

## V.

## OLD TESTAMENT USAGE.

It is admitted on all hands that St. Paul bases his employment of the terms "flesh" and "spirit" not on the usage of Greek writers, which presents nothing similar to it, but on that of the Old Testament, with which he was most familiar, and with which his most cherished and hallowed associations were bound up. The words came to St. Paul through the Septuagint as Greek renderings of the Hebrew terms *basar* and *ruach*; and it is by falling back on that earlier use, which he had inherited as a Jew, that we gain the starting-point of his Christian thought—the factors made ready to his hand, which he could take up and turn to further and fresh account. The subject of this Old Testament *usus loquendi* has been more or less fully discussed, as regards the terms separately, in various monographs. One of the most recent and interesting of these is a dissertation composed by M. Sabatier in honour of the illustrious veteran Édouard Reuss of Strassburg on occasion of his jubilee in 1879, and

entitled "Mémoire sur la notion hébraïque de l'esprit ;" but, as regards both sides of the inquiry, the subject has received the fullest and most careful investigation at the hands of Dr. Wendt, of whose work we have previously spoken, and whose general results have commended themselves to the judgment of competent scholars.<sup>1</sup> This discussion, which necessarily runs much into detail, is so important in itself and has so essential a bearing on the question before us, that we shall present an abstract of its more important arguments in the Appendix. Here we shall endeavour to give a summary view of the leading conclusions which he seems to us to have satisfactorily established.

As regards the word *basar*, Wendt distinguishes three different ways in which the term is employed : the first, that in which it bears its original and strict meaning, denoting the *flesh proper*, that is, the muscular or fleshy constituent parts of the body as contra-distinguished from other elements of it such as skin, bones, blood ; the second, that in which it denotes the *whole human body* ; and the third, that in which it is applied to signify *earthly creatures generally*, with the connotation of *the absolute weakness of their nature in contrast to the power of*

<sup>1</sup> See Diestel, *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie*, 1878, p. 496 ; Guthe, *Theologische Litteraturzeitung*, 1877, No. 18 ; Weiss, *Theologische Litteraturzeitung*, 1878, No. 9.

*God.* In the first and literal sense of the word it is used both of the flesh of the living body, and of that which is dead, especially, in the latter case, of what is employed for food or in sacrificial meals, but partly also of what is regarded as unclean. The second sense is not so much a change of meaning, as an *extension of use*, whereby the part is put for the whole. Wendt finds a link of transition to this second and extended use in the special employment of the term to express relations of *kindred* conceived as based on community of bodily substance—*consanguinity*—most fully in the form "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," more briefly in that of "thy bone and thy flesh," or simply in that of "our flesh." The synecdoche, by which the flesh is put for the whole body, does not rest on *basar* having the sense of animate matter generally (of which no instance can be pointed out), but on the simple circumstance that the flesh forms the most apparent and conspicuous characteristic of the body, or, as it is pithily put in the Latin form of his dissertation, "*caro corpori dat nomen, quia corpori conciliat formam, speciem, colorem*" (p. 7). When the body is spoken of as *basar*, it is mainly in passages where it comes to view as regards its *surface* or organised outward form, and not as regards its material substance. In this sense it is often placed in contradistinction to the *nepshesh* or *lebh* (soul or heart), the inner elements of man.

that do not come under the cognisance of the senses, or belong to his outward *aspect*.

The third and still more extended use of the term meets us specially in the oft recurring phrase *kol-basar* ("all flesh"), which obviously in most cases denotes something more than either the flesh on the body or the whole body named after the flesh. When it is said, for example, that "all flesh" has corrupted its way on the earth (Gen. vi. 12), or that "all flesh" is to know God as the Saviour (Is. xlix. 26), or that "all flesh" is to come to worship before God (Is. lxvi. 23), it plainly applies to *living beings generally* and includes their mental nature, just as the correlative phrase *kol-nephesh* is employed under circumstances where it must similarly be held to include or cover the bodily nature. In this case, as before, the part is put for the whole; and living beings are spoken of under that *aspect* which most strikes the eye. When we ask why the flesh is chosen as the most fitting *part* for such a synecdochic use, we find, on comparing all the passages where this usage occurs, that throughout a clear *contrast with God* is expressed or implied; and we can scarcely doubt that the usage has its main motive in the purpose of indicating such a *contradistinction*—a purpose, which would be most readily attained by designating the living beings in terms of that wherein the contrast was *most directly* apparent.

