

Spirit, Soul and Body: The Trichotomy of Kenyon, Hagin and Copeland

By

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Introduction

“Man is a spirit, has a soul, and lives in a body.” This claim might be heard in any number of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, but it is most particularly to be associated with, and originates from, the Word-Faith movement (WFM).¹ It is striking, not so much for its rigid trichotomy, which is not uncommon among charismatic Christians, but more for its uncompromising prioritisation and centralisation of the human spirit as the essential person, and its concomitant relegation of soul, and more particularly body, to the peripheries of human being. While it is becoming an increasingly common formulation, is it an acceptable one? Several of the movement’s critics have answered in the negative. Dan McConnell likens WFM’s anthropology to gnostic dualism.² Robert Bowman notes its similarities to Platonism, and believes that it leads to a harmful anti-intellectualism.³ Andrew Perriman too sees it preventing rational discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the movement’s beliefs.⁴ This article considers WFM’s anthropological trichotomy in order to determine its possible sources within the Bible, historic Christianity, and certain nineteenth century non-Christian ideas that WFM is alleged to have drawn from.⁵ It concludes that it cannot claim strong biblical support, but that several of its features are to be found within traditional Christianity, and not least among its closest orthodox predecessors.

The views of three exemplary authors will be considered. One of these is widely recognised to provide the conceptual basis for much of WFM’s teaching, even though he predated the movement as such. He is E. W. Kenyon (1867-1948).⁶ Another is the ‘father’ of WFM, the late Kenneth E. Hagin (1917-2003). The third is the leading living proponent of WFM, Kenneth Copeland (1937-). Both their statements and their reasoning will be studied. This will then be compared with the results of further scriptural study, and with the teaching of foremost writers on Christian anthropology.

¹ ‘Word-Faith’ is the preferred term of Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *The Word-Faith Controversy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), *passim*; cf. ‘Word of Faith’, the term employed by Andrew Perriman, *Faith, Health & Prosperity* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), *passim*. Members of the movement, if they label themselves at all, prefer the simpler epithet, ‘Faith’ teacher (e.g. Kenneth Hagin Ministries’ publishing arm is named ‘Faith Library Publications’). D. McConnell follows this nomenclature, referring to the ‘Faith movement’ (*The Promise of Health and Wealth* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990], *passim*). The movement is also known as the ‘Positive Confession’ movement (e.g. by D. Hunt & T. A. McMahan, *The Seduction of Christianity* [Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1985]), and less formally as ‘Prosperity theology’, as the ‘Health and Wealth’ movement, and even simply as ‘name it and claim it’. Its massive growth and pervasive influence are well documented by Milmon F. Harrison, *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

² McConnell, *Promise*, pp.110, 123.

³ Bowman, *Controversy*, p.103.

⁴ Perriman, *Faith*, p.32.

⁵ McConnell, *Promise*, ch.2.

⁶ For Kenyon’s connection to WFM see especially McConnell, *Promise*, ch.1.

Also, the teaching of Kenyon's possible immediate sources will be studied, for signs of likely influence upon him.

The Anthropology of Kenyon, Hagin, and Copeland

In his repeated affirmations that the spiritual is more important than the material, and particularly that 'revelation knowledge' surpasses 'sense knowledge', Kenyon went so far as to envisage a world controlled by God-given *spiritual* forces and laws, that took precedence over for instance physical ones.⁷ As commentators have noted,⁸ Hagin and Copeland teach likewise.⁹

While Kenyon's cosmology centralised spirit, his anthropology, if anything, did so even more. He held to a rigidly trichotomous view in which human nature comprises spirit, soul and body.¹⁰ This trichotomous formulation involved such dualistic disjunction between the parts that he insisted that of these three the spirit alone was the true 'I' to the exclusion of the others.¹¹ Hagin's anthropology was essentially the same. While, rarely, he could write in dichotomous terms,¹² his generally pervasive trichotomy led to WFM's well known formula: "Man *is* a spirit, *has* a soul, and *lives* in a body."¹³ Hagin consistently followed Kenyon in subjugating the body to the soul, and that in turn to the spirit.¹⁴ Copeland also offers a clearly pneumocentric trichotomy.¹⁵ This characterisation of humanity has moral repercussions. Hagin and Copeland agree that obedience to God requires a state in which spirit dominates soul and, in turn, body in making moral decisions, while in contrast immorality results when body or soul dominates.¹⁶

⁷ E.g., "Love and hate, hope and faith are spiritual forces. These forces are the forces that govern the world." (E. W. Kenyon, *The Two Kinds of Knowledge* [Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 21st printing, 1998 (1938)], p.32; cf. *The Bible in the Light of Our Redemption* [Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 3rd printing, 1969 (posthumously edited and compiled by Ruth Kenyon Housworth)], p.15).

⁸ Bowman, *Controversy*, p.106; Perriman, *Faith*, p.33.

⁹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *In Him*, (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications [FLP], 1975), part I; Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Righteousness* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications/ Tulsa, OK: Harrison House, 1984), p.11 ("You see, *the world of the spirit controls the world of the natural*. A Spirit created all matter" [italics original]); K. Copeland, 'Don't Hang the Curtains... Hang the Rod!', pp.2-5, *Believer's Voice Of Victory* 33.6 (June 2005), p.3 ("Spiritual law governs all of life").

¹⁰ No effort is made to define these three terms.

¹¹ E.g., "The spirit is the real man, created in the image of God... Your body is not you. Your mind is not you. You have a mind which you use. You possess a body which you use. Your mind and body are merely the instruments of your spirit, the real YOU." (Kenyon, *Bible*, pp.17-18, emphasis original).

¹² "Man's nature is two-fold. There is an inward man and outward man. The inward man is the spirit. The outward man is the body." (Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Real Faith* [Tulsa, OK: FLP, 1970], p.13).

