

promises (Num. 14:24,30), even if he must preserve his two faithful men from Anakim, chariots, and high water to do so . . . There is more in Hebron and Timnath-Serah than one usually hears.³⁰

As for Joshua's leadership it is nearly done. Moving into semi-retirement the baton is passed on (not jealously treasured): it is the LORD's work (51). 'Eleazar' and the 'heads of the tribal clans' are now responsible for seeing the LORD's work to completion.

Notes

- 1 This interpretation follows T. C Butler, *Joshua* (Waco: Word, 1983), 114 and J. Garstang, *Joshua/Judges* (London: Constable, 1931), 170, 175, 177.
- 2 F. Delitzsch, Joshua, in Keil and Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 106.
- 3 This reads like an old hymn! Was it often sung in the days that followed in the worship of Israel's God?
- 4 A. W. Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 295.
- 5 M. H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 190.
- 6 C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 103.
- 7 Compare 14:10. The sending out of the spies appears to have been two years after the exodus; see Num. 13.
- 8 D. R. Davis, *Joshua* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2000), 102.
- 9 The 'hardening' phrases in Exodus repay examining so as to

trace out the above pattern.

- 10 Davis, 104.
- 11 Woudstra, 200.
- 12 Davis, 105.
- 13 See chapter 21.
- 14 Compare Num. 34:16-29.
- 15 So Woudstra, 228.
- 16 See 15:13-19.
- 17 A. Redpath, *Victorious Christian Living* (London: Revell, 1971), 198.
- 18 Scholarly commentaries are full of discussions as to precise locations etc.. Such are generally sleep-inducing and unnecessary to the purpose of the present volume.
- 19 Davis, 193.
- 20 Butler, 189.
- 21 Pink, 356.
- 22 Davis, 130, 131.
- 23 Compare Ex. 23:23-33; 34:11-16; Dt. 7:1-6.
- 24 Davis, 132.
- 25 Keil & Delitzsch, 182, 183.
- 26 A. Edersheim, *Israel under Joshua and the Judges* (London: RTS, n/d), 94.
- 27 So Davis.
- 28 H. L. Ellison, *Joshua-2 Samuel* (London: Scripture Union, n/d), 17.
- 29 Perhaps the reference to the 'God of your fathers' (3) is a subtle hint that unfaithfulness in the path caused the fathers to miss the blessing.
- 30 Davis, 147.

Flesh and Spirit

James Danaher

KEYWORDS: physical body, metaphor, Gnosticism, strength, motivation, identity, anger, infidelity, idolatry, pride, retribution, money, sonship, belonging, repentance, poverty, weakness, example of Jesus, worship, following

The meaning of the term *flesh* (σάρξ) as it appears in the New Testament is almost always metaphorical. Thus Jesus says, 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven (Matt. 16:17) and 'my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed' (John 6:55): literal flesh and blood clearly have no power to provide revelation. Paul's frequent use of the term is also characteristically metaphorical.

Metaphorical Words

Words used metaphorically can have multiple meanings. The word cat has a literal meaning, but when it is used metaphorically it has multiple meanings. 'Raining cats and dogs', 'cat

burglar', or 'cat-o-nine-tails' are examples of the metaphorical ways we use the word. The same is true with the word *flesh*: it, too, has multiple meanings throughout the New Testament. Thus, in the passage above from Matthew's Gospel the translators of the New International Version translate 'Flesh and blood' as 'man': 'For this was not revealed to you by man'. Perhaps this is the meaning of 'flesh and blood' in this instance, but it is clearly not the meaning in John 6:55. In fact, it is very difficult to know exactly what is the meaning of 'flesh' and 'blood' in that context, and people have been arguing over what it does mean for centuries! Further, whatever flesh means in John, it certainly has a different meaning when Paul uses the term, flesh, in contrast to spirit.

Some might immediately think that in those instances where *flesh* is contrasted with *spirit* it is a metaphor for the physical body in contrast to the immaterial soul or mind. It is easy to make such an assumption since our western culture has a long tradition of distinguishing mind from body, elevating mind or soul while demeaning the physical body. We find this in the Platonic tradition.

Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or plea-

sure of any kind . . . Then here too – in despising the body and avoiding it, and endeavoring to become independent – the philosopher’s soul is ahead of all the rest.¹

Such an elevation of mind above body was also at the root of Gnosticism, but Paul does not seem to have been affected by either Platonic or Gnostic thinking. His concept of flesh seems very different from body. Thus, it is the flesh not the body that envies, hates, and practises sedition when he comments, ‘Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like . . .’ (Gal. 5:19-20).