Wendt finds a key to the nature of this contrast between God and living beings on earth in Is. xxxi. 3: "Egypt is man and not God, and their horses are *basar* and not *ruach*, flesh and not spirit," where the parallelism of structure shows that the idea of *basar* stands in the same relation to that of man as the idea of *ruach* to that of God. But, as will appear in the sequel, the *ruach* of God denotes throughout the Old Testament the power or powerful working of God; and so here and elsewhere, where the contrast appears, the *basar* denotes the relative or rather the absolute powerlessness of man. It is on the side of the bodily nature—where the flesh so easily falls a prey to corruption—that the perishableness and nothingness of man come most clearly to light, and make him stand forth in most absolute contrast to God. The word thus signifies *living beings* with the accessory notion of *the absolute weakness and transitoriness of their nature overagainst the power and living operation of God*. It is, in a word, the sense which we often express by the word "creature." Wendt has given numerous illustrations of its employment, where the object is to express the dependence of the creature on God, the reverence of the creature in presence of the Divine sovereignty, the folly of trusting in the creature; and especially of its frequent occurrence where the Divine judgments are spoken of.

In answer to the question, Whether, in addition to this undoubted accessory sense of natural *weakness*, the term does not include an element of moral blame, of *sinfulness*, Wendt examines several of the passages adduced in support of this view—such as Gen. vi. 3, where he controverts the view of Dillmann, as it seems to us, with some success, but the uncertainty as to the punctuation of the text and the obscurity of the whole passage, which wears an isolated aspect, preclude much stress being laid on it; Psalm lxxviii. 38, 39, where he rightly opposes the view of Tholuck; and various statements in the book of Job that assert man's inability to justify himself before God, as to which his explanation is more ingenious than sufficient—and he comes to the conclusion that in the Old Testament the idea of "flesh" has no accessory sense of moral blame.

But, while we think that he has sufficiently made good his main positive results, we conceive that in coming to this negative conclusion he has not taken adequate account of the facts even as regards the passages in the book of Job, and that he has failed to attach due weight to the early assertion of the corruption of all flesh at Gen. vi. 12, 13. When we call to mind the reference at Job xxv. 3 to the pervading and searching character of the divine light on the one hand, and the prominence given on the other to man's want of purity (where it might

seem enough, from Wendt's point of view, to have urged man's want of power), and when we find the distinct recognition of the moral impurity of the race as conditioned by descent from non-pure parents (*e.g.* xiv. 4 : "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and xv. 14 : "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous?") the suggestion of Wendt that the general impurity of man here spoken of has nothing in common with what we call sinfulness, but is simply an indication of the absolute gulf between the human nature and the divine, looks very like a begging of the question, and falls short, at any rate, of an adequate explanation.

Still more difficult is it to reconcile his position as to the absence of all reference to sin with the existence, at so early a stage in the record of human history, of the great generalisation from experience presented at Gen. vi. 12, 13 : "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me [that is, determined on by me], for the earth is filled with violence through them, and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." It is true that this corruption is not referred to the flesh itself in virtue of any necessity inherent in its

nature, for such a reference would be at variance with the explicit statement of Gen. i. 31 that God at the close of his creative work "saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good"; in point of fact the passage we have quoted charges the corruption of "the way" on the personal action of those concerned; but none the less does it present the reality of that corruption as a fact of experience holding true of "all flesh," and giving special point, as is remarked by Cremer,<sup>1</sup> to the contrast between the Spirit of God and the flesh spoken of a verse or two before (Gen. vi. 3). Can we doubt that under such circumstances the expression thus passing into general currency would carry along with it some connotation of the sin which was throughout its *actual* accompaniment? That it had this connotation seems evident from the very fact which Wendt himself had already pointed out, that the phrase "all flesh" occurs with especial frequency in connection with the mention of the Divine judgments—judgments proceeding essentially on moral grounds—the consciousness of which leads the people to say unto Moses: "For what is all flesh that it might hear the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire and live?"