¹³ See, e.g., Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Human Spirit* (Tulsa, OK: FLP, 6th printing 1980), p.8.

¹⁴ "Your body is not the real you, it is just the house you live in." (Hagin, *Real Faith*, p.14). "The real man is the spirit. The spirit operates through the soul: the intellect, sensibilities, and will. And the soul operates through the body." (Kenneth E. Hagin, *Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness and Spiritual Death* [Tulsa, OK: FLP, 2nd edn, 1983 (1966)], p.56).

¹⁵ Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Faith* (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1983), pp.6, 8; 'To Know the Glory', *Believer's Voice Of Victory* 24.11 (December 1996), p.6.

¹⁶ Hagin, *Zoe: The God-Kind of Life* (Tulsa, OK: FLP, 1981), p.7: "If your *mind* is not renewed with the Word of God, it will side with your *flesh* and dominate your *spirit*. But if you get your *mind* renewed, your *spirit*, through your mind, will dominate your *body*." (emphases original); Copeland, *Force of Faith*, p.6: "To be a powerful Christian, your spirit, trained in the Word, must be in command of your mind and body. The chain of command is spirit (heart), soul (mind), body (flesh)."

The reasoning for this position commences with the biblical statement that humans are made in God's image (Gen.1:26). Since God is spirit (Jn 4:24), then humans must essentially be spirit as well.¹⁷ In fact, Kenyon and Hagin went so far as to say that humans were made 'in God's class',¹⁸ and were thereby 'gods'.¹⁹ A full discussion of 'the image of God' lies beyond the limits of this article.²⁰ Suffice it to say that the logic applied by the authors under study could equally be applied the other way round: since humanity is made in God's image, and that humanity is self-evidently physical in nature, then this must imply some physicality in God's being.²¹ John 4:24 would not of itself preclude this possibility: the statement that God is spirit might in context be best understood in functional rather than ontological terms.²² Of course, and more importantly, the concept of 'image' need not preclude ontological differences between divine spirituality and human nature.

WFM's anthropology is further supported by references to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. Kenyon and Hagin clearly regarded 1 Thessalonians 5:23 as self-explanatory, both using it as a 'proof-text' for their trichotomy without elaboration.²³ In holding this view, they have almost every serious commentator on 1 Thessalonians against them,²⁴ and rightly so. Paul's clear emphasis is on God's preservation of the whole person, and he 'piles up' words to express this emphasis. There is no more need to see trichotomy here than there is to see 'tetrachotomy' in the 'greatest command' as recorded at Mark 12:30.²⁵ Copeland makes somewhat more considered use of the verse. For him, the word order (spirit, soul, body) supports the prioritisation

¹⁷ Kenyon, *Bible*, pp.17-18; *The Two Kinds of Faith* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 16th printing, 1998), p.46; cf. *Two Kinds of Knowledge*, p.32.

¹⁸ E. W. Kenyon, *The Father and His Family* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 32nd printing, 1998 [1916, 1937]), p.34; *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne*, (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 13th printing, 1969 [1945]), p.62.

¹⁹ Kenneth E. Hagin, *New Thresholds of Faith*, (Tulsa, OK: FLP, 2nd edn, 1985 [1972]), p.56.

²⁰ Similar difficulties with dualistic thinking about the divine image have been traced by Gunton from Irenaeus to Descartes. Gunton concluded that, because in these traditional formulations the image was classically seen in terms of reason, and the likeness of soul rather than body to God, "one implication is that our embodiedness cannot be the place where the image, and hence our true humanity, is found" (Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*', pp.47-61 in Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, *Persons, Divine and Human* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991], p.49).

²¹ David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: Collins, rev. ed. 1973 [1953]) pp.30-31, considers the idea, with reference to the Gilgamesh epic and the work of von Rad, that Genesis 1:26 might imply some physicality in God. He does not rule out the possibility. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) p.12, on the other hand, wisely does.

²² So George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Milton Keynes: Word [UK], 1991 [1987]), p.62, *contra* Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John, Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p.240.

²³ Kenyon, *Bible*, p.17; Kenneth E. Hagin, *The New Birth* (Tulsa, OK: FLP, 1975), pp.6-7.

²⁴ E.g. Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), p.269; Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. ed. 1991 [1959]), p.182; Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p.207; John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM, 1952), p.27; A. A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1986), p.208; Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996), p.218; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) p.57. I. Howard Marshall, in contrast, believes the triadic wording is "a description of human nature as consisting of three parts." However, the "distinctions are loose, and do not suggest three 'parts' of man which can be sharply separated, but rather three aspects of his being" (*1 and 2 Thessalonians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] pp.162-163).

²⁵ Morris, *Epistles*, p.182; Hoekema, *Image*, pp.208-209.

of the spirit.²⁶ However, mere word order does not inform about the location of the essential self. In similar vein, Copeland refers to Hebrews 4:12 in his explication of his trichotomous view, with no further comment beyond the observation that “only the Word can put the spirit, soul and body of a man in proper order.”²⁷ Hebrews 4:12, however, can no more be used to argue that spirit and soul are separate parts of a three-fold structure than to argue that joints and marrow are. The emphasis of the verse is clearly on the penetrability of God’s word to the deepest recesses of the human being.²⁸

The third way in which these authors’ trichotomy is supported involves Kenyon and Copeland both justifying the claim that one’s spirit should rule one’s mind and body with reference to the writings of the apostle Paul, in which the latter famously contrasts ‘the flesh’ with ‘the spirit’, portraying spirit and flesh as at war (e.g. Gal.5:16-17; Rom.8:4-7).²⁹ Commentators, however, widely agree that in such passages, the distinction Paul typically draws between spirit and flesh is not anthropological (in terms of distinguishable parts of the human make-up) but ethical and eschatological.³⁰

In conclusion, it is clear that arguments from the divine image, from ‘proof texts’ and from Paul’s flesh/spirit contrast do not successfully support a trichotomy, let alone one which promotes spirit as central and essential. However, points made thus far in this article have merely indicated that the reasoning offered has been faulty. They have not thereby negated Kenyon’s, Hagin’s and Copeland’s conclusions, nor, if necessary, offered an alternative. Further consideration is thus worthwhile.

