

Herman Bavinck's Anthropology and the Recent Body-Soul Debate

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Christian tradition has held that humans consist of body and soul, created and framed together by God into a holistic unity, and that these two elements separate at the moment of death but are reunited in the final resurrection. While this is a consensus in the Christian tradition since its beginning,¹ some modern scholars now question the orthodox tradition on this issue, considering it dualistic and unbiblical.² What is the constitution of human nature? What happens when someone dies? These are some questions these modern scholars have been addressing.

In the middle of this debate, John Cooper, holding to the traditional Christian view, coins the term “dualistic holism” to better describe biblical anthropology. He claims that “[b]ody and soul are distinct and normally integrated, but the soul can exist separately, sustained by God. They are unified in creation, redemption, and eternal

1. See: Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX, 3; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.75; John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15; John Cooper, “The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism,” *SBJT* 13, 2 (2009), 32–50; John Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

2. See Oscar Cullmann, “Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Body?” *Theologische Zeitschrift* (1956); Nancey Murphy, “Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Portress Press, 1998), 1–29; Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005); Kevin J. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Trenton Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,” in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 261–86.

life, whereas separation is a temporary consequence of sin and death. An appropriate term for this view is dualistic holism, which emphasizes the union of body and soul but recognizes the dichotomy.³

Among many orthodox and Reformed theologians, the renowned Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) held a “dualistic holism” view of human nature. Bavinck claims that “it is the essence of humanity to be corporeal and sentient. Hence, man’s body is first (if not temporally, then logically) formed from the dust of the earth and then the breath of life is breathed into him.”⁴ Body and soul belong integrally to the image of God; “the whole human being is image and likeness of God, in soul and body.”⁵ The body “is so integrally and essentially a part of our humanity that, though violently torn from the soul by sin, it will be reunited with it in the resurrection of the dead.”⁶ Bavinck’s anthropology has been an important focal point among Reformed scholars, especially regarding human nature as the image of God.⁷ Bavinck’s understanding is that body and soul are two elements bound together by the triune God and are temporally separated by death and reunited in the final resurrection of the body.

This essay will argue that Bavinck’s anthropology provides a biblical basis to address the modern body-soul debate. His anthropology claims that body and soul are two distinct elements that together must be understood as the essence of God’s image in humanity, and the final resurrection serves to restore in humans the temporary rupture between body and soul caused by sin and death. This essay will focus on Bavinck’s view of human nature, the immortality of the soul, and

3. John Cooper, “The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism,” 32–33.

4. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 2: 559.

5. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 561.

6. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 559.

7. Anthony A. Hoekema, “Our Reasonable faith,” *Reformed Journal* 7, no. 6 (1957), 17–20; Brian G. Mattson, *Restored to our Destiny: Eschatology and the Image of God in Herman Bavinck’s Reformed Dogmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Cory Wilson, “Simul Humanitas et Peccator: The Talmud’s Contribution to a Dutch Reformed Notion of the Imago Dei,” in *The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2: Revelation and Common Grace*, ed. John Bowlin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 262–78; James Eglinton, “To Be or to Become—That is the Question: Locating the Actualistic in Bavinck’s Ontology,” in *The Kuyper Center Review, vol. 2: Revelation and Common Grace*, 105–25; Harry Fernhout, “Man, Faith, and Religion in Bavinck, Kuyper, and Dooyeweerd” (M.Ph. Thesis, Institute for Christian Studies, 1975).

the final resurrection of the body, beginning with a brief summary of current arguments against dualistic holism. It will then provide an exposition of his view of body and soul, the intermediate state, and the final bodily resurrection; and finally, it will demonstrate how his position addresses the modern body-soul debate.

Current Arguments Against Dualistic Holism

Modern philosophy and recent developments in science have challenged the traditional Christian view of human nature, and they have done so mostly influenced by the theory of evolution, that says that “consciousness gradually emerged from matter as organisms became more complex, and thus it claimed to explain human mental and spiritual capacities without postulating a soul.”⁸ The scientific disciplines have questioned the Christian traditional view of human nature through neuroscience research, postulating that consciousness is entirely physical—that is, the physical brain is the essence of humanity and mental states are dependent upon brain states. Therefore, according to this naturalistic neuroscience view, there is no need for an immaterial soul, because the brain is what makes the human being.⁹ In fact, according to Joseph Carey from the Society for Neuroscience, “the brain is what makes us human.”¹⁰ Patricia Churchland articulates this neuroscientific view as follows: “Neuroscience is morphing our conception of what we are. The weight of evidence now implies that it is the brain, rather than some nonphysical stuff, that feels, thinks, and decides.... It means there is no soul to spend its postmortem eternity blissful in Heaven or miserable in Hell.”¹¹

