Chapter 8
The Psychology of the Spirit and Oepke Noordmans

Abstract
Oepke Noordmans, the Dutch Theologian has described the Holy Spirit as Interpreter and Comforter. This chapter explores the critical anthropology of Noordmans by showing how the Spirit’s interpretation of the cross of Christ to comfort humankind, critically challenges the positive humanistic anthropology in our society today. Sin cannot be scientifically explained, but expresses humankind’s relationship to God. Kierkegaard, Dostoyevski and Kohlbrugge contribute to the discussion.

Introduction
In his theology, Oepke Noordmans describes the Spirit as the Interpreter and the Comforter. The Spirit interpreting the crucified Christ to comfort humankind expresses the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. This comfort is the hidden work of the Spirit and presupposes a critical anthropology, which cannot be deduced from a general anthropology or the human spirit. Humankind often experiences existence as rejection rather than as comfort. The Spirit relates the concrete person, as spirit, soul and body, to Christ’s work. True humanity is living from the comfort of the Spirit.

The Spirit versus the spirit
“You're all flops. I am the Earth Mother, and you are all flops. (To herself) I disgust me. You know, there's only been one man in my whole life who's ever made me happy. Do you know that? ... George, my husband ... George, who is out there somewhere in the dark, who is good to me - whom I revile, who can keep learning the games we play as quickly as I can change them. Who can make me happy and

I do not wish to be happy. Yes, I do wish to be happy. George and Martha: Sad, sad, sad ... Whom I will not forgive for having come to rest; for having seen me and having said: yes, this will do; who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and must be punished for it [JT]. George and Martha: Sad, sad, sad ... Some day, hah! Some night, some stupid, liquor-ridden night, I will go too far and I'll either break the man's back or I'll push him off for good which is what I deserve.”

These are the words of Martha who is married to George. By this time, they have been verbally abusing each other for many hours. They have a young couple over for dinner that particular evening. She has been flirting outrageously with the young man and when he finally reacts to her advances, she says these disturbing words. Her life is marked by the most disturbing self-rejection. She is not unloved, but rather the very fact that she is loved is what is so unacceptable to her. She is not rejected even when she so fiercely tries to drive away her husband, who loves her.

Her husband, George loves her despite the fact that she hates herself. His love points towards the work of Christ. The Spirit interprets the work of Christ within the harshest of realities of a person’s self-rejection. The Spirit is at work here in the flesh, pointing towards Christ who died for his enemies. How strange is this rejection of love? Who could understand it or measure its cost? This story illustrates the hidden history of the cross.

This story reminds one of the naked raging possessed person in Mark 5 who lived among the graves and begs Jesus to leave him alone. Noordmans refers to this passage in his meditation “Possession” where he indicates that we as well-dressed sane citizens recoil at this representation on the edges of our humanity,

424 From the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), based on the work of Edward Albee.

because we don’t want to admit that this double shows us the other side of our existence.\footnote{426}

In Noordmans’ article “Within the circle of Pentecost,”\footnote{427} he discusses the theme of \textit{angst} under the cosmic subjects. \textit{Angst} expresses human beings’ most general experience of fallen creation. He describes this \textit{angst} as the feelings of emptiness, the darkness and existence without God. This feeling is present in people before any feelings of guilt, because guilt is not yet experienced as transgression, but existence itself is seen as a mistake. The \textit{angst} of conscience, on the other hand, only comes with the realisation of having transgressed. This feeling is dominated by the conscience as a demonic residue of the first creation. It operates reflexively whereby it throws a person back on him- or herself. It does not warn in advance, but judges afterwards. The Spirit, however, does not judge afterwards, but pronounces grace in advance.\footnote{428}