<sup>1</sup> In Herzog's Real-Encyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie, 2nd edition, article "Fleisch"; and in the Bibl.-Theol. Wörterbuch der Neutest. Gräcität, 3rd edition, 1883, p. 690.

(Deut. v. 23), and prompts the prophet in presence of the vision in the temple to exclaim: "Woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isaiah vi. 5).

Passing now to the conception of *ruach*, the applications of which are far more varied and complicated, Wendt considers that we may find their common source in the original sense of "wind," while others have preferred to take the primary sense as "breath." The chief characteristics of wind are motion and invisibility. Under the former point of view, as moved and moving, it is mainly conceived of as destructive; under the latter, as invisible, it may be regarded either as *unsearchable* in its origin, or as *immaterial* in its nature. Notwithstanding the close relationship of these ideas, they give occasion to two very divergent chains of thought. The wind, not being an object of experience as regards its origin, is in numerous passages referred directly to God, who creates it, sends it forth, directs it, makes it His messenger. Lacking in virtue of its invisible character the usual marks by which reality is tested, it becomes the symbol and expression for what is empty, null, unreal; and in this sense it may mean precisely the opposite of what is meant by it when looked at on the side of its divine origin.

With the signification of wind is immediately associated that of breath, presenting itself as wind in man, just as conversely the wind is apprehended as the breath of God ; and a further step makes the breath of man appear directly as the breath of God—the *ruach* belonging to man, in so far as it stirs or works in man ; and belonging to God, in so far as He has sent it or breathed it forth.

From these combinations between the wind, the breath of God and the human breath, result manifold and even opposite references for the *ruach*. As the stormy wind brings destruction, so the breath in impetuous movement furnishes the expression of *anger*; and the blast of the divine wrath in this sense is conceived as destructive of life. On the other hand, where the element of stormy motion is in abeyance, the process of breathing is felt to be the proper mark of all that lives, and the *ruach* obtains the opposite significance of the creating and preserving *life-breath*, which is altogether of divine origin.

The communication of the divine life-spirit to the creature forms the ground of all possibility and power of creaturely existence. God forms it in, or gives it to, men ; and as at first it came from Him, to Him at death it returns. To it are referred the various states and manifestations of vital power. Under impressions of surprise or terror it seems as though it would depart ; under opposite influences

it revives; the failure of the breath is the proper designation for the decay of the vital power.

Wendt next inquires what is the relation of this *ruach* to the *nephesh*. There is undoubtedly great likeness between them. The soul, too, is treated as seat and centre of the powers of life; all things that further or hinder the life are placed in relation to it; and the like predicates are used of it as of the *ruach*, when the restoration or dying-away of the life is spoken of. But there are also indications of no inconsiderable difference. First, the *nephesh* is the seat of *individuality*, of personality, of self-consciousness, while the *ruach* is a *common* mark of living beings, of like character and working in all. Secondly, they stand in a different relation to God. The *ruach* is viewed as an immediate outbreathing of God; it is but part of the general divine *ruach* which creates and preserves life everywhere, and it does not lose its character as such, even when at work in an individual earthly nature. The soul, on the other hand, is never regarded as an efflux of the divine. The soul depends on God, because it is given by God; but the life-spirit depends on God, because it is itself divine. Thirdly, they are dissimilar as respects their fate after death. The spirit returns to God who gave it, but we nowhere in the Old Testament read of the souls of the dead coming to God. The *nephesh* is by death absolutely severed from God.