Another possibility is to understand the metaphor, flesh, as it is contrasted with spirit, as *sinful nature*. This is in fact the way it is translated in the New International Version. However, this is as much a metaphor as the term *flesh* and leaves us asking, ‘What exactly is our sinful nature?’

A Common Assumption

The common assumption is that our sinful nature is what causes God to turn away from us. The Scripture, however, seems to indicate that it is not so much God who turns away from us as we who turn away from God. Furthermore, the reason we turn away from God is because we wish to find life and meaning in things other than God. This is what it means to live in what Paul refers to as the flesh: it is to establish an identity in the very things Jesus warns us against in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.

Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that what separates us from God is not the act of murder but simply our anger (Matt. 5:21,22). Indeed, it is not that God turns away from us when we commit murder, but we turn away from God when we leave his presence and ‘identify’ with our anger. For many of us, our anger is our god and the source of our energy and life: it is what motivates us to do the things we do. Athletes and other competitors often find strength and motivation in anger, but Jesus tells us that God is to be our source of strength and motivation. That is the way that Jesus lived his life, with God as the source of his strength rather than anger, and, if we are to follow him, we must do the same.

Likewise, Jesus says, ‘You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (Matt. 5:27-28). Our contemporary culture sees nothing wrong with imagined infidelity, but Jesus condemns it. There may be several reasons behind this but certainly one is that imagined infidelities serve as a source of energy and life rather than God. It is not that the act of adultery so displeases God that he turns away from us in disgust, but rather we turn away from God as soon as our imagination focuses on the god, *Eros* rather than the God who Jesus reveals. The popularity of pornography is evidence of the fact that *Eros* becomes our god, not when we commit adultery, but simply when we allow the thoughts of such things to take hold of our attention and begin to direct our lives.

The third thing, which Jesus mentions in the Sermon on

the Mount, is that we are not to make oaths. Moses had given prohibitions against the breaking of oaths (Deut. 7:8; Num. 30:2), but now Jesus tells us we should make no oaths at all. He says, ‘You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.” But I tell you, Do not swear at all . . . for you cannot make even one hair white or black’ (Matt. 5:33-36).

Pledging allegiance to anything other than God would have been seen as idolatry by the first century church because they took this teaching seriously. Our culture today is quite different, and we think that it is noble to keep our word and promises even when those oaths cause us to end up on the side of evil. Of course, breaking our oaths is a problem as well. Thus, Jesus tells us to promise our commitment to no one or no thing but God. But the bigger problem with swearing oaths is that it, like anger and lust, is something we are quick to identify with and use as something to stand upon – a source of strength other than God. We boast to others and take pride in giving our word, as if there was power in our words and their ability to control circumstances. Jesus tells us that we are not in control of the circumstances of our lives and thus to swear to do this or that is a false witness and a boast in a power we do not have. We would like to think that we are men or women of our word and, once given, our word is enough to motivate us to do what we have sworn. If we are honest with ourselves, however, we see what a lie that is and how powerless our sworn oaths are. Jesus reminds us of that powerlessness and that we cannot make one hair white or black. Of course, we love the illusion of power within ourselves and therefore swear oaths, as if we were able to will to do this or that. Therein lies our sin, and we are separated from God as we attempt to draw power from ourselves rather than him.

In his sermon, Jesus next addresses our idea of retribution. He comments, ‘You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also’ (Matt. 5:38,39). The Mosaic Law had allowed for retribution, but it seems that it, like divorce, was hardly God’s ultimate standard. Ultimately, retribution is a source of sin and separation from the fullness of life God has for us. Indeed, many of us find our energy and motivation in retribution or our reaction to the sins of others. For many of us, retribution provides us with energy and purpose, but it is God who wishes to give us life and meaning. The heavenly standard is that we do not need retribution to motivate us, but, with God alone as our source of energy and strength, we should turn the other cheek because our strength comes not out of a reaction to injustice but from a power on high that is willing to pay for the injustices of others.

The next observation Jesus makes probably goes farther beyond what Moses had given in the law than anything else Jesus ever said. It is a commandment whose revelation the people of the Old Testament were in no way ready to receive, just as we are still not ready to receive it today. Jesus says, ‘You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbour and hate your enemies.” But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven’ (Matt. 5:43-44).