²⁶ Copeland, *Force of Faith*, p.6: “It does not say, ‘body, soul and spirit.’ The Bible never speaks of the reborn man in this order.”

²⁷ Copeland, *Force of Faith*, p.7.

²⁸ “It would indeed be precarious to draw any conclusions from these words about our author’s psychology.” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. ed. 1990 (1963)], p.113; cf. Hoekema, *Image*, p.208; Sherlock, *Doctrine*, p.218).

²⁹ E.g., Kenyon, *Father*, p.156:

Satan’s appeal always comes through the physical senses; so Man’s only hope is to live in the spirit. I don’t mean the Holy Spirit, but in his own spirit realm; instead of dreaming of gratifying physical passions or desires, he is to live in the realm of the spiritual, his own spirit fellowshiping with the Spirit of God. This is the only way to overcome the influence of his physical body upon himself. So Paul says here, “If we walk by the spirit,” more literally, if we walk in the realm of the spirit, “ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh,” for the members of your body are combating against your spirit, and your spirit is contending against your flesh or the members of your body.

E.g., Copeland, *Force of Faith*, pp.6-7 (italics original):

Paul, by the Holy Spirit, is saying that the flesh lusteth or drives against the spirit (the human spirit, the reborn spirit of a man) and the spirit against the man’s flesh. The spirit of the man is demanding that the flesh obey him, and the flesh is reluctant to give up its control. Before a man is born again, his flesh (body) completely dominates his life and will continue to do so unless his mind is renewed by God’s Word... Paul said, *With my spirit I serve God*. He is talking of the spirit on the inside of him who is doing his best to please God. His flesh is trying to continue to live unrestrained and unregulated as it has had the freedom to do for years. When a man’s mind is not renewed to [sic] the New Testament, his spirit is trying to go one way at the leadership of the Holy Spirit and his body and his mind are attempting to live as they have always lived, following after the world’s order of things. He is being pulled in two different directions at once. When the man is born again, his spirit became a new creature in Christ Jesus, but his mind and body were unchanged. Now his spirit is right with God but *his mind and body must be trained*.

³⁰ Broad agreement is found from the classic Pauline study of Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament Volume 1* (ET London: SCM Press, 1952), pp.234-241 to more recent conservative contributions to Pauline anthropology such as Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), pp.816-822.

Anthropological Material/Immaterial Dualism

WFM's trichotomy stands, with dichotomous anthropologies, in opposition to a monistic anthropology. Before any further consideration can be given to trichotomy as such, with its clear distinction between spirit and soul, consideration must be given to whether Christian anthropology is dualistic at all, or whether in fact a more reasonable and realistic way to understand human nature is to dispense with any dualism between matter and an immaterial 'nature' entirely.

The traditional position until the twentieth century has been dualistic: a distinction can be drawn between soul and body. The biblical and philosophical basis for this dualism, and its ethical consequences, have been strongly criticised in recent decades, being replaced by monistic anthropologies that have enjoyed widespread support among biblical theologians,³¹ systematicians³² and philosophers.³³ Monists, building largely on Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Pauline anthropology, claim that for Paul, 'I am a body' is at least as true, if not truer, than 'I have a body', and certainly truer than 'I am a soul living in a body'.³⁴ The strongest argument in favour of this position is that Paul's eschatological hope was not for an eternal life of a disembodied soul, but for a resurrection of his body. It has thus been claimed by such critics of dualism there is no such thing as a soul distinct from a body. Human life is and only can be embodied. 'Soul' is a way of speaking of the life that this body enjoys.

However, this monism, in turn, is not without its problems. First, holistic views of the human person easily undergo reductionist collapse into a materialism that conforms to modernist views of humanity. One suspects, therefore, that the monism allegedly found in Christian scriptures may not have been drawn from that witness, but imposed upon it.³⁵ Also, in terms of interaction with scripture, support for anthropological monism is complicated by the fact that, while some believe they draw their monism from its pages, others see a dualism there of which they are critical.³⁶ Furthermore, moderate dualistic anthropologies offer a more satisfactory explanation of the occasional references in scripture to the intermediate state, in which the continuing existence of a disembodied soul is implied (e.g. 2 Cor.5:3³⁷) and to at least the conceivability of out-of-body experiences in this life (2 Cor.12:2³⁸).

³¹ Influentially, Bultmann, *Theology*; also influentially (despite using word studies in a way discredited since James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [Oxford: OUP, 1961], e.g. p.35), Robinson, *Body*, ch.I; more recently, Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), e.g. p.140; at a popular level, Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997).

³² E.g. George Carey, *I Believe in Man* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977); Clarke H. Pinnock, 'Foreword', p.13 in Bacchiocchi, *Immortality?*

³³ E.g. Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism* (Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1996), ch. 6: "nonreductive physicalism" (e.g. p.149).

³⁴ e.g. Bultmann, *Theology*, p.194.

³⁵ So James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (London: SCM, 1992), p.98.

³⁶ E.g. John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999 [1998]), pp.xxiii-xxix, is critical of what he sees as Paul's vacillation in 1 Corinthians 15 between 'Judaism' and 'Hellenism', the former of which Crossan prefers. Paul's "moderate Platonic dualism" (p.xxv) is a "Platonic compromise" (p.xxix); cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, pp.201-202; PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp.33-34, building on the work of Schmithals.