When on the basis of these distinctions we ask what is the relation between them, it is plain that they are not simply co-ordinate elements placed side by side, different in contents and mode of operation. The two terms represent one and the same quantity, but estimate it *from different points of view*. The nature of living beings may be estimated in two ways, either by comparison with God, or by comparison with inanimate nature: in the former, from the religious point of view, which distinguishes what in the creatures is earthly and what is divine; in the latter, from the physical or anthropological point of view, which distinguishes what in them is of material bodily nature and what is of an immaterial spiritual nature. The powers of spiritual or mental life are called *ruach*, in so far as they connect the creatures with God and place them in dependence on Him; they are called *nephesh*, in so far as they separate the creatures as animate individuals from one another and from the lifeless impersonal world of sense. Wendt finds a clear confirmation of this distinction furnished by Job xii. 10: "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the spirit of all flesh of man." The parallelism of the halves of this verse shows that the conceptions "soul" and "spirit" are related to one another just as the phrases "every living thing" and "all flesh of man." Now, as the two latter expressions denote quite the

same thing in point of contents, but denote it from different points of view—in the one case that of living beings in contrast to inanimate nature, in the other that of the creatures in contrast to God—it is clear that we must assume for the conception of “soul” and “spirit” a diversity not of the contents, but simply of the point of view, or, as it is put in the Latin form, a “*discrimen non rei designatae, sed rationis designandi.*”

A similar inquiry is instituted as to the relations of the *ruach* to the *lebh*. We find the word *ruach* very often joined with some designation of quality, when, generally speaking, a definite mental state is to be characterised; but for most of these designations we find parallels formed with *lebh*, while we elsewhere meet with the two expressions side by side, each accompanied by such an indication of quality; and in two cases they stand together with the same attribution—a clear proof that, while they are kindred, they are not exactly synonymous. An examination of the uses of the term *lebh*, as the seat of the conscious mental activities of living beings, leads Wendt to conclude that it is not so well rendered by the word “heart,” which makes us think of the seat of the feelings, and for which we are inclined to assume a favourable connotation, as by the German word *Sinn* (mind), which defines the different kinds of mental activity and indirectly of

outward action as regards *contents*; while *ruach* has its import best indicated by the older German use of *Muth*—still recognisable in its compounds, such as *Schwermuth*, *Freimuth*, *hochmüthig*, *demüthig*—and denotes the *energy* which, partly as *disposition*, partly as *character*, stamps on all the individual expressions of the life of feeling, as of the activity of thinking and willing, their definite *form*. The two sides, the natural disposition and the moral character, are for the Hebrew consciousness not yet separated; it is only our later reflection that separates them. There prevails no distinction in the strict sense between the designations formed with *ruach* and those formed with *lebh* so far as the thing itself is concerned, because the *contents* of the mental action given in the “mind” is always conditioned throughout by the peculiar *form* of the ruling natural or moral disposition. As between *ruach* and *nephesh*, so between *ruach* and *lebh* there subsists a distinction not so much of the *object designated*, as of the *point of view* of the designation.

A new and last signification of the *ruach* presents to some extent a blending of the most essential marks of the two that have already been mentioned. Here we encounter in the foreground the mark of *divine origin*, but in special connection with the *unusual* and *extraordinary* manifestations of the divine operation on man. This *ruach* is usually

designated simply as the *prophetic*, but not quite with strict justice; the prophetic *ruach* which expresses itself in prophetic speech or act is in reality only one species, though perhaps the most important, of a far more comprehensive class of phenomena. In all spheres of human action, achievements which in a conspicuous and significant way transcend the measure of ordinary human ability, are referred to the divine *ruach*. So it is with the proofs of Samson's strength, with the feats of the successful chief, especially in war, with the skill of the artificer or of the poet, with special powers of judgment and understanding, and particularly, in the religious domain, with the characteristic gifts of the prophets. This extraordinary divine *ruach* Wendt proposes to distinguish from the other senses of the term by designating it as the *transcendental*.

