in elegies (e.g., of Tyrtaeus) for soldiers who have died in battle for their community. They are guaranteed immortality in the sense of eternal memory. Jaeger believes that it was Plato who "takes the step of declaring the soul itself immortal" [W.W. Jaeger, "The Greek Ideas of Immortality", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 52 (1959) 139], while Friedrich Solmsen believes that it is possible that "the continued existence of *psyche* had been explicitly asserted before Plato" ["Plato and The Concept of Soul (Psyche): Some Historical Perspectives", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (1983) 359].

26 For example, both agree that while death is inevitable it is not necessarily the final human destiny.

27 Such as Clement of Alexandria, Basil and others. Clement describes a man as, "...like the centaur, a creature from Thessaly, compounded of a rational and irrational part, a soul and a body. The body tills the ground and hastens to it, but the soul presses on to God." (J. Pelikan, *The Shape of Life, Death and Immortality in the Early Fathers*, [New York: Abingdon, 1961] 39) but again it is definitely a modified Platonic tradition. "It is conceded that the soul of man is the superior part of man and the body the inferior part. But by nature the soul is not good nor the body bad. For there are things which are neutral, and among these some are to be preferred and others to be given second rank. Therefore the constitution of man, which belongs to the tangible world, was not necessarily composed of things that were diverse but not opposite, namely of body and soul." (Pelikan, *Death*, 40).

28 They felt, for example, that it was necessary to defend the Christian faith against any eschatology in which matter, as evil, could not participate in salvation. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus and others all refused to allow such a sharp distinction within the person and affirmed that the body is subject to salvation. [Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 5.2.2f; 5.20.1. Tertullian *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 5-11 in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans reprint, 1978) vol. 3].

Pauline use of *psyche* as a separate form of existence or as the life which survives death.²⁹ It seems that when Paul uses *psyche* he does so carefully and deliberately refrains from using it in a dualistic sense. In so doing he is avoiding confusion with the concept of the separated *psyche* or any dualistic anthropology involving negative attitudes towards the body.³⁰

Does this mean then that Paul holds only and absolutely to an anthropological monism or that he cannot contemplate any form of duality or hierarchical structure or a multiplicity of elements? It is undoubtedly correct that Paul did not use *psyche* in a dualistic manner and also that his theological anthropology involved a profound understanding of unity but this is only part of the story as there is also evidence of an anthropological dualism in Paul. However, the evidence of this dualism does not appear where it might be expected nor in terms that would have been the most natural. In fact, it seems to be quite deliberate that this evidence does *not* appear in passages where *psyche* – the most commonly used term – is found, even though it would have been most obvious for it to have been used at those points. As an example of the situation where a dualistic concept appears *without* the use of the anticipated word *psyche*, we may instance Paul's discussion of the vision he had of the Lord. "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – was caught up to Paradise" (2 Corinthians 12:2–4). The significance of this passage is seen in the fact that those who hold very strongly to the view that the New Testament picture of anthropology is always monistic, and who frequently do so on the basis of consideration of passages which specifically refer to *psyche*, often find it necessary to equivocate in the face of passages like this, and are forced to concede the possibility of some form of duality. This is because even though Paul does *not* say that he was "out of the body" he appears to be at great pains (repeating himself on the matter³¹) to hold it out as a *possibility*. This points to a duality which seems to run counter to his general line of thought as it is expressed in his use of *psyche*.

Paul would have been aware of the Jewish tradition which assumed that such ecstatic experiences were undertaken in the body³² and normally "one would suppose, (on the basis of 1 Cor. 15:35–50) that a bodiless journey would have been inconceivable to Paul – just as it was, theoretically, to anyone whose anthropology was

29 The aforementioned passages represent the entire Pauline usage of *psyche* with the exception of 1 Thess. 5:23.

30 This was one of the most commonly held ideas associated with the dualism of body and soul. Martin (*The Corinthian Body*, 116) argues that the following beliefs were held in common by diverse philosophers including Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, Philo, Apollonius of Tyana, Marcus Aurelius and Galen: first that they all use a dualism of body and soul, proving that such a dualism was not limited to Platonists in the first century; second, they all assume the deprecation of the body; third, the body-soul duality is found as part of a broader hierarchy of elements with varying forms of materiality.