³⁷ Robinson's useful translation was: "If, indeed, it is as clothed (*i.e.*, still alive), and not naked, that we shall be found (*sc.*, at the *Parousia*)" (*Body*, p.77). He continued, "The depression from which even Paul himself suffers derives from the fact that we cannot be *sure* that this very fragile house of flesh

For these reasons, an anthropology based on scripture, while celebrating the normal functional holism of human life on this earth and in the resurrection life to come, needs also to hold alongside this an awareness of at least some dualistic features in human being and becoming. This moderate dualism holds that the true person is the combination of body and soul, such that neither without the other can be regarded as 'I', or the full person.³⁹ The disembodied soul of the intermediate state, of which scripture states so little, only needs on this basis to involve sufficient personal identity to guarantee that the 'I' which experiences full bodily existence in the life to come is the same 'I' as has been alive on this earth, at least insofar as a plant need be regarded as the same individual as the seed from which it came (1 Cor.15:37).⁴⁰ While allowing that, it does not claim that this intermediate bodiless existence is in any sense full. It thus gives weight to the eschatological hope of the final resurrection. In line with such reasoning, a significant number of commentators continue to advocate forms of dualism. Examples can be found among biblical scholars,⁴¹ theologians,⁴² philosophers⁴³ and psychologists.⁴⁴

In conclusion to this section, forms of anthropological dualism are not without merit and continue to be found among current Christian formulations. That the anthropology of Kenyon, Hagin and Copeland is dualistic need not in itself be regarded with suspicion.

Promotion of the Immaterial

Drawing a conceptual distinction, however, between body and soul is quite a different matter from declaring that the essential self resides within one to the exclusion of the other, and that one should control the other. Such is clearly the case in WFM. It is now necessary to consider whether there is any wisdom in such a promotion of the immaterial.

will in fact last us until the *Parousia*, and that we shall not be required to face a temporary disembodiment" (p.77, italics original). It is surprising, given Robinson's earlier strong avowal of Paul's Hebraic monism, to find him admitting that Paul conceived of a temporary disembodiment.

³⁸ Bultmann, while insisting that Paul's anthropology was essentially monistic (*Theology*, pp.192-209), nevertheless indicated that at 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 "he is clearly reckoning with the possibility that the self can separate from the *soma* even in this present life, and this *soma* can only be the physical body" (p.202). This is one of a few examples that indicated to Bultmann that Paul was occasionally influenced by Hellenistic and even gnostic dualism away from his more characteristic monism.

³⁹ E.g. Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed* (London: SPCK, 1993), p.86. Bernard Williams (*Problems of the Self* [Cambridge: CUP, 1973], ch.5) argues persuasively that the claim that a disembodied soul is fully personal leads inexorably to Cartesianism (which view is not regarded as an exposition of any biblical anthropology by serious commentators today).

⁴⁰ A brief philosophical defence of this idea is offered, building on Aquinas, by Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), ch.2.

⁴¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Barr, *Garden*.

⁴² Hoekema, *Image*, ch.11: "psychosomatic unity" (e.g. p.217. This term is used by some holists, e.g. Carey, *Man*, p.29, but Hoekema's commitment to a form of dualism is indicated in his discussion of the intermediate state, pp.218-222); John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting* (Leicester: Apollon, 2nd edn 2000 [1989]): "holistic dualism" (e.g. p.164).

⁴³ Davis, *Risen*, ch.5: 'General Resurrection and Dualism': "temporary disembodiment" (e.g. p.87).

⁴⁴ Jeffrey H. Boyd, 'A History of the Concept of the Soul during the 20th Century', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26.1 (1998), pp.66-82: "holistic dualism", with reference to Cooper, *Body* (e.g. p.70).

If biblical justification is sought for these ideas, beyond banal observations such as the word order in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, appeal might be made to Paul's sense of necessity, for instance, that "I remain *in* the body" (Phil.1:24). This statement might suggest the belief that the real "I" is an entity other than the body. Scholars are virtually unanimous, however, in observing that for Paul full personal existence involves bodily existence. Insofar as the soul can be distinguished from the body at all, its disembodied existence is 'naked', and this existence is something to be avoided (2 Cor.5:2-4). There seems to be no biblical reason to site the 'I' in one 'part' of the human make-up rather than the whole, or to argue that one 'part' controls, or ought to control, the other(s). Therefore, a Christian anthropological dualism need not postulate that the 'real person' is immaterial; still less that it should control the material. The whole person can be seen, with Barth, as 'bodily soul' or 'besouled body'.⁴⁵ On this basis, WFM's prioritisation of the spirit as the real 'you' is less than satisfactory.

Accepting that the Bible does not offer a sound basis for prioritising the immaterial over the material in human nature, it is necessary to concede that until the twentieth century, Christian writers not only distinguished between body and soul but frequently promoted the latter over the former. Augustine, working with a Platonist framework, clearly prioritised the soul over the body. This is evident throughout his treatise on the origin of the soul, where it is evident that the soul dominates the body, which is its home.⁴⁶ It is also evident from his treatise on the Trinity that the mind, to the exclusion of the body, is the true self.⁴⁷ Aquinas, more Aristotelian in outlook, took more care to highlight the essential unity of soul and body. However, insofar as he distinguished between the two, the soul was still prioritised as "the primary principle of life."⁴⁸

Luther too relegated the body: "the spirit may live without the body, but the body has no life apart from the spirit." Furthermore, the work of the body "is only to carry out and apply that which the soul knows and the spirit believes."⁴⁹ Calvin perhaps most overtly prioritised the soul/spirit over the body, in words even reminiscent of Plato and Nag Hammadi:

Moreover, there can be no question that man consists of a body and a soul; meaning by soul, an immortal though created essence, which is his *nobler part*. Sometimes he is called a spirit... Christ, in commending his spirit to the Father, and Stephen his to Christ, simply mean, that when the *soul is freed from the prison-house of the body*, God becomes its perpetual keeper.