An Impossible Command

This is not merely a difficult commandment; it is an *a priori* impossible command. Enemies are by definition people we do not love. If we love our enemies, the idea of an enemy loses its meaning. Of course, that is just the point, but is it humanly possible? Perhaps Jesus could ask us not to take revenge upon our enemies or maybe even not to hate them, but to love them seems beyond the realm of human possibility. Indeed, the only way this is at all humanly possible is if we are connected to an incredibly loving and forgiving God as the source of our being and identity. That is what is behind this commandment to love our enemies, *and it is what is behind everything Jesus is telling us in the Sermon on the Mount.*

Following the commandment to love our enemies, Jesus then begins to command us concerning religious activities. Giving to the needy is to be done in such a way that you do not gain recognition from men. Thus, it is not enough that we give, but we must give with the right attitude and that right attitude is that we give without a desire for recognition (Matt. 6:1). This may seem strange since previously Jesus said, 'Let your light shine before men, that they might see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven' (Matt. 5:16). Obviously, giving with the intent to be seen before men is not a good deed, and is not righteous. Indeed, it is intent upon bringing glory to ourselves, but the real problem with giving for the sake of recognition, and the reason it is sin, is that it makes prestige and reputation among men our motivator rather than God. We seek to be made into the image of the great man rather than the image of God.

There is a similar situation with the religious practices of prayer and fasting. Like alms giving, it is to be done in secret in order that no one but God knows. It is not enough that we pray and fast, but we must do it without being motivated by a desire for reputation or esteem. Our sin is that we desire to establish an identity based upon who human beings think we are rather than who God says we are. This is what it means to live in the flesh, and find our identity in the things of this world rather than God.

Jesus proceeds to warn us concerning our attachment to earthly treasures. He comments, 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matt. 6:19,20). We easily become attached to the things of this world and very easily they, rather than God, become the things from which we attempt to draw life. Many people, especially successful people, draw their energy from their treasures and the things they have accomplished in this life. Jesus tells us that such treasures are a fleeting source of worth and we will soon be disappointed if we put our hope in them rather than God.

Jesus next tells us not to worry. Certainly being frightened is not a sin, but as we allow what scares us to remain in our lives and become worry, we certainly do sin and are separated from God. The opposite of the kind of faith Jesus is calling us to is anxiety. When we are anxious about many things, our attention is not on God. With worry at the centre of our being, God is not in all of our thoughts, and it is not God, but worry, that energizes and defines us. In so far as worry is at the centre of so many lives, it certainly is the

thing that separates us from the living God, and the identity he has for us.

Finally, Jesus says, 'Do not judge' (Matt. 7:1). But that is exactly what we most want to do. What is behind so much of our theology is a desire to have a standard by which we can judge the saved from the unsaved, the godly from the ungodly, and the moral from the immoral. Certainly our identity, or our notion of who we think we are, comes from what we identify with, and our judgment of what is right and wrong, or good and bad, play a major role in establishing who we think we are. If we identify with and try to find meaning in our judgments or any of the other things Jesus warns against, we will create for ourselves that false self or the identity that Paul refers to as the *flesh*.

A Strong Contrast

By contrast, to live in the *spirit* is to live at the core of our being. It is to live in our real self or who we are *in* God. Or perhaps, more precisely, our real self is who we are *in relationship to* God. It is the self that is loved by God because we are his beloved daughters and sons. Before we did anything right or wrong we were his creation, and he loved us because we were his. He does not love us because of the greatness of our prayers or almsgiving, nor does he love our ability to keep our oaths or make good judgments. These are the things that make other people love us, but God is not like other people. As a matter of fact, these things, which are often the very reason that others love us, are the very things that keep us from God. They keep us from God because they capture our attention and cause us to focus on them in such a way that they become the very source of our false identity. That is, we identify with, and take meaning from them, rather than from our relationship to God. As we form an identity in the flesh by finding the source of our energy and life in the things of this world, our spirit is cut off from communion with God. Once our attention is fixed upon those things that give rise to the flesh, we no longer live at the core of our being as beloved children of God. By contrast, when our identity is in God, we live in the real self (or what Paul refers to as the spirit). When we live in the spirit, God is our source of life and meaning and we wish to commune with him constantly. Just as sin is separation from God, righteousness is a matter of living in God's presence.

Jesus wishes to disciple us to live as he lived. The way he lived was with God in all of his thoughts. He did not identify with, nor allow himself to be occupied by, those things that he warns us of in the Sermon on the Mount. Instead, he lived his life in a constant awareness that he was the beloved son of God. He tells us to follow him and live in that same sonship.