Several modern philosophers and theologians have recently joined scientists in questioning the traditional Christian position regarding body and soul, claiming it to be dualistic and unbiblical. The book *In*

8. John Cooper, “The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism,” 33.

9. Warren Brown, Nancy Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

10. Joseph Carey, ed., *Brain facts: A Primer on the Brain and Nervous System* (Washington, D.C.: Society for Neuroscience, 2006), 4.

11. Patricia Churchland, *Brain-wise: Studies In Neurophilosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), 1.

Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem presents four different arguments.

First, Stewart Goetz holds a view of human nature called "substance dualism." His position is that humans are embodied souls, meaning that the personality of a person is identified with the soul, not with the body. The soul directs the body, and the body is nothing more than the temporary home of the soul. Thus, at the time of death, the soul leaves the body.¹² Goetz is a dualist in the sense that the soul is separable from the body, but his perspective departs from the Christian and biblical view when he assumes that the body is only a temporary dwelling for the soul.

Second, William Hasker, trying to resolve the conflict between Christian dualism and physicalism, provides a view of human nature called "emergentism" or "emergent dualism."¹³ With regards to human nature, Hasker claims that emergentism does not involve an immaterial substance connected to the body, but that the mind's mental properties "manifest themselves when the appropriate material constituents are placed in special, highly complex relationships...which is to say: mental properties are emergent; they involve emergent causal powers that are not in evidence in the absence of consciousness."¹⁴ With regards to the resurrection of the body, Hasker's understanding is that the actual physical body is not the same after the resurrection, whether one is a dualist or physicalist.

What is that life both now and then? Is it literally the same body which shall rise again on the last day? Few have thought so; indeed, one can easily imagine circumstances which make this impossible. It may often have happened that each and every particle of matter making up a person's body later on became part of the bodies of other persons—and it might also happen a body should be caught in a nuclear holocaust and pulverized into its constituent elementary particles, so that literally no single atom of the original body remains.¹⁵

12. Green and Palmer, *In Search of the Soul*, 33–60.

13. See William Hasker, "Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity: Can There Be Eternal Life Without a Soul?" *Christian Scholar's Review* 4 (1975): 319–25; "Brains, Persons and Eternal Life," *Christian Scholar's Review* 12 (1983); *Metaphysics*, 76–80; *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 211–22.

14. Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 189–90.

15. Hasker, "Resurrection and Mind-Body Identity," 319.

Third, Joel Green is a scholar who has argued that an eschatology in which the soul remains alive temporarily detached from the body—intermediate state—has insufficient biblical support. Green asks whether Scripture supports the intermediate state between death and the final resurrection, or the immediate resurrection of the dead.¹⁶ He writes, “[I]t is no longer possible to insist on a pattern of biblical eschatology requiring an intermediate state, much less one in which disembodied personal existence is integral.”¹⁷ According to Green, the traditional Christian view is wrong because “a coherent, ‘biblical’ eschatology, in which a disembodied, intermediate state plays a central role, is actually an extra-biblical construct against which the biblical evidence must be set.”¹⁸

Fourth, Nancey Murphy is another scholar that has opposed the orthodox Christian tradition.¹⁹ In her essay on human nature, she claims that humans are purely physical beings, a view that she calls “non-reductive physicalism.” According to Murphy, this view “comes from current advances in cognitive science and the various neurosciences.... [And] nearly all of the human capacities or faculties once attributed to the *soul* are now seen to be functions of the brain.”²⁰ Therefore, if the physical being is all that there is, and human capacities and abilities are attributed to the brain, consequently, they all cease to function and to exist with biological death.

Another viewpoint comes from Kevin Corcoran, in his book *Rethinking Human Nature*, where he claims that “the Christian story, from the beginning of the narrative in Genesis to its dramatic climax in Revelation, is an ‘earthly’ story, a story that celebrates materiality, laments its perversion by human sin, and eagerly awaits its ultimate glorification in the resurrection. It is the position of this book that a materialist view of human nature, as opposed to a dualist view, fits this earthy picture of the Bible’s grand narrative most comfortably.”²¹ He believes that human bodies are living, physical organisms that do not

16. See Joel Green, “Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of Pertinent Biblical Evidence,” *Science & Christian Belief* 14, 1 (2002): 33–50.