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⁴⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol.III Pt.2 (ET Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960 [1948]), p.350. It is not necessary thereby to agree with Barth that "soul would not be soul, if it were not bodily" (p.350).

⁴⁶ Augustine, 'On the Soul and its Origin' (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* Vol.V [Philip Schaff, ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 (1887)]) e.g. IV.4: the soul "moves the body" (p.355); cf. Augustine's references to "a rational soul, using a mortal and earthly body" and a soul's being "suited to the task of ruling the body." (quoted in Cooper, *Body*, p.10).

⁴⁷ Augustine, 'On the Trinity' XI.1 (Schaff, *Fathers*, Vol.III [1976]), p.144: "we ourselves, *i.e.* our minds, are not sensible things, that is bodies."

⁴⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.75,1 (Timothy Suttor, ed., Westminster: Blackfriars, 1970), p.7.

⁴⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* vol. 21 (Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., Saint Louis: Concordia: 1956), pp.303-304.

[Biblical] passages which everywhere occur, not only clearly distinguish the soul from the body, but by giving it the name of man, intimate that it is his *principal part*.⁵⁰

Even today, some Christian dualists, while keen to label their version of dualism as ‘holistic’, actually depart from the moderate form of dualism they claim to espouse: they demote the body from its full contribution to personhood. The soul is the real ‘I’, so that, however much they may protest against it, the body seems to emerge in their thinking as just a house.⁵¹

Given historic Christianity’s readiness to promote the immaterial over the material in these ways, Kenyon’s so doing does not immediately suggest any great departure from Christian tradition. However, McConnell claims that Kenyon learnt his form of dualism between spirit and matter from ‘metaphysical cults’ such as New Thought and Christian Science (NT/CS).⁵² His claim that Kenyon drew conceptually from these wells has, however, proved controversial. Geir Lie, Dale Simmons and Joe McIntyre, in their different ways, have shown that Kenyon was as likely to have been influenced by certain orthodox Christian teachers in movements known as Higher Life and Faith Cure (HL/FC) as by NT/CS.⁵³ Research into the beliefs of teachers in HL/FC on one hand and NT/CS on the other, specifically to discover whether they prioritised the immaterial over the material, may therefore provide a guide as to where Kenyon gained this aspect of his anthropology from. HL/FC authors to be reviewed will be A. J. Gordon (1836-1895), A. T. Pierson (1837-1911), G. D. Watson (1845-1923), Andrew Murray (1828-1917) and A. B. Simpson (1843-1919).⁵⁴ NT/CS authors reviewed will be Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), and Ralph Waldo Trine (1866-1958).⁵⁵

Among HL/FC authors, A. J. Gordon’s dualism seemed particularly moderate. He did not believe that the soul was the real or whole person, but humanity’s “complete condition” required “body and soul united”.⁵⁶ A. T. Pierson could appear to prioritise

⁵⁰ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I/XV, 2 (ET London: James Clarke & Co., 1962), pp.160-161, italics added; cf. Plato, *The Republic* XI 1:611 (ET London: Penguin, 2nd edn 1974 [1955]), p.382; ‘Nag Hammadi’, *The Treatise on the Resurrection* 45:40-46:2; 46:22-47:24; 47:37-48:3; *A Valentinian Exposition* 35:28-37; *On Baptism B* throughout (James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* [ET New York: HarperCollins, rev. ed. 1990 (1978)] pp.55-56, 486, 488; cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I:XXI:4,5 (Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, eds, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975 (1867)], pp.346-347). Larry Hurtado is, however, wisely cautious about the extent to which the Nag Hammadi texts may be taken to reflect the earlier varieties of gnosticism that Irenaeus criticised (*Lord Jesus Christ* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], pp.533-538). Calvin’s reliance on Platonism is noted by Hughes, *Image*, p.399.

⁵¹ E.g., Cooper, *Body*, p.162, despite his criticism of ‘axiological dualism’ (p.185).

⁵² McConnell, *Promise*, p.110.

⁵³ G. Lie, ‘E. W. Kenyon: Cult Founder or Evangelical Minister?’, *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* vol.16 (1996), pp.71-86; ‘The Theology of E. W. Kenyon: Plain Heresy or Within the Boundaries of Pentecostal-Charismatic “Orthodoxy?”’, *Pneuma*, 22.1 (Spring 2000), pp.85-114; D. H. Simmons, *E. W. Kenyon and the Postbellum Pursuit of Peace, Power, and Plenty* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997), e.g. p.305; Joe McIntyre, *E. W. Kenyon and His Message of Faith: The True Story* (Orlando, FL: Creation House, 1997), e.g. pp.21-22.

⁵⁴ In each case, McIntyre (*Kenyon*) offers clear evidence that Kenyon was a recipient of their teaching, and in many cases he presents equally clear evidence that Kenyon was a positive admirer.

⁵⁵ Quimby is widely regarded as the founder of New Thought. The other three authors are all claimed by McConnell to have had association with and possible impact on Kenyon (*Promise*, pp.25-26, 41).