We do not live in that blessed place of sonship because we choose to live in the flesh and establish what we consider a substantial identity by attempting to find life and meaning in the things that Jesus warns us against. This is our sin or the cause of our separation from God. It is not that we commit some moral evil that causes God to turn away from us, but that we turn away from him and find other sources of life and identity. What separates most people from God (i.e., their sin) is that they spend trivial existences, iden-

tifying with, and attempting to find life and meaning in something other than God.

Belonging

Sin and righteousness are essentially a question of belonging. Do we belong to God or the things of this world? Our natural, fallen tendency is to gravitate toward a fleshly identity. Kingdom living occurs when we repent, and turn from those false gods that create the illusion which is the false self, and instead found our identity upon who we are in God. This seems to be what it means to live in the spirit rather than the flesh.

In order to live in the spirit, two things seem essential. The one is a desire and ability to live in an almost constant state of repentance or turning away from the false gods that so easily and quickly turn our attention away from God. The other is a desire and ability to live in a state of poverty. Poverty seems to be key in order to live consistently in the spirit. This poverty, however, is not simply a poverty of wealth and possessions, but a poverty of power and prestige as well.

Max Weber (1864-1920) claimed that one's social class was established by some combination of wealth, power, or prestige. The upper class is constituted of people who have enormous wealth, power, and prestige; while the middle class are people with moderate amounts of wealth, power, and prestige; and the lower class is made up of people who have no wealth, power, or prestige. We live in a culture driven by success and the quest for ever greater amounts of wealth, power, and prestige. That journey up the ladder of success, however, is the very thing that leads us away from a life in the spirit and simply adds to the illusion of the flesh. As we gain more wealth, power, and prestige, we easily become identified by such things. They, rather than God, define our lives and give us meaning. Of course, the poor, who have no wealth, power, or prestige, could lust after such things and identify with them even in their absence. Likewise, it is possible for someone with considerable amounts of wealth, power, and prestige to not identify with such things.

The Perfect Example

Jesus is the perfect example of such a man. As God incarnate, he owned everything yet possessed nothing. At any moment, he could have called upon legions of angels to change the circumstances of his life to whatever he wished, yet he chose to live out of powerlessness as a nailed victim. If he did manifest his power and demonstrated his ability to use force in order to make others do what he wanted, he would have instantly receive a prestige and celebrity far surpassing any emperor or rock star. He chose instead a poverty of wealth, power, and prestige in order that, in the absence of such things, his identity would be totally in God. He resisted the fleshly identity that comes from idolatry, and lived instead in the spirit or who he was in God. What he identified with was not his wealth, power, or prestige but the fact that he was the beloved son of God, and we are to follow him and live in that same spirit.

The temptation to sin is the temptation to look to the

things of this world, rather than God, as the source of our identity. When Satan tempted Jesus, he was asking him to look away from God as the source of who he was and create an identity for himself out of the wealth, power, and prestige that this world offers. Jesus is tempted to turn stones into bread (Matt 4:3) or to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in order to demonstrate his power as the son of God (Matt. 4:8). He is tempted with "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8). If he would only worship the prince of this world, he would be given all the wealth and prestige imaginable. But Jesus knew that such things are the very things that create the false self or the illusion of the fleshly identity.

False Identity

We build for ourselves a false identity, and live in the flesh, when we attempt to find life, energy, and meaning in our anger, our lust, our oaths, our sense of justice, our enemies, our good works, our earthly treasure, our worries or judgments. If we found our identity upon these things, we establish the fleshly identity that is so contrary to a life in the spirit or who we are in our relationship to God. Our true identity is founded upon the fact that we are God's beloved daughters or sons. He is '*our Father* who art in heaven' (Matt. 6:9).

Of course, the only person who ever truly realized such an identity founded purely in God was Jesus. He alone completely rejected an earthly, fleshly identity in favour of a heavenly one as God's beloved son. Unlike us, Jesus never sinned. He may have been tempted with an earthly identity and separation from God but he never succumbed to that temptation. He never identified with the wealth, power, and prestige that so easily causes us to leave God's presence for the idols of this world and their promise of more life than what God has for us. Jesus never yielded to that temptation and continued to draw his energy, life, and meaning from the fact that he was God's beloved son. Even when he felt that God had abandoned him (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34) it was still God to whom he committed his spirit (Luke 23:46).

We are called to follow him and live as he lived. Of course, we immediately realize how impossible that is, but the good news is that we do not have to be perfect in the same sense that he was. We simply have to repent and return to our heavenly Father every time we find ourselves attempting to take life and meaning from things apart from him.