After enumerating various predicates of this *ruach*, he derives from them two leading marks as characterising it. First, it is constantly conceived of as a higher *power*, which comes on man as its organ, not dependent on his will and ability, nay even in some cases impelling him against his will (Num. xxiv. 5). But it nowhere appears as a *substance* of a supernatural heavenly kind; for that the expressions borrowed from material things, such as *shaphakh* and *labhash*—to *shed* or to *put on*—are merely figurative, is obvious from the very diversity of the

material conceptions with which they are linked. And he adds that an illustration of the almost accidental way in which such expressions may originate may be clearly recognised in the prophecy of Joel, where the prophet has (at ii. 23) promised for the fields devastated by the locusts the fertilising rain, and, when to this natural gift of God there is added in the hoped-for time of blessing the gift of the Spirit, its communication is likewise presented under the figure of the pouring out of a rain (iii. 2; comp. Is. xlv. 3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring"). Secondly, it is to be noted that this transcendental spirit-power is always conceived of as a moving power revealing itself outwardly, and not as a quiescent possession of the individual or as a mere capacity, which he might have but need not put forth. Even the prophet has the *ruach* only when he is prophetically active; his noiseless piety or his inner religious speculation is nowhere termed *ruach*.

If we ask how we are to conceive of the nature and quality of this transcendental *ruach*, we shall proceed most surely by following as far as possible the analogy of the other forms of its use already dealt with. Wendt holds that here too we may think first of a natural *life-power*, only not of that which

is normal and common to all creatures, but of a special *heightening* (*besondere Steigerung*) of the same, from which springs in each case the capacity for extraordinary achievement; but, on the whole, it may be said that the *ruach* in this sense belongs to the great ideal figures of early times—as in the Book of Judges—or is held forth in prospect for the last time (Is. xlv. 3; xi. 2: “spirit of might”). Elsewhere this element of heightened *natural* power falls into the background before that of the higher *religious* and *moral* working of God, which is communicated partly to the prophets of the present, partly to the king and people of the latter times. It is analogous to the *ruach* previously mentioned, which, as disposition and character, gives its ruling *form* to all man’s mental activity. The transcendental *ruach* also is such a *mental movement* (*Gemüths-bewegung*); which, however, is accounted not as a product of natural influences, but as a higher God-sent power that determines the form of all man’s thinking and willing (“*animi motio et affectio, quæ divinitus data omnibus mentis voluntatisque actis divinam suam conciliat formam*”). Especially, Wendt conceives, in this sense to be retained in the case of the prophetic *ruach*. It is far from being a *contents* communicated to the prophets, whether of any sort of spirit-substance, or of any kind of ready-made knowledge, but is a *form* of thinking and looking

at things (*eine Denk- und Anschauungsform*); namely, the religiously elevated tone of mind (*Stimmung*), which apprehends and judges of the given relations according to the supreme principle of the religious covenant-relation between Jehovah and his people.

The communication of this transcendental *ruach* is promised by the prophets to the collective Israel of the hoped-for last time. Joel presents it as the prophetic *ruach*, in which all members of the nation attain the highest stage of religious knowledge (iii. 1): Zechariah as "a spirit of grace and supplication," that is, as the "prayerful disposition" which turns in believing and penitent trust to the previously despised and forsaken God of salvation (xii. 10); Ezekiel speaks of the "new spirit," which as renewed life-principle has as its effect the walking after the commandments and ordinances of God (xi. 10f.; xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26f.); Isaiah and the Deutero-Isaiah conceive it specially as "spirit of judgment," that is, as the attitude of purified moral life, which is in keeping with the unique relation of the people to God (iv. 4; xxxii. 15f.; xlii. 1). And the individual pious man may, as Psalm li. shows, express his longing after a deletion of his consciousness of guilt and after a strengthening of his life and walk before God in the prayer for renewal and preservation of this divine *ruach*, namely, the steadfast, candid, and humble character

(verse 12, *ruach nakhon*; verse 14, *ruach nedhibhah*; verse 19, *ruach nishberah*), which, together with the pure and unselfish mind (verse 12, *lebh tahor*; verse 19, *lebh nishbar*), is the mark of true piety and morality.