⁵⁶ A. J. Gordon, *Behold He Cometh* (London: Thynne & Co. Ltd., 1934 [1896 as *Ecce Venit*]), p.202.

the spiritual. In calling his hearers to view modern missionary activities as in some way paralleling the initial missionary expansion depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, he wrote: "Only a spiritual eye can read them: only a spiritual mind interpret them." However, it is clear from the context that Pierson simply meant by these terms the eye and the mind guided by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ In similar vein, the following words by G. D. Watson seem initially to foreshadow Kenyon's favouring of 'revelation knowledge' over 'sense knowledge': "There are two hemispheres of knowledge; first, the hemisphere of what we learn through our senses; secondly, the hemisphere of knowledge revealed intuitively by the Spirit." However, Watson was actually valuing sensory knowledge as well as intuitive knowledge, with respect to 2 Peter 1:16-19.⁵⁸

Andrew Murray did more clearly promote the immaterial over the material: he regarded the soul as the true self, and wrote, "the spirit, as linking him with the Divine, was the highest [part]; the body, connecting him with the sensible and the animal, the lowest".⁵⁹ He could thus write, "Sin entered in, and appeared to thwart the Divine plan: the material obtained a fearful supremacy over the spiritual."⁶⁰ Sin altered what had previously been a perfect harmony between spirit and matter: "Man was to be the highest specimen of Divine art: the combination in one being, of matter and spirit in perfect harmony, as type of the most perfect union between God and His own creation."⁶¹ A. B. Simpson's writing also contained a prioritisation of the immaterial over the material: "the soul is superior to the body,"⁶² and physical healing must be sought through "spiritual channels."⁶³ Nevertheless, Simpson held a holistic view of humanity's spirituality and physicality: "Man has a twofold nature. He is both a material and spiritual being."⁶⁴ In summary, HL/FC authors offered various forms of dualism, some more moderate and balanced than others. The seeds of Kenyon's ideas may have lain in the teaching of those, like Andrew Murray and A. B. Simpson, who most explicitly promoted the immaterial.

Turning now to NT/CS, Quimby wrote of soul and matter in typically esoteric and puzzling terms:

Everyone will admit that all the qualities of 'soul' which I have mentioned will apply to man's intelligence, and that 'mind' according to every definition can change; also admit that Wisdom cannot change, that it is the same today and forever. Now can anyone tell me what there is that is not matter that can be changed? ... what is it that is not Wisdom, God, or spirit, and not matter and yet can be changed? It is matter held in solution called mind, which the power of Wisdom can condense into a solid so dense as to become the substance called

⁵⁷ A. T. Pierson, *The New Acts of the Apostles* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Limited, 1901), p.10.

⁵⁸ G. D. Watson, *Coals of Fire: Being Expositions of Scripture on the Doctrine, Experience, and Practice of Christian Holiness* (n.pl.: n.pub., 1886), pp.119-120, quotation from p.120.

⁵⁹ Andrew Murray *The Spirit of Christ* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1888), p.333.

⁶⁰ Andrew Murray, *Abide in Christ* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, ET 1895 [1864]), p.83.

⁶¹ Murray, *Abide*, p.83.

⁶² A. B. Simpson, *The Holy Spirit or Power from On High* (New York: The Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 1895), p.42.

⁶³ A. B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (London: Morgan & Scott Ltd., new ed. 1915 [1888]), p.28.

⁶⁴ Simpson, *Gospel*, p.5.

‘matter’. Assume this theory and then you can see how man can become sick and get well by a change of mind.⁶⁵

While, according to this ontology, soul, or mind, seems to be derivative of matter, being matter ‘held in solution’, nevertheless mind, by the operation of ‘Wisdom’, dictates the behaviour of matter, such as the sickness or health of a human body.

Emerson, similarly, building on the works of Plato and Platonists,⁶⁶ taught that “the mind had to rule the body.”⁶⁷ He also drew on Hindu ideas to teach that sensory perception of matter could be an illusion trapping an individual in a state of less than full actualisation.⁶⁸ Eddy’s view was yet more negative about matter: “my system of metaphysics... rests on God as One and All, and denies the actual existence of both matter and evil.”⁶⁹ And:

I learned these truths in divine Science: that all real being is in God, the divine Mind, and that Life, Truth, and Love are all-powerful and ever-present; that the opposite of Truth, - called error, sin, sickness, disease, death, - is the false testimony of false material sense, of mind in matter; that this false sense evolves, in belief, a subjective state of mortal mind which this same so-called mind names *matter*, thereby shutting out the true sense of Spirit. My discovery, that erring, mortal, misnamed *mind* produces all the organism and action of the mortal body, set my thoughts to work in new channels, and led up to my demonstration of the proposition that Mind is All and matter is naught as the leading factor in Mind-science. Christian Science reveals incontrovertibly that Mind is All-in-all, that the only realities are the divine Mind and idea.⁷⁰

Trine, though using the three-fold terminology of soul, mind and body, rather than spirit, soul and body, wrote material to which Kenyon’s ideas came closest. He advised his readers to realise their oneness with the Infinite Life and Power in quiet receptivity:

Calmly, quietly, and expectantly desire that this realization break in upon and take possession of your soul. As it breaks in upon and takes possession of the soul, it will manifest itself to your mind, and from this you will feel its manifestations in every part of your body.⁷¹

⁶⁵ P. P. Quimby, ‘The World of the Senses’, 1860-1865, ch.15 in Horatio W. Dresser, ed., *The Quimby Manuscripts* (Electronic Edition: Cornerstone Books, 2000 [1921]), accessed 15.9.05 from <http://cornerstone.wwwhubs.com/framepage.htm>.

⁶⁶ Richard Geldard, *The Spiritual Teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2001), pp.22-27.

⁶⁷ Geldard, *Teachings*, p.24. Emerson used the word ‘soul’ pantheistically (Emerson, ‘Divinity School Address’, 1838, accessed 15.9.05 from <http://cornerstone.wwwhubs.com/framepage.htm>).

⁶⁸ Geldard, *Teachings*, pp.118-119.

