

Embodiment and Spirituality in the Writings of Paul

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL?

SETTING UP THE ISSUES

The Body Beautiful?

Cosmetic Surgery Figures

- in the early 21st century in Britain cosmetic surgery increased by 10-20% year on year
- it is now increasing by over 30% a year;
- last year worldwide it is thought that around 15 million procedures took place;
- in Britain around 75,000 with c. 50,000 non surgical procedures.

Barbie



- Neck twice as long and 6" thinner than an average woman
- 16" waist (thinner than her head) only room for $\frac{1}{2}$ liver
- 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wrists couldn't lift anything
- Legs are 50% longer than her arms

Reductive Materialism

‘You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules’

Francis Crick

SETTING UP THE ISSUES

The Spirit Beautiful?

Dictionary.com

“spirituality” is

1. the quality or fact of being spiritual;
2. incorporeal or immaterial nature;
3. predominantly spiritual character as shown in thought, life, etc.; spiritual tendency or tone;
4. Often, spiritualities. property or revenue of the church or of an ecclesiastic in his or her official capacity.

Living Words of Wisdom

“The definition of spirituality is that which relates to or affects the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things.”

SETTING UP THE ISSUES

The Problem of Paul?

Body, Flesh, Spirit and Soul

Body

Spirit

Flesh

Soul



The Inner Plato

- The soul gives life to the body but unlike the body, the soul cannot die
- Transmigration of the soul from body to body
- Soul also brought knowledge which was constrained by the body – reason is the essence of a soul and that by which we apprehend the divine

Body, Flesh, Spirit and Soul

Body

Spirit

Flesh

Soul



EXPLORING CONCEPTS

The 'Soul' in the Bible

Nephesh in Genesis

- Genesis 2:7 then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath (neshmah) of life; and the man became a living (nephesh) being
- Genesis 9:4 Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life (nephesh), that is, its blood.

Nephesh

Genesis 1:20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms **of living creatures** (nephesh chayah), and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky."

Genesis 19:19 your servant has found favour with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my **life** (nephesh); but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me

Nephesh

- **Exodus 15:9** The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, **my desire** (nephesh) shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'
- **Psalm 30:3** O LORD, you brought up **my soul** from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

Psuche in Paul

- **Romans 2:9** There will be anguish and distress **for everyone** (every psuchē) who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,
- **Colossians 3:23** Whatever your task, put **yourselves** (your psuchē) into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters

Psuchē in Paul

- A comparatively rare word only used 13 times in the wider Pauline corpus
- Appears to be used by Paul in a very similar way to nephesh in the Old Testament
- As a result cannot be split from the body as it could in Platonic thinking
- The psuchē encapsulates the whole of life including the body

EXPLORING CONCEPTS

The 'Spirit' in the Bible

Multidimensional meaning of Spirit

- As God's Spirit
- As Wind
- As Breath

- Hebrew word 'Ruah'

Ezekiel 37

- **Ezekiel 37:1** ^aThe hand of the LORD was upon me, and ^bhe brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley;¹ it was full of bones.
- **Ezekiel 37:6** I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath¹ in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

Ezekiel 37

- **Ezekiel 37:9** Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath:¹ Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,² and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

Dale Martin

- ‘in the ancient world, the human body was not *like* a microcosm; it *was* a microcosm – a small version of the Universe at large’

The Corinthian Body p. 16)

Ruah as God's Spirit

Numbers 24:2 Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him,

1 Samuel 11:6 And the spirit of God came upon Saul in power when he heard these words, and his anger was greatly kindled.

Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, ...

Spirit in the Old Testament

- Very close in some instances to nephesh
- Key difference is that God's ruah is of course closely connected to God
- There is a difference between God's spirit and our spirit
- God's spirit falls temporarily

Romans 8.9-11

- ⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the **Spirit**, since the **Spirit** of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the **Spirit** of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the **Spirit**¹ is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the **Spirit** of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ¹ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through² his **Spirit** that dwells in you.

Romans 8:14-16

- ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Romans 8.26-27

- ²⁶ Likewise the **Spirit** helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very **Spirit** intercedes¹ with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God,¹ who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the **Spirit**, because the **Spirit**² intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Paul and Spirit

- Is contrasted with flesh BUT when you factor in that Spirit is not immaterial need to redefine both flesh and Spirit
- Spirit is that which comes from God; flesh is that which pulls away from God
- God's Spirit dwells permanently with those who are in Christ entwining with their Spirit and the means by which

EXPLORING CONCEPTS

**The interchange between 'Soul'
and 'Spirit' in Paul**

1 Corinthians 15.44-45

- ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.
- It is sown a psuchikos body and raised a pneumatikos body. If there is a psuchikos body there is also a pneumatikos body. Thus it is written 'The first man, Adam, became a living psuche; the last Adam became a life making pneuma.

Who are we?

- Bodies made alive by nephesh that came from God
- But those in Christ are not just alive they are indwelt by God's Spirit which is life-creating
- It is this, not reason, that allows us to commune with God
- People who live the resurrection life early.