31 Verses 2 and 3.

32 As in 1 Enoch 12:1; 14:8; 39:3–4; 2 Enoch 38:1–2; 3 Apoc. Bar.11:1–2.

essentially Jewish.”³³ But Paul would also have been aware of the Hellenistic tradition that such experiences were bodiless³⁴ and so his parenthetical (and yet repetitively emphatic) words were probably designed to avoid prejudicing those at Corinth who held firmly to one or other opinion. Consequently, while emphasising that the experience was ecstatic Paul’s insistence about his uncertainty concerning the mode of rapture indicates that he does not really care about it and that the matter is not of first importance.³⁵ The natural conclusion is that Paul is prepared to entertain the idea of some form of anthropological dualism, but there is some resistance to this from those who look for complete ontological consistency. For example, Lambrecht follows Thrall and argues that the fact that Paul uses the term ‘out of the body’ “can scarcely be used as Pauline authority for the possibility of an incorporeal existence.” After all, Paul “may be emphasising his total lack of comprehension as to how the event occurred”.³⁶ But if Paul is expressing a total lack of comprehension then this must mean that he has not entirely ruled out either of the only two possibilities which he has outlined. Moreover, even an apologetic motive – that Paul argues in this way so that his opponents cannot disregard his experience on the grounds of the mode by which it occurs³⁷ – has to be consistent with the conviction that it really does not matter to Paul if there is a form of anthropological dualism.³⁸

If we allow the possibility of theoanthropology being variable to some extent it is not necessary to force everything into one mould or repudiate every dualism as being inconsistent or peripheral or an unwanted accretion.³⁹ This theological variation, this willingness to switch between monism and dualism is not a contradiction, nor is it the result of carelessness. It is present for two reasons. Firstly, it is there in order to deny certain ontologies which could be introduced through the use of *psyche* at the wrong time. Secondly, and more importantly, it enables Paul to use anthropology to support other, more central doctrines. That is, in terms of understanding the possibility and nature of the individual’s present spiritual

33 V.P. Furnish, *II Corinthians*, (New York: Doubleday, 1984) 550.

34 As in the Myth of Er in Plato’s *Republic*, Book X.

35 Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 545.

36 J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1999), 201. This is not an untypical resistance to the idea. See also W. Kummel [*Man in the New Testament*, (London: Epworth, 1963) 57] who argues that Paul allows for no dualism at all concedes that “the dualistic manner of expression at times gives rise to this impression” and D.E.H. Whiteley [*The Theology of St Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974) 38] who suggests that the duality which he reluctantly finds here simply ought to be disregarded because “it is peripheral”. The problem is that these appear to be more dogmatic repudiations of a dualist interpretation of Paul’s experience than Paul was prepared to give. In fact it is as though it was of great concern to him that it should be understood by his readers as being open to both possibilities.

37 Furnish *II Corinthians* 545.

38 Ralph Martin argues that by “leaving the door open to bodiless experience Paul affirms his teaching of 5:1–10 that there is existence of the soul apart from the body.” *2 Corinthians* (Waco: Word, 1986,) 400.

39 Gundry argues that if Paul were purely and only monistic he need not have mentioned the possibility of some out of body experience at all but could have simply referred to bodily re-location into heaven without even considering the alternative. That he did not indicates another way of thinking. Gundry, *Soma*, 147. However, it was not as simple as that as to have done this would have had the effect of opening his argument to criticism on grounds he considered peripheral.

relationship with God Paul affirms that there is a dimension of life so radically different that it can, potentially at least, be described as “out of the body”. However, he refrains from using the term *psyche* because he wanted to avoid having his ontology tainted with those forms of philosophical dualism which were traditionally associated with the concept of *psyche* and which involved a complete deprecation of the value of the body, something which Paul could not countenance. Paul permits a form of dualism (and not merely a duality of aspects⁴⁰) but does not permit an identification of this dualism with those more common dualisms which disregarded the value of the body. To do that would have been to run counter to one of the anthropological convictions – that the person has unique moral status and value – which were intimately tied to his core belief in the redemption of all things in Christ.