⁶⁹ Mary Baker Eddy, *No and Yes* (Boston, MA: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1887), p.29. Eddy’s denial of the existence of matter, however, seems to be contradicted by her belief in *physical* healing: “Become conscious for a single moment that Life and intelligence are purely spiritual, - neither in nor of matter, - and the body will then utter no complaints. If suffering from a belief in sickness, you will find yourself suddenly well” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* [Boston, MA: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, rev. edn 1891 (1875)], p.14).

⁷⁰ Eddy, *Science*, pp.108-109, italics original, paragraph breaks removed.

⁷¹ R. W. Trine, *In Tune With The Infinite* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1952 [1897]), p.192.

It is clear from these brief quotations that Kenyon's prioritisation of spirit and soul over body did not reflect the extreme anti-materialism of Eddy. The positions of Quimby, Emerson and Trine, however mysteriously expressed, have more in common with Kenyon, all indicating that soul, or mind, is the originating force that affects physical outcomes in the body. That stated, the conclusion cannot be reached that Kenyon was necessarily dependent on these sources for his form of dualistic anthropology. The fact, already indicated, that similar prioritisation of the soul is to be found scattered throughout traditional Christianity, including in HL/FC, makes it difficult to be certain whether Kenyon drew this idea from orthodox or heterodox sources. Given that Kenyon consistently disparaged NT/CS,⁷² and given that the nearest terminological similarity is in A. B. Simpson's work, the benefit of this doubt must be given to the possibility that Kenyon drew his inspiration from orthodoxy.

Spirit and Soul

Discussion can now move on to consider that which characterises trichotomy among dualistic anthropologies: drawing an ontological distinction between spirit and soul, or, as Kenyon often did, between spirit and mind or intellect. It is first worth noting that those who do so are, in the eyes of mediaeval Christianity, in error, for trichotomism was condemned at the fourth Council of Constantinople.⁷³ Nevertheless, Hoekema traces the existence of trichotomy from Irenaeus in the second century to Watchman Nee, for instance, in the twentieth.⁷⁴ Conceiving of differences between spirit and soul is not as easy as doing so with respect to soul and body. Theologians have tackled the difficulty, and the relevant biblical material, in a number of ways, not all of them trichotomous.

One way, beloved of anthropological monists, is to understand all biblical references to spirit to refer to divine spirit, so that 'spirit' does not denote a constituent aspect of human nature.⁷⁵ However, this narrowly theological understanding of spirit had already been cast into doubt by H. Wheeler Robinson.⁷⁶ Niebuhr was thus right to demur: Paul could speak of the "spirit of man".⁷⁷ While, occasionally, Niebuhr used 'soul' and 'spirit' in apparently interchangeable ways,⁷⁸ he was encouraged by the biblical data to make a conceptual distinction between the two: soul is "the life principle in man", while spirit is "man's organ of relation to God."⁷⁹ This coheres

⁷² Kenyon, *Two Kinds of Faith*, p.17; *Jesus the Healer* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 29th printing, 2000 [1943]), p.77; cf. *The Wonderful Name of Jesus* (Lynnwood, WA: Kenyon's Gospel Publishing Society, 30th printing, 1998 [1927, 1935]), pp.69-70.

⁷³ 869-870 C.E.

⁷⁴ Hoekema, *Image*, p.205.

⁷⁵ E.g., Barth, *Dogmatics III.2*, p.354; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (ET Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp.519, 522, 529-530.

⁷⁶ *The Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), p.110.

⁷⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man Vol.I* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1941), p.163 and n.1; cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, pp.205-208. More recently, Fee has equivocated, referring to S/spirit, and using this deliberately ambivalent term to demonstrate "Paul's apparent conviction that the believer's spirit is the place where, by means of God's own Spirit, the human and the divine interface in the believer's life" (*Presence*, p.25).

⁷⁸ Niebuhr, *Nature*, p.13.

⁷⁹ Niebuhr, *Nature*, p.162; cf. p.163. Biblical distinctions between spirit and soul are not "too sharp" (p.163). More recently, Dunn, writing about Pauline anthropology, has reached a similar conclusion. While for him the Pauline soul is "the whole person" (*Theology*, p.76), he writes that the spirit in Paul is "evidently that dimension of the human person by means of which the person relates most directly to God" (p.77).

with what he regarded as Christianity's definition of spirit: it is suprarational, and is associated with freedom, transcendence, and the search for the ultimate "ground of existence."⁸⁰

Niebuhr's understanding of the biblical term was, however, questionable. Others are adamant that spirit and soul are used interchangeably throughout scripture,⁸¹ and it is certainly difficult to see how Niebuhr's assertion that the spirit rather than the soul is the 'organ of relation' to God fits with such scriptural proclamations as "my soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God" (Luke 1:46-47). Similarly, "I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind" (1 Cor.14:15) does not suggest that the spirit is an 'organ' that relates any more obviously to God than does the mind. Those who follow Niebuhr in positing any distinction between spirit and soul must either create their own definitions to suit, or must be highly tentative in the undertaking.⁸² Nothing is lost to theological discussion by following the biblical lead and using the terms interchangeably. Both strictly monist and trichotomous readings of 'spirit' are suspect, and the Bible certainly does not set a precedent in offering an ontological distinction between spirit and soul.