The human conscience works like the Pharisees surrounding the woman in John 8 with the stones in their hands, ready for the kill. This idea is also expressed in the film \textit{The man from La Mancha}, based on the work of Cervantes where the hero, Don Quixote is also surrounded with mirrors to reveal his madness to himself.\footnote{429}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[426]{Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 8} 1990b, 293.}
\footnotetext[427]{“Binnen de Pinkstercirkel” (Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 323-348). This article contains guide-lines for discussions on youth camps.}
\footnotetext[428]{“Het waarschuwt niet vooruit, maar veroordeelt achteraf. ... De Geest ... klaagt niet achteraf aan, maar spreekt vooruit vrij,” (Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 329).}
\footnotetext[429]{Man of La Mancha is a 1972 film version of the Broadway musical \textit{Man of La Mancha} by Dale Wasserman, with music by Mitch Leigh and lyrics by Joe Darion. The musical was suggested by the classic novel \textit{Don Quixote de la Mancha} by Miguel de Cervantes, but more directly based on Dale Wasserman's 1959 non-musical television play, \textit{I, Don Quixote}, which combines a semi-fictional episode from the life of Cervantes with scenes from his novel. The film was directed by Arthur Hiller. \textit{Man of la Mancha}.}
\end{footnotes}
The Spirit comforts us with the Word of God by saying that if our hearts judge us, God is bigger than our hearts (conscience) (1 Jn 3:20).

Noordmans continues his discussion of angst by pointing out its physico-spatial aspects. Personality is not a divine principle, as proposed by German idealism, in opposition to nature. Shamefulness reveals something of the sinfulness of personhood.

This shamefulness is illustrated in the work of Dostoyevski, Notes from the Underground. The protagonist in the novel encounters a prostitute and tells her of the beauty of marriage and love and awakens long lost hope in her heart. When she finds the courage to go to him in search of this hope, he shatters her expectations by ridiculing her. He then confesses to her that he wants to humiliate her, because he was humiliated earlier that day by another person. The he continues by saying:

“I am the nastiest, most ridiculous, pettiest, stupidest, most envious of all the worms on this earth, who are none of them any better than me, but who, the devil only knows why, are never put out of countenance: but all my life any nit will be able to give me a fillip on the nose, and that is my most distinguishing feature! And what business is it of mine that you don't understand a word of this? And what on earth has it to do with me whether you are perishing in that place or not? Do you understand how much I shall hate you for being here and hearing all of this?…What more do you want? Why are you still here, tormenting me, after all that, why don't you go?”

When she hugs the poor man and cries for him and he also starts to cry, he says to himself.

“The idea also came into my overwrought mind that our roles had definitely been reversed, she was the heroine and I

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was just such another crushed and degraded creature as she had been that night - four days before... And all this came into my head while I lay head downwards on the sofa... I don't know, I still can't make up my mind, but then, of course I was still less able to understand it than I am now! Without power and tyranny over somebody I can't live. ...But... but after all, discussion won't explain anything, and consequently there's no point in discussing it. However, I overcame my reluctance and lifted up my head slightly; after all, I had to raise it some time.... And then, purely because, as I am convinced to this day, I was ashamed (JT) to look at her, a different feeling was kindled in my heart and flared up all at once... a feeling of mastery and ownership. ... How I hated her and how strongly I was attracted by her at that moment!

... All my life I have been unable to conceive of any other love, and I have reached the stage when I sometimes think now that the whole of love consists in the right, freely given to the lover, to tyrannize over the beloved. ^430

The episode ends where the man puts a five-rouble note into her hand, something like the 30 silver coins of Judas. He convinces himself that he did her a favour by not involving her further with a “morally depraved” person like himself. He nobly dies for her, because it is better for her to face the humiliation (which will probably make her stronger) than have a life full of arguments and struggle with him. The tragic hero denies himself love and gives up his life for her.

Angst, fear, guilt, shame and pride, these things reveal the depths of our human condition. These are all expressions of our sinful human situation.

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Saul, who wanted to be more merciful than God by being gracious to God’s enemies, also has a predisposition for the tragic. In a disturbing meditation of Noordmans, “Downfall,” he points out that the theological relation between God and the innermost person takes precedence over any psychological perspective on a person.

