

Re: The Five Physical Senses  
John R Gavazzoni

The following is a reply to a brother in Christ who asked a question of John concerning the nature of the flesh and its expression through our physical senses:

Getting back to you finally, Karl. Wow, you really push my buttons with this question. There are few subjects that have called for more investment of meditation on my part (hopefully, while being instructed by the Spirit of Truth) than the one you've brought up. To reply in a way that is consistent with the essential underlying message of scripture requires "rightfully dividing the word of truth," with the utmost exegetical skill---something that one dare not trust to mere natural intellect and/or unenlightened familiarity with the text of scripture.

First off, we must be aware of the fact that scripture uses the term "flesh" in both a positive sense and a negative sense. I won't bother listing the many instances of the negative, but will remind you of some of the positive ones, such as Job's assurance that "in (his) flesh (he) would see God," and the prophets declaration that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

Then, of inestimable importance is John's statement that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Our Lord was, in flesh form, full of grace and truth and the disciples beheld His glory in His incarnate existence. Paul encourages us in our humanness by saying "In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead, BODILY, and ye are complete in Him." It is by Christ's inclusion of us bodily that we are complete.

So how are we to reconcile such commendations of the flesh-body with the many biblical indictments against "the flesh?" I am very mindful of that genre represented by such verses as "They that are in the flesh cannot please God, and "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and the two are contrary one to the other." (I'm not looking these up, just quoting them from memory from the KJV).

I believe the key to relieving the tension of such apparent contradiction lies in Paul's understanding that man's aeonian state of moral and spiritual futility is essentially a problem of alienation. Especially of late, I've been deeply impressed with the fact that said alienation is a matter not only of man's existential disconnect from God, but also his disconnect from himself---from his own being and identity.

Most of the Bible teachers that had early influence in my life spoke of death in terms of separation and I think that's accurate. It is the separation, the disconnect of alienation, an alienation rife with hostility and enmity.

When I write or speak on or around this subject, I am careful to distinguish between incorruptibility of being and the contrarian influence that our being must bear in our aeonian, creaturely passage.

It seems absolutely clear to me that the essence of our being is incorruptible and that we find that truth in Paul's statement to the philosophers on Mar's Hill, "For in Him, we live and move and have our being." Also the principle embraced by the apostle in the statement, "For out from the midst of Him, and through the midst of Him, and into the midst of Him, are all things." (a more literal translation).

Clearly, God is not merely the Big Being above all us little beings, but rather, He is Being Itself from which all being proceeds, and thus, all being possesses essential incorruptibility an incorruptibility that extends to bodily-being since all THINGS are out of Him and through Him and to (or into) Him.

What I'm getting to is that our being has been, in its aeonian existence, subjected to an alien consciousness, while nevertheless, retaining its God-birthered incorruptibility, and that when the term "flesh" is used negatively it has to do with the vulnerability of our bodily five senses to the lie that sin has effectively caused God to abandon us.

Scripture does speak of our sin separating between us and God, but notice it is between us and God, not between God and us. In man's

heart, a separation has occurred, but not in God's heart. The same passage says that His face is hid from us. We've been blinded to the face of God shining with the grace of love upon us. Sin may keep a man from connecting with God, but it does not keep God from connecting with the man. The man may be alienated from God, but God is not alienated from the man.

The flesh, negatively speaking, has to do with the earthly body under the influence of this most primal delusion. It is in our five senses that we have been subjected to that alien and alienating consciousness that seeks to deny our essential Godness. This delusional consciousness may be ours in the sense of us having to bear it, but it is not ours in the sense of it being intrinsic to the being we possess in God.

I am convinced that mankind needs to endure a season of subjection to such alien consciousness as part of the divine mechanism whereby God establishes in us our true identity in Christ. In other words, we have to endure being brainwashed into believing who we ARE NOT, in order to most fully experience who we ARE. To overcome the great lie, God causes us to reach down into the depths of the glory of our Being in God in order to overcome the lie.

Consider Paul's teaching about the natural body and the spiritual body.

He says, in chapter 15 of 1st. Cor. that it (the body) is sown a natural body and is raised a spiritual body. Here's where rightfully dividing the word of truth comes in. One could infer from Paul's statement that two totally different bodies are involved, one natural and one spiritual. But it's not that simple. He says IT is sown a natural body, IT is raised a spiritual body. Same body---it, it.

In the same context he writes that it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption (better translation is "corruptibility" and "incorruptibility"). Where did the incorruptibility that it is raised in come from? Why, from within itself! It needed to go through a death process in order to draw forth from its depths its intrinsic incorruptibility. In that process the chaff falls away and the glory within the seed unfolds.

Oh how we need to realize that our very corruptibility conceals (only for a season) our intrinsic incorruptibility. The kingdom of God is indeed within us, though presently concealed, and that the corruptibility serves to cause the glory of incorruptibility to fully come forth. So I must say, in answer to your question, that you must not begin with the assumption that the flesh is corrupt. You must ask yourself, as my dear mentor Harry Robert Fox would say, "in what sense, is it corrupt."

Also, let me hasten to say that man cannot think himself into a consciousness of true identity. It requires regeneration, a supernatural infusion of the mind of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Try this thought on for size: the two (flesh and spirit) are contrary one to another because, while the flesh keeps confessing what is not true of it (because of being subjected to the lie concerning God and itself), the spirit insists on affirming the truth--the truth of the whole man, spirit, soul, and body as being sanctified in Christ Jesus.

The spirit, as it were, says to the flesh, "call thou not common or unclean what (God) has cleansed," while the body keeps stubbornly insisting upon its ungodliness. Don't be fooled by thinking that folk who assert their own independent-of-God goodness have overcome the lie.

Their self-assertion is simply one kind of personality's attempt to deal with its subconscious insecurity.

The truth will win out. The delusion is but chaff. Remember that the prophet proclaimed that "the whole earth (the whole of earth, including our earthen body) is full of the glory of the Lord," and that "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." This covering of glory- consciousness shall come forth out from the midst of our being--our being within His Being--and will swallow up the alien lie-consciousness, and "we shall know as we are known."

The cross of Christ reveals to us that God Himself has endured this contradiction to His Being and that our human condition has been a participation in the passion of God in Christ. Whenever we hear the voice of, and feel the feeling of alienation from God, our own selves and from others, we know that what we are hearing and feeling is

truly a lie. That enmity of mind, which the scriptures personify as the Devil, cannot withstand the reconciliation of all things by the death of Christ. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins against them."

By the way, my article posted on our web site, "Incarnation, Not God's Plan B," might also be helpful as you reflect on this matter.

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