This study points out the dangers in looking for a final and unchanging view of humankind. The optimistic view of humanity in modern society and culture as an expression of humanism is not able to explain the depths of personal and societal destruction and inhumanity. The Biblical description of our sinful relation to the triune God provides a much more convincing and realistic view on humankind.

From the perspective of God the Creator, Christian anthropology cannot be read as a matter of course from creation or from the humanity of Christ or from an uncritical view on the work of the Holy Spirit. Noordmans has convincingly illustrated that creation and with it the work of the Father, the Creator can only be understood in light of the cross and thus in relation to Christ. The critical character of a Christian anthropology must also take into account that one cannot merely see humankind in the extension of the incarnation of Christ. Humanity is not an continuation of the human nature of Christ. Furthermore, the Spirit as the third person in the trinity must not become confused with our own spirit. Creation, the human nature of Christ and re-creation must be interpreted to us by the Holy Spirit, by way of the cross. Only in this way does one do justice to the witness of Scripture and prevent a contamination of the Biblical witness with independent anthropological categories.

Both Noordmans and Dostoyevski portrays humankind as an entity that must be understood from different perspectives simultaneously. The presupposition in their work is that only God can truly understand humankind. Dostoyevski shows humankind in their desperate attempts in trying to control their own lives and find some meaning in their duplicate state. Only in the Revelation of the all-encompassing grace of the triune God could one find hope for these real people lost through their alienation from God.

From a Christological point of view, the concrete reality of the raped concubine in Judges 19, whose body was cut up as a sign of the violent depths of sin, puts the reality of the incarnation into perspective by pointing towards Christ’s broken body in the Lord’s Supper. No sentimental perspective on the Word becoming flesh could be gleaned from the incarnation when it is brought into relation with Judges 19 and the cross of Christ. Rather,
humankind’s silence amidst the violence of this world is revealed as sin. From the perspective of Scripture the silent betrayal of those suffering in the streets is worse than those committing the crimes. This perspective is applied to the situation in Post-apartheid South Africa.

The Temptation narrative in Luke primarily witnesses to Christ’s victory amidst the most subtle of temptations by the devil. He tempts Jesus to transgress the boundaries of the trinity by completing the work of the Father by his own means or by taken over the work of the Spirit to coerce people into submission like Dostoyevski’s Grand Inquisitor. Jesus follows the incomprehensible way of the cross, which humans cannot follow. Humanity’s salvation lies in the fact that Christ resisted the temptations, not in its possible imitation of His resistance. The Spirit reveals the subtlety of the devil’s temptations, whereby even Scriptures could be quoted and faith could be demanded. The critical nature of Christ’s work is also related to a lecture by Thabo Mbeki.

The Servant of the Lord is the one from whom we turned away our faces. The seemingly exclusive elements in place-taking, where the Servant is seen as one justly punished, is exactly what poignantly humbles us when the Spirit reveals to us that those justly suffering are taking our sins on them. That all are responsible for all is only a truth through the eyes of faith as perceived in relation to Jesus’ suffering on the cross.

Subsequently, Pneumatological perspectives on a critical anthropology are provided. The seven in 2 Sm 21, making atonement for a whole nation is a sign of the atonement achieved for us through the work of Christ. The substitutionary atonement, which is such a grotesque idea for humanism, reveals our sinfulness, our lack of understanding of the depth of our role in broken-down reality of sin. The rejection of others and ultimately Christ’s rejection is the cost of our salvation.

The intensity of our betrayal is revealed in the person of Judas. Not his evil nature, but exactly his morality, noble intentions, his sense of responsible, are all good things contaminated by sin, which drove him to commit the ultimately bad for ultimately good reasons, to kill Christ in service of God.

Neither humanity’s spirit nor its soul has something God-like about it. Our experience of life without God, the emptiness of existence drives us into angst, self-rejection and violence. The law frees from the angst of existence by revealing a person as guilty. Psychology is not able to do more than describe the potential transgression, which gives it a mythical character that leaves no possibility of forgiveness for a historically manifested sin. Theological
psychology, as Noordmans calls it, reveals a human person as sinful and justified, where sinfulness can be faced in light of the gracious merit of Christ. Not only did He free our souls, but *Christus Consolator* bore our disease in his body like He did our sins on the cross. This is the content of the Comfort the Spirit brings to us.

A positive anthropology does not bring true comfort to humanity, which is lost in sin. Only the comfort of the triune God as Father, Son and Spirit, brings relief to humanity fallen in sin.