Saul feels sorry for himself, because David and Jonathan allegedly connived to betray him. Nobody sympathises with him and nobody informed him of their plot. Noordmans says that “in such a state the spirit chooses itself as prey. It scavenges on its own heart and soul and tears the raw flesh bloodily apart like a bird of prey its catch … Because by way of this inner self-mutilation and bitter sweet revenge on his own being, he actually attempts to draw God’s attention.” God is the guilty one, it is He who rejected Saul.

Noordmans’ meditation on Saul could just as well have been a discussion of the Martha in *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolff* and *Notes from the Underground*. They reject themselves and any hope of happiness. Are they not fighting with God? Their almost sadomasochistic delight in their own perdition makes them very difficult, if not impossible to love. Independent of the work of the Spirit, human beings experience their existence to a great extent as rejection. This expresses itself in self-rejection. These are the

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431 Noordmans, *Verzamelde Werken Deel 8* 1990b, 213.

432 “Ondergang” (Noordmans, *Verzamelde Werken Deel 8* 1990b, 222-224).

433 “In zulk een toestand kiest de geest zichzelf tot prooi. Hij aast op eigen hart en ziel en verscheurt die rauw en bloedig apart like a bird of prey its catch …Want door de inwendige zelfverminking, die bitter-zoete wraak op zijn eigen bestaan, bedoelt hij eigenlijk Gods aandacht te trekken” (Noordmans, *Verzamelde Werken Deel 8* 1990b, 223).

434 Heidegger’s thesis that we are thrown into existence to freely actualise ourselves, takes on a different aspect if one sees how these persons actualised themselves, Roussouw, H. "Wetenskap, Interpretasie, Wyseheid." *Seminare Simposia en Lesings B7* (Port Elizabeth: Universiteit van Port Elizabeth Publikasiereeks, 1980), 46. Human beings experience the fact that they are
ones that Christ died for. These are the people whom the Spirit comforts with the work of Christ.

It does seem to be a fantastic view of humanity, but once one’s eyes are opened to see the children in your own home, the girl who was raped, your own broken relationships from this perspective, then one sees rejected humanity with angst as its companion.

The psychology of the Spirit

In his article “Psychology and Gospel,” Noordmans proposes that the mythical element in Adam’s sin becomes history in the life of the people before God. In doing so he positions himself with Kierkegaard to a great degree over against modern psychology, which views sin from a mythical perspective in search of its origins.

Noordmans proposes that the law of God brings relief from the cosmic angst and incomprehensible fear. People are drawn from their lonely unfathomable fears towards knowledge of their sinfulness before God through socialisation in church. In this way we no longer see ourselves as the tragic victims of fate, but as sinners before God. In church we are then changed from victim to sinner.

However, the law does not bring salvation, because it becomes independent and thus demonised. The whole history of Israel is an illustration of this point. Even under the law, we could still see sin as a form of fate (supra-individual total corruption), whereby death still reigns. The law cannot take away sin, but rather multiplies it. Even though it brought relief from the incomprehensible angst, it

thrown into existence often as rejection by God, which manifests itself in self-rejection.

435 “Psychologie en Evangelie” (Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 2 1979, 98-118).

436 Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 2 1979, 335.

437 Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 2 1979, 337.
condemned us as sinners. The way out of this predicament is not the one chosen by the Pharisee, because also the Pharisee stands lonely and isolated from the other sinners. The only salvation from this solitude is the gospel for sinners, which the tax collector understands better than the Pharisee. The answer for this body of death can be found in Rm 7.

The central question for many commentators of Rm 7 is whether this passage refers to Paul before or after his conversion. Noordmans proposes that sin is not a condition that one can shove unto the unconverted person. On this point, Noordmans proposes that one has to do with what he calls a theological psychology. It is different from secular psychology in that it is not an analytical view on the possibility of sin. It does not have a mythical view of sin, which is still a danger in the creation narrative and it also is does not see sin as something far away in the concrete historical sin of Israel, but it is brought to light in church under the cross in all its demonic patency. Here the cross banishes sin in all its forms and reveals its ephemeral character. Noordmans finds support for his view in Kierkegaard’s work, Angst.