17. Green, *Eschatology and the Nature of Humans*, 50.

18. Green, *Eschatology and the Nature of Humans*, 50.

19. See Murphy, “Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues,” 1–29; cf. Murphy, *Bodies and Souls or Spirited Bodies?*

20. Murphy, *Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues*, 1.

21. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature*, 14.

die or decompose at the time of death. Corcoran's basic view is that human bodies continue to exist after death in an intermediate state.²²

Bavinck's View of Human Nature: Body and Soul as the Image of God

Where does Herman Bavinck fit in with all of this? His anthropology claims that body and soul are two distinct elements that together must be understood as the essence of God's image in humanity, and the final resurrection serves to restore in humans the temporary rupture between body and soul caused by sin and death.

In his *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*,²³ Bavinck writes that, centuries ago, even before Christianity, it was commonly known that the soul was a "spiritual entity that was united with the body in an intimate way. At the same time, the soul was thought to possess such a measure of independence from the body and its metabolism that when separated from the body by death, it was able to continue an independent existence."²⁴ This perspective was reinforced by Scripture.

However, in Bavinck's time, the naturalistic, materialistic, and evolutionary worldview began to question the traditional view of body and soul. In dealing with the development of psychology, Bavinck asks, "What is the difference and what is the similarity between all those disclosures of the soul's life? Is there a discernible plan and direction? Are there laws possibly or is there perhaps one law ultimately that governs all of life in all its manifestations? Is the teaching of evolution also applicable here?"²⁵

For Bavinck, materialism could not be the explanation for human nature. He writes, "The soul cannot be reduced to nature because it is always accompanied and presupposed, even by the simplest perception of the external world."²⁶ With this recognition, the importance

22. See Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: a Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul*; and Kevin Corcoran, ed., *Soul, Body and Survival* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

23. Herman Bavinck, *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

24. Herman Bavinck, "Trends in Psychology," in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 166.

25. Bavinck, "Trends in Psychology," 167–68.

26. Bavinck, "Trends in Psychology," 168–69.

and the validity of the soul were recovered as a reaction to materialism. Unlike Murphy, Bavinck stands against the materialistic position that claims that humans are only physical beings. They must have a soul. But what is the nature of the soul? How does the soul function?

When observing and describing psychic phenomena, a big difference of opinions presents itself at once. The life of the soul displays many phenomena, such as sensations, ideas, concepts, judgments, feelings, temper, inclinations, passions, desires, and so forth. But what are all these phenomena? Naturally and seemingly, there is a mutual and multifaceted relationship. But taken together, do they exist independently as, for example, clouds that float in the sky? Or do they point back to something that appears in it? Do they come from forces, organs, abilities (or whatever they may be called) that somehow precede or are basic to it? In a word, are they pure phenomena, or are they the outcome of some force?²⁷

Bavinck describes his view of body and soul more specifically in his *Reformed Dogmatics (RD)*. He begins his view of body and soul emphasizing that “the whole being...is the image of God. Further, sin, which precipitated the loss of the image of God in the narrower sense and spoiled and ruined the image of God in the broader sense, has profoundly affected the whole person, so that, consequently, also the grace of God in Christ restores the whole person.”²⁸ This is a key statement to understand Bavinck’s position. His view of human nature is threefold. First, by “whole being,” he means God created human beings, body and soul, and these two elements are essential to being human. Second, his view of human nature also takes into account the reality of the fall that affected the whole person, body and soul, ruining the image of God in human beings. Third, Bavinck points to the grace of God that in Christ restores the whole person. If sin affects the whole person, body and soul, the work of Christ is not just to save the soul, letting the body perish, but to restore the body as well as the soul.

Bavinck is careful not to fall into error or heresy, and for this reason, he grounds his view on divine revelation.²⁹ He says that “a

27. Bavinck, “Trends in Psychology,” 169–70.

28. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 554.

29. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 557. Bavinck writes, “Rationalism and Pelagianism detach

philosophy that either does not know or rejects divine revelation always lapses into empiricism or rationalism, materialism or spiritualism. But Scripture reconciles the two. Man has a 'spirit' (*pneuma*), but that 'spirit' is psychically organized and must, by virtue of its nature, inhabit a body. It is of the essence of humanity to be corporeal and sentient.³⁰ In other words, to be body and soul is the essence of being human. Bavinck claims that the body is not a prison for the soul, or a disposable instrument for the soul, as Goetz claims. For Bavinck, the body and the soul together form the essence of humanity. He observes that

[t]he body is not a prison, but a marvelous piece of art from the hand of God Almighty, and just as constitutive for the essence of humanity as the soul (Job 10:8–12; Ps. 8; 139:13–17; Eccles. 12:2–7; Isa. 64:8). It is our earthly dwelling (2 Cor. 5:1), our organ or instrument of service, our apparatus (1 Cor. 12:18–26; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Thess. 4:4); and the “members” of the body are the weapons with which we fight in the cause of righteousness or unrighteousness (Rom. 6:13).³¹

The body is the earthly dwelling for the soul. The nature of the union between body and soul is more than ethical; it is physical.

It is so intimate that one nature, one person, one self is the subject of both and of all their activities. It is always the same soul that peers through the eyes, thinks through the brain, grasps with the hands, and walks with the feet. Although not always present in every part of the body in its full strength (*secundum totalitatem virtutis*), it is nevertheless present in all parts in its whole essence (*secundum totalitatem essentiae*). It is one and the same life that flows throughout the body but operates and manifests itself in every organ in a manner peculiar to that organ.³²

Therefore, body and soul are so intimately connected with each other that both are part of and belong to the image of God in human

the intellect and the will from the heart and equate the total being of man with intellect and will. Mysticism, despising the conscious, active life of the will, retreats into the depths of the mind. The Greek Orthodox Church and Greek Orthodox theology place head and heart immediately side by side.”

30. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 559.

31. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 559.

32. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 559.

beings. But Bavinck again is attentive and points out that this fact does not mean that God also has a physical body. In fact, Bavinck concludes that “the human body is a part of the image of God in its organization as instrument of the soul, in its formal perfection, not in its material substance as flesh (*sarx*).”³³

His analogy does not mean that God has a physical body; he points to structure and function of the body in union with the soul. According to Bavinck, “just as God, though he is spirit (*pneuma*), is nevertheless the Creator of a material world that may be termed his revelation and manifestation, with this revelation coming to its climax in the incarnation, so also the spirit of man is designed for the body as its manifestation.”³⁴ Brian Mattson helps to clarify Bavinck’s analogy when he says that “the human body (necessarily) is to the human soul what the whole creation (freely) is for God, namely, an organized materiality designed for the function of revelation and manifestation.”³⁵

Regarding human nature, therefore, Bavinck clings to the traditional Christian view claiming that body and soul are two elements bound together by the triune God giving form to the whole person. For him, body and soul belong integrally to the image of God. It means that humans are not only physical matter; there is also a spiritual component. But if the union of body and soul is what makes humans whole, what happens when one dies? Bavinck’s eschatology answers this question.

Bavinck on the Immortality of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Body

The Immortality of the Soul

Over against the evolutionary worldview,³⁶ Bavinck claims that “the most respected historians of religion tell us that belief in the immor-

33. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 559–60. Bavinck also cites major theologians such as Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Aquinas, Petavius, Gerhard, Calvin, Polanus, Zanchius, Becanus, and Mastricht to prove his point. See also Mattson, *Restored to our Destiny*, 142.

34. Bavinck, *RD* 2: 560.

35. Mattson, *Restored to our Destiny*, 142–43.

36. Bavinck writes, “From an evolutionary viewpoint, belief in God, the independent existence of the soul, and its immortality cannot have been an original part of human nature but must, as a consequence of a variety of circumstances,

tality of the soul occurs among all peoples and is a component even of the most primitive religions. It is found everywhere and at every stage of human development."³⁷ Bavinck argues for the immortality of the soul in the intermediate state between death and the final resurrection, appealing to his grace-restoring-nature theme.