It seems likely, then, that Kenyon and WFM do not gain their distinction between spirit and soul from a close reading of scripture but from Christian tradition, which view is then reinforced by their unsophisticated reading of scripture. However, as already stated, Kenyon Hagin and Copeland go further: they state that 'man is a spirit' but only 'has a soul', or mind. Kenyon's promotion of spirit over mind sometimes had a strong moral tone: "In the beginning, man's spirit was the dominant force in the world; when he sinned, his mind became dominant – sin dethroned the spirit and crowned the intellect; but grace is restoring the spirit to its place of dominion" and "One of the greatest mistakes that has been made in our intellectual culture has been the ignoring of the spirit. Knowledge of our intellects has taken the throne, and our spirits have been locked away in prison."⁸³

Such statements have led to the charge of anti-intellectualism. However, it would be wrong to think that Kenyon was anti-intellectual as regards human affairs in general. He could happily write: "Man's education should cover the whole being. To train only the physical is to make a prize fighter. To train only the mental is to make an intellectual anarchist. To train only the spiritual is to make a fanatic."⁸⁴ If Kenyon was anti-intellectual, it was only as regards knowing God: the intellect certainly had a legitimate place in human affairs, but it could not receive direct revelation from God.⁸⁵ Also, it would be more accurate to describe his position not as anti-intellectualism, but as anti-physicalism: his distrust of 'sense-knowledge' was not so much a rejection of the mind as a means to know God, but of the physical senses.

⁸⁰ Niebuhr, *Nature*, pp.14-15, quotation from p.15.

⁸¹ E.g., Hoekema, *Image*, pp.206-207.

⁸² E.g., Sherlock, *Doctrine*, p.220.

⁸³ Kenyon, *Wonderful Name*, p.25; *Two Kinds of Faith*, p.48

⁸⁴ Kenyon, *Wonderful Name*, p.68.

⁸⁵ Even this idea was maintained rather ambivalently by Kenyon: "Sense Knowledge can see the handiwork of God, can see the design in Creation, but it cannot find the Designer" (*Two Kinds of Knowledge*, p.12), but "Creation shows the Designer's Master Hand." (*Father*, p.19).

Charges of anti-intellectualism apart, the question arises as to the source from which Kenyon gained his prioritisation of spirit over soul. To address this question, it is necessary to divide Kenyon's prioritisation into two aspects: the spirit is the true self; and the spirit should control the soul. With regard to the second aspect, it is likely that Kenyon heard such ideas preached in HL/FC circles. A. B. Simpson, a trichotomist, held that "the soul represents the intellectual and emotional elements that constitute man. The spirit represents the higher and the Divine life which links us directly to God, and enables us to know and to come into relationship with Divine things."⁸⁶ This belief that God communicates directly with only the human spirit, held also by Kenyon, led Simpson to conclude that "our higher spiritual nature should control the soul. Just as the soul is superior to the body, so the spirit should be predominant to the soul. The fatal defect of natural life is that the soul is predominant, and the natural mind controls spirit and body."⁸⁷ Similarly, Jessie Penn-Lewis taught that the soul should be a 'handmaid' of the spirit.⁸⁸

With respect, on the other hand, to the first aspect (the spirit is the true self, as opposed to the soul), a source is sought in vain. There is no such statement in historic Christianity that Kenyon seemed to be echoing. Even historic trichotomism, while distinguishing between spirit and soul, did not declare that spirit was the true self, while soul was, in contrast, an appendage. Advancing the scrutiny to Kenyon's immediate historic predecessors and possible influencers, neither HL/FC⁸⁹ nor NT/CS⁹⁰ offered a precedent. It seems that this idea may have been a *novum* in Kenyon's mind.

Summary Conclusions

In conclusion, Kenyon's, Hagin's and Copeland's statements that 'I am a spirit, I have a soul, and I live in a body' betray an anthropology that does not have a strong biblical basis. Its prioritisation of the immaterial over the physical body cannot be justified scripturally. Furthermore, its distinction between spirit and soul, let alone its promotion of one over the other as controlling self, cannot claim scriptural support.

That stated, three points may be made that ameliorate the weaknesses of their view. The first is that scripture does support a moderate material-immaterial dualism that recognises a disembodied intermediate state, and thereby allows some distinction to be validly drawn between body and soul. The second ameliorating factor is that, while scripture itself does not support a prioritisation of spirit or soul over body in terms of either personal identity or functional control, nevertheless Christian tradition has been replete with voices that have done precisely this. The suspicion thus emerges that Kenyon, Hagin and Copeland, while thinking that they gained their relegation of the

⁸⁶ Simpson, *Spirit*, p.36.

⁸⁷ Simpson, *Spirit*, p.42.

⁸⁸ Jessie Penn-Lewis, *Soul and Spirit* (Leicester: Overcomer Book Room, 3rd edn, n.d.), p.8. McIntyre (*Kenyon*, p.116) and Lie (personal communication, 16.9.05) both consider Kenyon to have read her work favourably.

⁸⁹ Anthropological formulations among these authors varied between dichotomous and trichotomous ones. Those which distinguished between spirit and soul did not limit selfhood to the spirit. If anything, Murray (*Spirit*, p.333) and Penn-Lewis (*Soul*, p.7) regarded the soul, not the spirit, as the self.

⁹⁰ For Eddy, 'spirit', 'soul' and 'mind' were synonymous (*No and Yes*, pp.20, 32). Trine's advice, already referred to, that realisation of oneness with Infinite Life should reach soul first, then mind, and then body (*Tune*, p.192) does resemble Kenyon's spirit-soul-body prioritisation, but does not view the soul exclusively as the true self.

body from scripture, actually gained it from Christian tradition. This is despite the observation that approximately similar relegation of the physical can also be found in NT/CS writing. Thirdly, trichotomism as such continues to be found within the tradition. Even Kenyon's and WFM's particular form of trichotomy, in which the spirit is not only distinguished from the soul but should control the soul, can find precedent in the HL/FC movements. The only aspect which has emerged as a clear departure from the Christian tradition is the statement that the spirit as opposed to the soul is the true self. There is no evidence to suggest that Kenyon gained this most distinctive aspect from NT/CS. He may well have developed it himself.