Now the suggestion that Paul was prepared to consider some form of anthropological dualism does not mean what it has often been taken to imply – that Paul cannot be interpreted as presenting a monistic view elsewhere, when dealing with different anthropological themes. I agree with Green’s claim for consistency between monism and biblical teaching in certain passages of scripture. But ontology was not at the centre of Paul’s theology: his theological method is reflexive and, at times, he makes use of a dualism to defend central themes. What he is not prepared to do is to admit certain unacceptable elements which are damaging to his understanding of anthropology, such as any dualism which denigrates the physical form or any idealism in which the separated soul is the real person. These things are not acceptable and consequently he only uses the concept of *psyche* in contexts where the unity of the person as body and soul is not in doubt. This reflects his fundamental theological approach which treats soteriology and related anthropological themes as central.

Pneuma-Soma and the Resurrection of the Person

While Paul is prepared to consider an out-of-body experience in the context of a discussion concerning an ecstatic experience of God he is more insistent upon the unity of the person when dealing with eschatology and the future life of the person. In this section we will briefly examine Paul’s eschatology and his use of *pneuma* and we will observe his fundamental monism, but also notice one area of qualification which again indicates his willingness to use ontology to support more central anthropological and soteriological themes. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul describes at some length the situation at death and here are found references to the resurrection, the resurrection of Christ (vv.14,15,17), the resurrection of those ‘asleep’ (v.18), the resurrection of the dead (vv.15,21,32,35,42) and even the resurrection of the body (vv.38,42), but *not* directly to the resurrection of the *pneuma* even though there is a reference to the resurrected *soma pneumatikon* (‘spiritual body’ v.44). In this, and in the passage as a whole, it is clear that the intention is to emphasise the unity of the *whole* resurrected person. If Paul had wanted to follow a dualist path it would have made sense to speak of the resurrection of the *pneuma* but Paul only uses this term very deliberately in a highly

40 See note 41.

qualified sense ('spiritual body') which makes it impossible to interpret eternal life with God in a dualistic sense.

Despite this, underlying Paul's thoroughly monistic interpretation of resurrection life there exists a certain tension concerning the possibility of separating body from non-bodily aspects of humanity. This possibility partly emerges from the fact that although Paul insists on the resurrection of the whole person he accepts the *conceptual* distinction between the two aspects of the person. They are, in that sense at least, "separable" but this is not to say that they necessarily will, or even should, become separate. This conceptual distinction⁴¹ only becomes more than a possibility when one considers those who, at death, reject the possibility of eternal life.⁴² At this point a conceptual possibility becomes an actual threat and the separation of body and soul, death and alienation from God is realised. This is not God's intention. Dualists though, who seek absolute ontological consistency, argue that body-soul separation, is a normal stage that all people, not only the unredeemed, will experience. The redeemed will experience it as an "intermediate state", a temporary state of disembodied human existence which occurs after death and prior to the final resurrection of the body. Apart from the fact that this concept runs counter to the monistic emphasis of Pauline eschatology there are a number of problems with regard to the adoption of the idea of the intermediate state. The first is the fact that even among those who accept the notion, there is considerable debate about precisely which scriptural passages are evidence of it.⁴³ There is also the problem, for those who accept the notion, that there are varied and often contradictory explanations of

41 This conceptual distinction becomes more than aspect dualism when understood in relation to final judgment. Aspect dualism accepts that there is a physical-mental/spiritual duality to the person which is not accounted for by reductionist materialism. But aspect dualism does not go so far as to allow for an actual separation of aspects and so is fundamentally monistic. Anthropology becomes dualistic when an ontological separation can, theoretically at least, occur.

42 The dualistic separation which dualists apply to the redeemed person in terms of an intermediate state emerges out of an understanding of the nature of death as the destruction of the person. Biblically, human mortality is a self-evident fact (Psalm 103:15; 1 Peter 1:24) which is also an existential problem, an evil (Hebrews 2:14) which is the result of sin (Genesis 3; Romans 6:23). Death is a radical and comprehensive end to the whole of life involving the physical dissolution of the body (1 Corinthians 15:44) and spiritual alienation from God, the source of life (Romans 4:17; Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14–15; 21:8). Physical and spiritual death are inextricably bound together and comprise a process which is a present experience as well as a future prospect (John 5:24; Romans 7:24). The soteriological response to death is grounded in the resurrection of Christ which is synonymous with life (John 11:25) and is the defeat of sin and death (Philippians 3:10–11; 1 Corinthians 15:12–58). The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection of believers (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). Whereas death is presented as the complete end of personal being, eternal life involves the resurrection of the whole person in an ontological form which is a transformed state continuous with the earthly life of the person.