This, I think, more than anything else, is what it means to follow Jesus. That is, that we continually dwell in God's presence and draw our identity from him alone, just as Jesus did. The ideal of the Christian life is to set our gaze continually upon God, and when we find that our attention is not on him, but on the things that create the false self of the flesh, we need to repent and return, once again, to an awareness of his presence.

Worship

If what it means to follow Jesus is to stay in God's presence, then we need to be cautious, not only of those things that take us out of God's presence by capturing our attention and

causing us to fix our focus on those sources of the false self, but also of more subtle deceptions. One way that we are kept from the fullness of the Christian life is by thinking that other things are more essential than living in a continual awareness of his presence. Take, for example, the idea of worship.

A recent best seller claims that our central purpose in life is to worship God. Worship is certainly essential to the Christian life, for without the worship of God, we very quickly come to worship ourselves. To be convinced of this we only have to look to the rise of celebrity in this secular age. When people stop worshipping God, they start worshipping one another, and that is enormously harmful to both the people worshipping and those being worshipped. Worship is also important in that it is often the way many people first experience God's presence. Indeed, worship is often the very awareness of God's presence that we have been describing.

There is, however, a potential problem with worship as it is commonly understood. The problem is that it is easy for us to imagine that our worship satisfies some desire in God to be worshipped, rather than our need to worship God – that it is not for our benefit but for his. The desire to be worshipped is a characteristic of fallen human beings or a very anthropomorphized god. It is what is at the heart of Satanic rebellion. Such a belief causes us to imagine a needy God created after the image of the worst of human beings rather than after the image of Jesus who seeks to be followed rather than worshipped.

Furthermore, the belief that worship is the paramount purpose of the Christian life can deceive us into believing that by worshipping God we have fulfilled our major responsibility as Christians. If we see worship as our main purpose, we will be tempted to think that by worshipping Jesus we have done the most essential thing and can thus be excused for not doing secondary things like following him. Additionally, the more we worship Jesus as God, the less we can expect ourselves to follow him as the model for what it means to be human.

Of course, we are to worship Jesus as God, but when we

make that the centre of our faith, it is a very clever way to avoid following him. Worship demands little in the way of surrender; following him demands that we surrender everything. What makes following so difficult is that where Jesus leads us is not only into God's presence but, as we have seen, into a poverty where God alone is our treasure.

In order to live in the spirit, poverty is the essential condition. Only when we live in the absence of wealth, power, and prestige do we live at the core of our being with God as our only source of life, meaning, and purpose. Certainly the ladder of success that leads us upward into a greater and greater abundance of wealth, power, and prestige leads us away from the kingdom where God alone is our source of wealth, power, and prestige.

Throughout the gospel, there is a definite preference for the poor. The gospel is good news to the poor (Luke 4:18) and it is the poor who are the blessed ones (Matt. 5:3). By contrast, the rich seem cursed, and we are told that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:24). In the story of the prodigal, the great blessing that comes to the prodigal is his poverty that forces him back to his father's arms. Imagine his state if he had never fallen into poverty. Imagine our state if we could continue to surround ourselves with all the false sources of identity that wealth, power, and prestige bring until we no longer have any vistas through which to see the God who loves us and in whom alone can life and meaning be found.

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Notes

- 1 Plato. *Phaedo*. Trans. Hugh Tredennick. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1989), 65 c-d.

Christians and Muslims: Coexistence, Conflict, or Cooperation?

Chawkat Moucarray

KEYWORDS: monotheism, pluralism, spiritual warfare, holy war, power of God, humility of God, old covenant, new covenant, tolerance, religious persecution, confrontation, colonialism, immigration, injustice, Israel, fundamentalism, globalisation, terrorism, Iraq, justice, gospel, equality, God's mercy, love

Chawkat, a Christian Arab, analyses the present relationships between Islam and Christianity in the light of their theological convergences and differences, especially concerning their view of God and of their role in society, of the historical development of both the Islam community and 'Christian' Europe, and of the impact of recent history and events. He challenges Christians not

only to coexist with Muslims, but to actually work together with them for the common good of human societies. For him, 'Christians have a unique contribution to make as bridge-builders between the West and the Muslim world'. He turns first, then, to the:

Theological perspective

Islam

God is powerful

In Islam one of the key attributes of God is that he is a mighty God. He is sovereign and his power is boundless. Further, Muslims see Islam as God's final and perfect religion