In Angst, Kierkegaard indicated that “sin” does not belong in any science. As a specifically theological issue sin transgresses the field of psychology, “if one accepts the psychological explanation and repeats it a few times and therefore believes that it is not unlikely that sin came into the world in this way, then one has confused everything. Psychology must stay within its boundaries, only then can its explanations have meaning.”

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440 Kierkegaard, S. Angst.Translated by S van Praag. (Amsterdam: De Gulden Ster, [18--]), 17.
441 “Als men de psychologische verklaring aanvaardt, haar eenige keeren herhaalt en daarop meent, dat het niet onwaarschijnlijk is, dat de zonde op die manier in die wereld is gekomen, dan heeft men alles verward. De psychologie moet
Kierkegaard proposes that there are two configurations of sin in a person. In the first formation the individual who is lost in sin, has angst for the possibility of evil. From an elevated perspective this is a configuration of the good, since the person fears evil. Kierkegaard proposes that there is another formation of sin in a person, which he calls the demonic. In this formation the individual lives in sin and fears the good. The first formation of slavery to sin points to an unfree bound relationship towards the good, while the demonic formation presupposes an unfree relationship towards the evil.

In the first formation, the possibility of freedom for the individual was the cause of the angst. In the demonic, the freedom with regard to evil presents itself as unfreedom and in this way all freedom is lost. The demonic results in isolation and bondage. The unfree makes of itself a prisoner and evades all communication. It clothes itself in a deep misunderstanding expressed by a systematic unbroken silence. When it comes into contact with the free it becomes angst. This bondage brings about muteness; on the other hand language, the word liberates from the the empty abstractions of the isolation.\textsuperscript{442}

The free brings this isolation out into the open and that is why the possessed ones ask Jesus to go away and not to torment them (fear of the good), in Mk 5:7, Lk 8:28.\textsuperscript{443}

Noordmans agrees with Kierkegaard that a person with angst about a real sin (which could be confessed before God), lives in fear of the possibility of the next sin. Remorse for sin is not expressed in freedom, but in relation to sin it is degraded to a possibility. This remorse cannot abolish sin, but can only suffer for it.

binnen haar grenzen blijven; dan kan haar verklaring altijd haar beteekenis hebben” (Kierkegaard, Angst [18--], 47) (Translated by author).

\textsuperscript{442} Kierkegaard, Angst [18--], 160.

\textsuperscript{443} Kierkegaard, Angst [18--], 162.
“Remorse has lost its mind and has elevated angst to remorse. The consequences of sin continues on its course and drags the individual along with it like a woman, whom a hangman drags along by her hair as she cries out in despair. The angst goes on ahead, it discovers the consequences before they come, so that one can sense in oneself a foreboding of bad weather: it approaches, the individual shivers like a horse and whinnies as it tramples around on the very spot it took freight. Sin has conquered. The angst frantically throws itself into the arms of despair. It dares the ultimate. It accepts the consequences of the transgression as the necessary suffering of the deserved punishment, and perdition as the necessary consequence of sin. All is lost, the verdict is out, condemnation is certain, the intensification of the verdict lies in the fact that the individual must be dragged along to place of judgment. In other words, remorse has become insane.”

By way of Kierkegaard, Noordmans criticises psychology. Against the purely psychological conjuring up of shadows from beneath the threshold as a form of methodical exorcism, Noordmans proposes combating the evil within the walls of the church when they become historical figures in the light of the Gospel and they are

444 “Het berouw heeft zijn verstand verloren en den angst tot berouw gepotentieerd. De consequentie van de zonde gaat haar gang en sleept den individu als een vrouw met zich, die door een beul aan heur haren wordt voortgetrokken, waarbij zij het in wanhoop uitschreeuwt. De angst gaat vooraf, hij ontdekt de consequentie, voor zij komt: zoodat men aan zich zelf kan merken, dat er een onweer dreigt: hij komt nader, de individu trilt als een paard, dat hinnekend op dezelfde plaats begint te steigeren, waar het eens geschrokken is. De zonde overwint. De angst werpt zich wanhopig in de armen van het berouw. Dit waagt het laatste. Het vat de consequentie van die zonde als een lijden ter wille van de straf, het verderf als de consequentie van de zonde op. Het is verloren, zijn vonnis is geveld, de verdoeming is zeker, de verscherping van het vonnis ligt daarin dat de individu gedurende zijn heele leven naar de gerechtsplaats moet worden gesleept. Met andere woorden: het berouw is waanzinnig geworden” (Kierkegaard, Angst [18--], 150).
disarmed by Christ. These powers of evil express themselves in Israel and the law, covetousness and religion.\textsuperscript{445}

