

5-1-1951

# A Study of the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Light of the Apostle Paul's Use of the Term "Flesh" (Sarx)

Bern Madison Warren

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## Recommended Citation

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following  
faculty committee:

First reader: F. H. Munnell Approved 5-10-51

Second reader: Delbert G. Rose Approved 5-10-51

A STUDY OF THE WESLEYAN DOCTRINE OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S  
USE OF THE TERM "FLESH" (SARX)

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Western School of Evangelical Religion

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
Bern Madison Warren

May 1951

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem under consideration was an investigation of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification in the light of the Apostle Paul's use of the term "flesh" (sarx). No term, in connection with this doctrine, needs more careful study and analysis than does the word "flesh" as Paul used it in his New Testament epistles. Paul so closely identified this term with sin and salvation from sin that no one can adequately apprehend hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation from sin) and ignore the Apostle's use of the word "flesh". Therefore, the problem centered around the question as to whether Paul gave the same meaning to the term "flesh" (sarx), every time he used it, or whether the word had different meanings depending on the line of truth he was presenting.

#### II. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the fact that the theological world has been so divided concerning the Apostle Paul's use of the term "flesh" (sarx), and because the available literature on the subject seemed meager and inadequate, supplementary objective investigation and study appeared both valuable and

necessary. More extensive examination revealed that most commentators' interpretations of the Apostle Paul apparently have been determined by their theological positions rather than a careful inductive and exegetical study of the Scriptures under consideration. A review of existing writings on the subject disclosed a scarcity of material which further convinced this investigator that additional research was needed. Therefore, since there is a need for clear understanding of Paul's position at this point, this writer felt justified in making an honest effort to contribute the results of his study. Any doctrine of sin or of salvation from sin will be greatly influenced and affected by one's interpretation of Paul's meaning when he used the term "flesh".

### III. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

A brief survey of previous literature on the subject was made to ascertain its availability and usefulness. That review was not only revealing but also pathetic. Writers on this topic, both within and without the Wesleyan movement, have failed to adequately treat the term "flesh" (sarx) in its relation to the Pauline theology of sin and salvation. Nearly every theologian, Bible expositor, and commentator has, to a greater or lesser degree, touched on the matter, but almost always without adequate treatment.

Some men have written from a purely theological emphasis and have omitted the inductive and exegetical study. Others have written more from a devotional or experiential standpoint, and have sacrificed, at least at times, logical research and scholarship. Some have been lacking in an adequate understanding of the original Biblical languages, particularly Greek, and have often reached unjustifiable or unsubstantiated conclusions. Others have been unduly biased by their theological commitments which have prevented thorough and objective research. Still others have perhaps been well-qualified to adequately treat the subject, but have been limited by space, time, or their objective in writing.

Daniel Steele, one of the greatest theologians in the Wesleyan movement, did not adequately treat Paul's use of the term "flesh" (sarx) in any of his writings. What he did write was not definitive enough to be very valuable.<sup>1</sup> Brockett, in his refutation of Ironside's book on holiness,<sup>2</sup> made some rash and unsubstantiated statements concerning the flesh that have weakened, rather than strengthened, his much-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Daniel Steele, Half-hours with St. Paul and other Bible Readings (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1909). Daniel Steele, Love Enthroned (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1902).

<sup>2</sup> H. A. Ironside, Holiness, the False and the True (New York: Loizeaux [n.d.]).

needed and worthwhile apologetic.<sup>3</sup> His zeal for the truth apparently caused him to take an extreme position without sufficient facts to support it. Commentators, such as Clarke, Godbey, and Binney, handled the subject in their writings, but did not develop it enough to make it very useful. Some men, such as Hodge, Ironside, and Machen, have written from a theological position which predetermined their final interpretations of Paul's theology and therefore made their works inadequate. It must be admitted here that not only have some Calvinists been guilty at this point, but also that some Wesleyan writers have been unduly biased by prejudices which have hindered rather than helped the cause of Biblical interpretation.

Since a more minute investigation of some of the material in this field occupies a later chapter of this study, a detailed presentation seemed inadvisable here. However, the point has been made that the available literature on this subject was insufficient and not definitive enough to be helpful to ministers and laymen. Certainly there was a need for a study which would combine the sciences of systematic and exegetical Christian theology with a careful inductive study of the Scriptural passages concerning the Apostle Paul's use of the term "flesh"

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Henry E. Brockett, Scriptural Freedom from Sin (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1941).