43 Often included are Luke 16:19–31; 23:43; John 11:25; 2 Cor. 5:1–6; Phil.1:23; 1 Thess.4:13; Heb.12:22; Rev.6:9. However, should Luke 16:19–31, which is parabolic in form, be included as evidence? Should Paul's words in 2 Cor.5 concerning 'nakedness' be understood ontologically? Are the words of Jesus (Luke 23:43) to be interpreted temporally? It is not uncommon for those who argue for the intermediate state to admit that the evidence is not clear-cut. Stephen T. Davis speaks of "the very many theological differences" which exist between those who argue for it ["The Resurrection of the Dead" in S.T. Davis (ed.) *Death and Afterlife*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) 123] and S.M. Smith admits that the New Testament "offers no sustained reflection on the intermediate state" and speaks of "a paucity of reflection on the intermediate state" ["The Intermediate State" W.A. Elwell, (ed.) *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 562–564].

what it is that constitutes the intermediate state. The inability to agree on this point does not disprove the intermediate state, but it does raise real concerns about its validity.⁴⁴ In fact the notion is unhelpful and arises as an unnecessary importation of a dualistic anthropology (legitimate in its proper context) into an area of eschatological thinking where it is inappropriate. The intermediate state arises out of an attempt to synthesise two different anthropologies in the one context.

Dualists are right that separation is possible but it is a process which leads to eternal death rather than to resurrection life. If there is a dualism of the person in Paul it is found here, but it is not something to be desired or applied to resurrection life. It is the result of the corrupting power of sin. The death and resurrection of Christ ensures that the resurrected person does not undergo the final stage of death – complete alienation from God – and the process of physical corruption becomes a process of transformation (1 Corinthians 15:35–50). Separation of body and soul is unthinkable in resurrection context for Paul, but it remains a possibility for those not resurrected. Thus there is an eschatological-anthropological dualism in Paul but the fact that it is a precursor to death explains why Paul is reluctant to extend it. The conclusion is that Paul's anthropology contains both dualist and monistic elements, each of which has its own validity within the context to which it belongs.⁴⁵

Implications for Contemporary Discussions

If Paul is, at some times, not prepared to rule out some form of dualism (such as when considering certain experiences of God or when reflecting on the fate of those who reject God) but, at other times, is prepared to insist on monism (when examining the future life of those resurrected in Christ) then we would do well to reflect on whether an insistence on one form of anthropological ontology is helpful in the present context or whether it is still possible to see Pauline (and perhaps by implication general biblical) anthropology as prescriptive, rather than as simply descriptive, based as it is in particular cultural and philosophical contexts. It is argued here that a decision concerning the most appropriate theoanthropological ontology for the present time or a specific situation will be determined by a reflexive procedure similar to that which Paul adopts. This will mean that when considering anthropologically related issues such as genetic engineering, cloning, euthanasia, human sexuality, mind-brain interaction, biological determinism and artificial intelligence that following Paul will mean more than accepting his specific ontological conclusions. It will mean adopting a method which gives a priority to working with anthropological and soteriological themes such as those referred to: the possibility of a personal relationship with

44 It has been variously described as (a) a period of rest and happiness prior to the fullness of eternal life (b) a period of growth in holiness (c) a place of punishment for the wicked (d) a time of unconsciousness or sleep waiting for the general resurrection (e) a place of purgation and (f) a period of imprisonment prior to judgement.

45 Nonetheless Paul's monistic ontology may be considered theologically more important because it represents his understanding of the eschatological fact that the ultimate intention of God for humanity is a resurrection life of the whole person in comprehensive unity.

God; a recognition of the unique moral value of persons and an affirmation of the future resurrection life. This may result in certain ontological tensions and it may mean using the ontology of other writers and philosophies. Like Paul we will use such concepts thoughtfully and carefully but we will always be open to new ways to defend those dimensions of the Christian life and experience which are genuinely central.

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