Noordmans sees in Kohlbrugge someone that epitomised the singular psychology of the Gospel. In his sermons he would point out the most respectable forms of sin and bring it before Christ – our idea of justice, our morality, our religion. Sin is not historical, but it takes on historical forms.\textsuperscript{446} His preaching does not describe the possibility of sin as in psychology, but it is theology read from history. Kohlbrugge does not analyse subliminal expressions of the possibility of evil, but preaches that sin reaches to the depth of our being. In light of the Gospel even the desire for the good can be evil. This sin is historically expressed in the person of Paul, the Pharisee, who desecrated the body of Christ in his desire to serve God.

As a substitutionary figure, Paul is made history in Rm 7 and he makes history. The powers of the law and Israel are made history and are driven ahead up to the crucifixion of the Son. Sin is not repetitive and forgivable like it features within psychology, which tries to explain it from its origins (like the mythical of Adam). Our view of sin as something repetitive is what brings us into the temptation to flirt with the next.\textsuperscript{447}

Sin takes on a specific once-off form in history. Noordmans proposes that sin does not come forth from the earth as in the mythical sin of Adam, but that it takes on shape in things that come from the side. The fact that Christ was made sin (2 Cor 5:21)

\textsuperscript{445} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 110, 111.

\textsuperscript{446} On this point, Noordmans disagrees with Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard sin does not have a history, but Noordmans stresses the fact that it does take on a form in historical persons and that this is where it can be brought to light and forgiven through Christ’s work. The historical expression of sin is the point at which Noordmans finds comfort for the devastation of sin, while Kierkegaard’s a-historical view tends to lean more towards the mythical view, which is also prevalent in Psycho-analysis.

\textsuperscript{447} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 113.
abolishes the question about the origin of sin. Here it becomes pure history.\footnote{Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 113.}

In his article “Resurrection,”\footnote{Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 84-97.} Noordmans points out that one must not view Creation, Christmas, Easter or the resurrection from the anthropological categories of body and soul, which could lead to these historical events to become mythical expressions of anthropological distinctions. Rather one must view humankind in light of these historical events from the theological perspective of the relationship between God and humankind, where the historical expressions of sin finds its final culmination in the person of Christ on the cross.

In opposition to the ambiguity of conditions of a person within psychology, Noordmans posits the unmixed duality within theology. Noordmans sees in the duality of God and humankind in Christ a general theological rule. Pascal agrees with him by pointing out how faith holds together many seemingly contradictory truths.\footnote{\textit{La foi embrasse plusieurs vérités qui semblent se contre-dire ... La source en est l'union des deux natures en Jésus-Christ} (Pascal \textit{Pensées} 1977b:146).}

Noordmans thus proposes that one cannot distinguish between who Paul was and what he now is. He is a sinner who has received grace. Noordmans relates this condition to the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector. For him Paul is both of them at the same time. In turn he relates this to the Christological formula in Chalcedon, saying that Paul is Pharisee and tax-collector without confusion or separation, like Christ is a human person and God.\footnote{Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 2} 1979, 113.}

An expression of this rule is found in Luther’s view of a person as a justified sinner. A person is both at the same time. There is no causal relation in the duality, neither is there any gradual from the
one to the other. The unity of a person remains a theological issue. In this condition one can only cry out like Paul “Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death”? The answer does not lie in the washing off of sin to leave a pious person, but in the godly love of Christ who takes a person out of sin. Where does the sin that is left go? Noordmans proposes that it resides nowhere like everyone who has loved a person on earth knows.⁴⁵²