(sarx). This, the present investigator endeavored to make.

#### IV. LIMITATION OF THE PROBLEM

The very title of the investigation limited the area in which the greatest emphasis could be made. However, a study of the Pauline use of the term "flesh" (sarx) in its relation to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, opened a vast field for research, and care needed to be exercised in the selection and use of material. Large and important areas related to this subject went almost unmentioned, because of lack of time, space, and the immediate ability of the investigator. A study of the Greek usage of the word sarx outside of the Bible would have been interesting and undoubtedly helpful, but it was omitted. Inquiry into the Old Testament usage of sarx, as found in the Greek Septuagint, could only be brief and far from comprehensive. The historical development of the interpretation of Paul's use of the term "flesh" (sarx), within the Christian church, was almost entirely ignored. There were tempting areas for examination, concerning related phases of the doctrine of entire sanctification, which could not be included in this study.

Although an inductive study was made of all the Pauline epistles where the term "flesh" (sarx) was used, the main Biblical emphasis was limited to those parts where Paul

especially identified this word with the sin problem and its remedy.<sup>4</sup> The theological and literary survey had to be limited and yet thorough enough to be representative of that area of the problem. The study of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification was confined to that section directly related or pertinent to Paul's use of the term under consideration. The entire investigation called for careful judgment in the handling of materials, in order to avoid superficial or inadequate treatment on the one hand and needless entanglement in less important phases of the subject on the other. Every effort was made to include only such research items as had direct, or at least important, contributions to make toward the solution of the problem stated previously in this chapter.<sup>5</sup>

## V. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Flesh. The term "flesh", unless specifically stated otherwise, was interpreted in this study as the English equivalent for the Greek word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$ . Therefore, two words were used interchangeably as equal terms: flesh and  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  (sarx).

Wesleyan. The term Wesleyan was used to identify the

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<sup>4</sup> Such epistles as Romans and Galatians.

<sup>5</sup> Supra p. 1.



doctrine and the men who have followed in the tradition of the great English churchman, John Wesley, and the Methodist movement which had its beginning under his leadership.

Non-Wesleyan. The term non-Wesleyan included the writers of the Calvinistic and Lutheran traditions who have been more or less contemporary with the Wesleyan movement.

English Bible. The English Bible used in this investigation, unless notation was made otherwise, was the American Standard edition, published in New York in 1901.

## VI. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Every effort was made to keep this study objective and free from unfair and unwarranted subjective interpretations and conclusions. Previous procedure has been to formulate a doctrinal statement or theory and then select the Scriptural passages which appeared to uphold the idea. Such was not the purpose of this investigation. There has been far too little real investigation of doctrine through a thorough inductive Bible study. No true doctrine of the Christian church can ever be endangered by honest inductive study of the Bible. Rather, much benefit may result from the removal of the false and unwarranted accretions which have been attached to many of the doctrines. The method of procedure followed in this study was

inductive rather than deductive. This method was used in order that greater freedom from bias and greater objectivity of research might be attained. In order to secure a valid basis upon which to evaluate the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, it was first necessary to ascertain what Paul actually taught concerning the term flesh. This provided the light by which the Wesleyan doctrine was carefully examined.

The investigation of the problem was begun with a survey of the general usage of the term flesh within the Old and New Testament. In order to save time, and facilitate the research, the concordance to the English Bible was consulted to locate the passages where the English word flesh appeared. These passages were then compared with the Greek versions. By this procedure, those sections of Scripture containing the Greek word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  were easily isolated for inductive study.

Following the brief survey of the non-Pauline usage of the term flesh, a chapter was devoted to an inductive study of the term within the Pauline epistles. This chapter was opened with a careful investigation of the Greek word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$ . Help in the examination was derived from some of the most dependable Greek lexicographers. The special word study was followed by a general survey of all the Pauline epistles which contained the term  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  or words derived

from it.<sup>6</sup> This review established the fact that Paul did use the term *σάρξ* with various shades of meaning in his writings. A more careful and detailed inductive scrutiny was then made of the epistles where Paul used the term flesh in relation to man's sinful condition and God's remedy of salvation from sin.

The inductive study of the Pauline epistles was followed by a review of the theological usage of the term flesh. This survey was far from exhaustive, but an endeavor was made to carefully represent the field. First, the non-Wesleyan writers and their literature were studied. In this phase of the problem, the non-Wesleyan writers were limited, for the most part, to men of the Calvinistic and Lutheran persuasions. Second, a review was made of the men who have followed in the tradition of John Wesley. The materials used in this study were limited to those which were directly related to the problem.