Bavinck points out, "Grace did not undo nature but renewed and consecrated it. This is also what happened with the popular belief in the afterlife."³⁸ The person does not end with death because the soul cannot be killed. The body will one day be raised and believers will experience eternal life. For their part, unbelievers "from the moment of their death enter a place of torment.... Unbelievers who reject Christ remain under the wrath of God and are condemned already on earth (John 3:18, 36) and must—along with all others—expect judgment immediately after death (Heb. 9:27)."³⁹

This is the position of the orthodox Christian tradition in the early period regarding the immortality of the soul, and is also Bavinck's position in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and matches what Scripture teaches. Bavinck says that, according to Scripture,

death is not natural but arises from the violation of the divine commandment (Gen. 2:17); from the devil insofar as he by his seduction caused humanity to fall and die (John 8:44); from sin itself inasmuch as it has a disintegrating impact on the whole of human life and, as it were, produces death from within itself (James 1:15); and from the judgment of God since he pays the wages of sin in the currency of death (Rom. 6:23). And in Scripture this death is never identical with annihilation, with nonbeing, but always consists in the destruction of harmony, in being cut off from the various life settings in which a creature has been placed in keeping with one's nature, in returning to the

have arisen and evolved gradually and accidentally. Ancestor worship, affection for deceased relatives, the love of life and the desire for its continuation, a hope for better living conditions on the other side of the grave, the fear of punishment, and the hope of reward—these are then the factors that promoted the gradual rise of belief in immortality" (*RD* 4: 589–90).

37. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 590.

38. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 598.

39. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 605–6.

elementary chaotic existence that, at least logically, underlies the entire cosmos.⁴⁰

For Bavinck, sin did not annihilate humanity and creation because God Himself intervened. He again emphasizes grace restores nature as a central theme in his theology. It is the powerful and gracious Christ's act of re-creation that maintains and sustains the soul temporarily apart from the body between death and the final resurrection. Therefore, the soul is immortal because God, the one who is eternal and immortal by nature, sustains it.

The Resurrection of the Body

Because of human sin, death brings a temporary separation between body and soul; but because of Christ's gracious work of re-creation, body and soul will be reunited in the resurrection of the dead. Bavinck develops his doctrine of the resurrection of the body based on Christ's death and resurrection, and, by doing so, he objects to the evolutionary approach to human nature. He grounds it in God's revelation. "The first event that follows the appearance of Christ is the resurrection of the dead. This event is not the result of an evolution of bodies in general or of the resurrection body implanted in believers by regeneration and sacrament in particular but the effect of an omnipotent, creative act of God (Matt. 22:29; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:38; 2 Cor. 1:9)."⁴¹

Bavinck also argues for the necessity of bodily resurrection, since sin entered the world and a temporal death took place. "The resurrection of the dead in general is only obliquely a fruit of the work of Christ. It has become a necessity only because a temporal death has occurred; and this temporal death is separated from eternal death by God's gracious intervention."⁴² Sin affects human nature as a whole—body and soul; therefore, the image of God in humans needs to be restored, and this restoration is only through Christ's work of redemption and re-creation. According to Bavinck, the purpose of human bodily resurrection is "to restore in all human beings the temporary rupture of the bond between soul and body—a rupture that occurred only with a view toward grace in Christ—to place them all

40. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 614.

41. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 693.

42. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 693.

before the judgment seat of God as *human beings*, in soul and body, and to let them hear the verdict from his mouth."⁴³

Through Christ's work of re-creation, humans' soul and body are reunited after a temporal death and separation. The bodily resurrection is not only "a reunion of soul and body, but also an act of vivification, a renewal. It is an event in which believers, united in soul and body, enter into communion with Christ and are being re-created after God's image (Rom. 8:11, 29; Phil. 3:21)."⁴⁴ The key to understanding the resurrection of the body is Christ's gracious work of re-creation of the whole human being after God's image, and "in this resurrection the identity of the resurrection body with the body that has died will be preserved."⁴⁵ Although the identity is preserved, the resurrected body will be transformed and glorified as Christ's glorious body.

In the Christian religion this identity of the resurrection body with the body that was laid aside at death is of great significance. In this respect it is, in the first place, diametrically opposed to all dualistic theories according to which the body is merely an incidental dwelling place or prison of the soul. The essence of a human being consists above all in the most intimate union of soul and body in a single personality. The soul by nature belongs to the body, and the body by nature belongs to the soul. Although the soul does not itself create the body, it nevertheless has its own body. The continuity of an individual human being is maintained as much in the identity of the body as in the identity of the soul.⁴⁶

This continuity of an individual human being is due to the fact that Christ's redemption is an act of re-creation. It is the re-creation of the image of God in human beings that was once affected and corrupted by sin. It is Bavinck's view that at the moment of death, body and soul are temporarily detached from one another, but, by God's grace and power, the soul continues to exist and is reunited with the body at the final resurrection. In the final resurrection, the whole person—body and soul—is not only recreated in God's image, but also

43. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 693.

44. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 693.

45. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 694.

46. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 694.

glorified in a way that transcends the earthly nature as created. Thus, the power of Christ is revealed in His gracious work of redemption of the whole creation, including redeeming the human body and soul from sin. Christ not only redeems the soul, He also redeems the body. It is redemption of the whole image of God.

Bavinck and the Modern Body-Soul Debate

If humans are a soul-body unity, then the resurrection is essential to salvation and redemption, for unless the physical body has eternal life, the person cannot have eternal life. Bavinck does make a distinction between body and soul as a physical and spiritual component of a person; his understanding is that all one's activities and abilities are rooted and flow from the soul and are expressed through the body. Humans are integrally and essentially body and soul because only the union of body and soul makes a person truly human. At the time of death, the soul is detached from the body, and, in the final resurrection, the soul is reunited with an immortal, incorruptible, and glorious physical body.

Bavinck holds a holistic view of body and soul as the essence of humanity, and a dualistic view only between the time of death and the final bodily resurrection. That is the Reformed position and what John Cooper calls "dualistic-holism." It means that a person is not only material or only spiritual; a person is the union of both. Founded in the traditional Christian position, Bavinck provides a strong basis for one to deal with the modern body-soul debate.

In Murphy's essay on human nature, she claims that humans are purely physical beings, and "nearly all of the human capacities or faculties once attributed to the *soul* are now seen to be functions of the brain."⁴⁷ However, for Bavinck, humans are formed by one physical component [body] and one spiritual component [soul] in union. Bavinck's view of human nature does not leave any space for a non-reductive physicalism and all the materialistic views of human nature. Bavinck claims that the physical being is not all that there is, but all human activities, including the brain's functions, happen through the union of body and soul. For example, it is not the brain that thinks, but the brain is fundamental to the thinking process of a human being, and it is not the eyes that see, but one can only see

47. Murphy, *Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues*, 1.

through the eyes. The union of body and soul is responsible for all human activities and functions.

Harry Fernhout correctly affirms that, for Bavinck, the bodily component of a person “becomes the field of expression” of the soul, where the soul “organizes and directs (rules over)”⁴⁸ the body. Fernhout suggests that the soul, therefore, functions as the center of humans, and in the union of the soul with the body, the body becomes the organ of the soul. For Bavinck, the core of human personality is in the soul. The powers, abilities, feelings, convictions, and capacities of a person are rooted in the soul, not in the brain, as Murphy claims, and these activities are expressed through the body.

According to Bavinck's position, at the time of death, body and soul are torn apart because of sin, but they will be reunited in the final resurrection. His view of an intermediate state is based on Christ's gracious work of re-creation. Biblical dualism can be understood in the intermediate state. Bavinck claims that “the purpose of human bodily resurrection is to restore in all human beings the temporary rupture of the bond between soul and body that occurred only with a view toward grace in Christ.”⁴⁹ The intermediate state makes bodily resurrection possible, and bodily resurrection happens because of the intermediate state. According to Bavinck, the intermediate state and bodily resurrection are two intimately connected biblical beliefs.

It is Christ who sustains the soul apart from the body at the moment of death, and it is Christ who will restore the whole person to the image of God, reuniting body and soul in the final resurrection. Therefore, Bavinck believes that there is a pattern of biblical eschatology that requires an intermediate state in which disembodied personal existence is integral. According to Bavinck, those who have died as believers are now with Jesus, standing before the throne of God, praying and serving God, even in a disembodied personal existence. Those who have died in the Lord are still able to engage in “activities of intellect and will, increasing in knowledge, and being confirmed in love.”⁵⁰

48. Fernhout, “Man, Faith, and Religion in Bavinck, Kuyper, and Dooyeweerd,” 13.

49. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 693.

50. Bavinck, *RD* 4: 642.

Thus Bavinck's anthropology provides a biblical basis to address the modern body-soul debate. His anthropology argues that body and soul are two distinct elements that together must be understood as the essence of God's image in humanity, and the final resurrection serves to restore in humans the temporary rupture between body and soul caused by sin and death.