Kohlbrugge elicited great offence through his teaching of the radical nature of sin as a condition of fleshliness. Fleshly humanity as sinners in the most concrete sense of the word do not have to climb to God by way of dogmatics or morality, because God became flesh in Christ. We must not attempt to be more than what we are, namely: sinners. All our attempts to be more does not take us closer to God, but rather stands in the way of the Spirit. This does not mean that that we must attempt to humble ourselves through spiritual exercises. Our sinfulness is not something to attain, but it is the true state of affairs. There is no nook of holiness where we could hide from God. Sin is the material of faith. That is why Christ was born from a unmarried mother within the succession of hereditary sin – Rebekah, Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Mary. Christ cannot be drawn too deep into sin. The greatest possible tension must be upheld between flesh and Spirit. Therein lies the greatest truth of the love of God for sinners. He became the sin we are trying to escape.

This critical anthropology does not allow for any religious-philosophical spirit (or soul) as the divine in a person. Our spirit drives us to despair and angst, but he Holy Spirit is the Comforter who dispels the fear. We do not find Him in ourselves, because He is God.⁴⁵³

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⁴⁵³ Noordmans, *Verzamelde Werken Deel 2* 1979, 344.
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The Spirit and body

In Noordmans’ meditation “Sinner and Beggar,” he expounds on the different way in which the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus and the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector are interpreted.

Most interpretations do not allow for the same tension between the rich man and Lazarus as they allow for between the Pharisee and the tax collector. Like Pierson most of us understands Lazarus as the content poor person over against the jealous poor person and the wicked rich person in opposition to the good rich person. We do not relate the condition of Lazarus to that of the rich man in the same way as we do it with the Pharisee and the tax collector.

The classes of rich and poor, which becomes something fixed for us in providence and in general society, seems to exist in a position of rest toward each other. We tend to see a much closer relationship between the two worshippers in the temple. In hearing the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector one could imagine a rush from the side of the Pharisees to the side of the tax-collectors, but when people hear the parable of the rich man and Lazarus one would find it difficult to imagine a great amount of people rushing over to the side of the poor Lazarus. This illustrates the closer relationship between the worshippers in the temple than between the rich man and Lazarus. This results in the rich man not being viewed in such a bad light as the Pharisee.

Noordmans wonders why spiritual pride would seem more dangerous than being rich. Does richness and poverty not have bearing on a greater part of life than mere religious sentiments in the church?

Noordmans points out that there are two types of misery; namely, that of the soul and that of the body. These two sometimes exclude one another, because there could exist physical suffering

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where there is no guilt and forgiveness involved, but where the poverty itself takes the place of guilt. It is as if Lazarus believes with his sores, with the totality of his misery, with his body.\textsuperscript{455}

There are people who find such a comfort and assurance from the Spirit in the reading of this parable that it surpasses the mere internal assurance. This does not mean that poverty and richness is the will of God as natural theology often presupposes. In the comfort for the poor lies the judgement of the rich.

Noordmans illustrates this point by referring to Proverbs, which does say that God made the poor and the rich (Pr 22:2) equal before him, but it is also written that God treats the poor and the oppressor equally (Pr 29:13). Nobody would propose that God made the oppressor as a necessary part of Providence.\textsuperscript{456}

In the parable of the prodigal son it would appear that the sinner and the beggar are both in focus. The prodigal son, however, became a beggar through his own sin, which is not the case with Lazarus. If we would like to protest and make a sinner of Lazarus, we would have to take care not to find ourselves in the company of Job’s friends.

Noordmans proposes that it is difficult to determine the relation between these two sides of the Gospel; namely, sin and misery. It is a fact that these two aspects are present in the Gospel and in these parables and that we would detract from the comfort of the gospel if we were to relate them directly with each other.\textsuperscript{457}

Noordmans is of the opinion that the church has made too little of the \textit{Christus consolator}. If we see the Spirit as the Comforter, then we think first of the sinner and not of he beggar.\textsuperscript{458} In the

\textsuperscript{455} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 8} 1990b, 20.

\textsuperscript{456} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 8} 1990b, 23.