Lastly, at two passages there occurs the expression "spirit of the holiness of God" (Ps. li. 13; Is. lxiii. 10f.) where the more precise definition of the *ruach* in the attribute of holiness is placed by means of the suffix directly in relation to God. But the difficulty apparently herein involved is removed when we recollect, as Diestel has well pointed out, that the holiness of God is throughout not a simple idea of quality, but an idea of relation, which denotes the *belonging* in covenant to God. In this case the attribute indicates not the nature and peculiarity which the *ruach* itself has, but the relation brought about and established by it. The "spirit of God's holiness" is that spirit, which is the expression of belonging in covenant to God, and the departure of which is linked with the destruction that results from the withdrawal and alienation of God.

Exception may, perhaps, be taken to some of these views of Wendt, such as his assumption of "wind" as the original meaning of *ruach*, rather than "breath"; his conception of the mode in which the several senses are correlated to the different

elements involved in that primary meaning; his apparent exclusion of special gifts of knowledge from the sphere of the prophetic *ruach*, which is hardly consistent with his own statement that the *ruach* communicates "*auctas sapientis, ethici, religiosi ingenii virtutes;*" and individual details of his exegesis may be open to question. But it seems to us that he has fully made good his main position that *ruach* conveys especially the notion of efficacious power, whether it is applied to the life-spirit constituting and upholding the life of man in general, or to the dispositions and character that mould his thoughts and his action, or to the higher and more extraordinary Divine influence that empowers and impels men to the special work given to them to do.

When we turn to the Septuagint, which was the medium through which the Greek-speaking Jews received the Old Testament, we find that the word *ruach* is almost invariably rendered by *πνεῦμα*; while *basar* is differently rendered according to the different modifications of its use. In its original import of flesh pertaining to the body it is translated by *αἱ σάρκες* when the reference is to the parts of the body as still living, and by *τὰ κρέα* or *κρέατα* as regards the parts of animals slain. When the word denotes by synecdoche the whole body, the word is rendered sometimes by *τὸ σῶμα*, sometimes

by the singular ἡ σάρξ; but it is not easy to discover on what principle the choice proceeds. Wendt remarks that "as the word σῶμα, according to general Greek usage, denotes the organism, it is found in the Septuagint only at passages where the body comes mainly into view as respects form, especially as to its surface (Lev. vi. 3 (10); xv. 13, 16, 19; xxii. 6; Num. viii. 7; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Job vii. 5); but there is no reason at all for extending the rule to the effect that σῶμα stands *everywhere*, where the body as organised is meant, and σάρξ *only*, where the body was to be designated as material substance." And he adds: "The comparison of the two passages, 1 Kings xx. (xxi.) 27, and 2 Kings vi. 30, where the same expression *saq-'al-besaro* is rendered in the former case by σάκκος ἐπὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, in the latter by σάκκος ἐπὶ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, shows plainly that σάρξ is employed quite synonymously with σῶμα. And a specially clear proof of this usage is furnished by the passage Wisd. Sol. vii. 2: ἐν κοιλίᾳ μητρὸς ἐγλύφην σάρξ, 'in my mother's womb I was formed into a body,' where σάρξ therefore denotes the body precisely as organised." It is to be borne in mind, moreover, that the translators have not always been careful as to the accuracy of their renderings, e.g., at Gen. xxxvi. 6, where our version has, "And Esau took all the persons of his house," the Hebrew has *naphshoth*, "souls," but the

Septuagint has σώματα, "bodies." It is especially important to observe that, wherever *basar* is used in the signification of "creature," it is always rendered by the singular σάρξ, and the phrase *kol-basar* by πᾶσα σάρξ, the only exception noted by Wendt being Job v. 4, where the expression βροτός is used as a more free rendering.

We may add, before leaving Wendt at this point, that his investigation embraces an interesting review of the various passages in the New Testament writers other than St. Paul, where the terms σάρξ or πνεῦμα are used, and shows with skill and success how closely they follow the lines, and scarcely pass beyond the limits, of Old Testament precedent.