\textsuperscript{457} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 8} 1990b, 25.

\textsuperscript{458} Noordmans, \textit{Verzamelde Werken Deel 8} 1990b, 25.
Gospels we read more about external help than about the internal care of the soul.\textsuperscript{459}

For Noordmans this applies to all physical suffering. In his meditation “The Destitute ones,”\textsuperscript{460} Noordmans shows how Christ’s salvation for the suffering of those with physically disability or handicap is a fulfilment of the promise that the He is the One in whose wounds we are healed (Isa 53). Jesus himself directly relates Lazarus’ physical need with his salvation in Lk 16:25, where the bad things he received on earth is the direct opposite of his salvation in heaven. The physically handicapped form the elite in the Kingdom of God, where their physical need is an expression of their election. The faltering steps of a cripple woman has liturgical meaning for him when he says:

“Look! There goes one from this chosen crowd. A cripple woman. Her face glows with goodness; already a pledge of her heavenly inheritance (Eph 1:14) and an antidote for her handicap. There is evidently a relation between these things. See! How she lift her head high up each time she pulls her foot from the depths. It is a liturgical passage, whereby she performs Psalm 130, the De Profundis.”\textsuperscript{461}

The Spirit relates our whole physical existence to Christ. His work cannot be spiritualised. In the concrete, unique and hidden reality, the Kingdom of God comes. There the Spirit makes history. For those that feel Christ’s suffering in their bodies, it comforts. The concreteness of His suffering is interpreted for us by the Spirit, the

\textsuperscript{459} Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 8 1990b, 298.

\textsuperscript{460} “De Misdeelden” (Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 8 1990b, 294-296).

\textsuperscript{461} “Kijk! Daar gaat één uit deze uitverkoren schare. Een kreupele vrouw. Om haar gelaat speelt een vleug van goedheid; een onderpand reeds van haar hemelse erfenis (Eph 1:14) en een tegengift tegen haar gebrek. Er is een kennelijk verband tussen deze beide. Zie! hoe zij haar hoofd omhoog heft, telkenmale als zij de voet uit de diepte trekt. Het is een liturgische gang, waarmee zij de 130e psalm, het lied De Profundis opvoert” (Noordmans, Verzamelde Werken Deel 8 1990b, 295).
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Comforter. He teaches us that in Christ’s wounds do we find healing. Only through the interpretation of the Spirit do we understand the physical suffering of Christ in relation to our own and that of others. The Spirit confirms the truth of the Crucified One’s suffering to our bodies.

Conclusion: anthropology of the Spirit

One must not confuse the human spirit with the Holy Spirit. The human spirit brings forth angst for the cosmic emptiness and drives a person towards self-rejection. This is well illustrated in the works of Dostoyevski, *Notes from the Underground* and in the play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolff*. The Spirit is the Comforter, who comforts us in our fall with the comfort of the Gospel of Christ. The depths of self-rejection and the violence we do others in the process, that is what Christ bore for us. This truth is the comfort the Spirit brings to us.

The law brings some respite from the unfathomable human fears. To be guilty is better than facing the angst for the emptiness. However, the Law does not free us, but shows our condition of sin before God. Sin does not have the repetitive mythical qualities ascribed to it by psychology, whereby it escapes all comprehension, makes forgiveness impossible and places us in a perpetually ambiguous position in our relationship to God. Sin takes on a historical form in us, which can be confessed and forgiven before God. There is no direct development from being a sinner to being justified. The Comfort of the Spirit exists in the sinner being declared righteous in Christ.

The Pharisee’s call on God’s law is equivalent to the rich man’s call on the Providence of God. On the other side, the spiritual guilt, which the tax-collector bemoans, is equivalent to the physical pain of Lazarus. Sin and physical need, however, cannot be directly and causally related.

Noordmans proposes that Paul is the Pharisee and the Tax collector both without confusion or separation. In the same way one could say that this duality could be applied to the rich man and Lazarus. They are all in us to some degree and the Spirit has to
interpret to us to which degree they are present in any specific situation, for our comfort and our judgment.