Following the theological survey, another chapter was given to a careful evaluation of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification in the light of the preceding investigation. In this way, it was hoped to fit the doctrine to the evidence, rather than selecting evidence to support a previously adopted theory. The final chapter summarized the course of the investigation, stated the

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<sup>6</sup> E.g., the words *σαρκικός* and *σάρκινος*.



## CHAPTER II

### GENERAL USAGE OF THE TERM "FLESH"

This chapter contains the results of the research concerning the general usage of the term flesh within the Old and New Testament Scriptures. An analytical concordance<sup>1</sup> to the English Bible was used in this survey. The English Bible was carefully compared with the Greek versions to ascertain if sarx were the Greek equivalent for the English word flesh and the Old Testament Hebrew word bāsār (בָּשָׂר).

The chapter has been divided into two main divisions. One section has covered the research in the Old Testament, and the other has covered the research in the New Testament. The main purpose of this general survey was to find the varied meanings given to the word sarx.

#### I. SEPTUAGINT VERSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (BRIEF SURVEY)

The Hebrew word bāsār (flesh) was used about two hundred and sixty times in the Old Testament Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> In the English Bible, it was translated nearly two hundred and fifty times as the word "flesh". A Greek equivalent for the Hebrew term bāsār appears in the Septuagint version

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (revised (20th) edition; New York: Funk & Wagnalls [n.d.]).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., "Index-Lexicon to the Old Testament," p. 7.

(excepting the Apocryphal books) at least two hundred and thirty-five times.<sup>3</sup> However, the word sarx was not always used. Instead, four primary Greek words were used in translating the term bāsār. These words were sarx (σάρξ), kreas (κρέας), sōma (σῶμα), and chrōs (χρῶς). Sarx was found 126 times, and usually in some reference to man.<sup>4</sup> Kreas was found 75 times, and was usually used in reference to the flesh of non-human animals, either as food or as sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> Sōma was used 20 times, and usually as pertaining to the washing or clothing of the human body.<sup>6</sup> Chrōs appeared only 14 times, all in the book of Leviticus, and all but two were in relation to a certain type of leprosy of the skin.<sup>7</sup>

Since the word sarx was the term under particular investigation, a closer study was made to discover its varied meanings. As is noted in the paragraph above, sarx was nearly always used in some relation to the human race. There were a few exceptions, but for all practical purposes

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Genesis 2:21, 23-24; 17:11, 13-14, 24-25; Exodus 4:7; Job 2:5.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Genesis 9:4; Exodus 12:8, 46; 16:8, 12; Leviticus 6:27; 7:15.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Leviticus 6:10; 14:9; 15:16; 16:4, 24; Job 7:5.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Leviticus 13:2-4, 10-11, 13. (The two exceptions were Leviticus 15:7 and 16:4).

this statement will stand the test of careful research.

Several of the more important uses of sarx have been listed.

1. Sarx was used in a physical sense to denote a part of the human body.<sup>8</sup>

2. Sarx was extended from the meaning as part of the body to include the "whole body," especially the human body,<sup>9</sup> although the Greek word sōma was often used in this relationship.<sup>10</sup>

3. Sarx was used to refer to "all men", the human race, or mankind, and was used occasionally as a common term for living things.<sup>11</sup> Usually, in this sense, however, it referred to mankind. In this relation, sarx was often found in the term "all flesh" or pasa sarx.<sup>12</sup>

4. Sarx was also used as the medium of external or natural generation: in the sense of relationship, tribal connection, or kith and kin.<sup>13</sup> The expressions "bone" and

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., Genesis 2:21; Ezekiel 23:20; Job 10:11.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Genesis 40:19; Exodus 4:7; Leviticus 17:11, 14; Numbers 12:12; II Kings 4:34; Job 33:25; Ecclesiastes 12:12.

<sup>10</sup> H. L. E. Luering, "Flesh," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1947 edition, II, 1118-19.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Genesis 6:12; Psalms 65:2; 145:21; Isaiah 40:5-6; Jeremiah 25:31; Ezekiel 20:48; Job 2:28.

<sup>12</sup> Luering, op. cit., p. 1119.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Genesis 2:24; 37:27.

"flesh" were often found in combination.<sup>14</sup>

5. Sarx was used figuratively of human nature as opposed to God and the Spirit of God,<sup>15</sup> and also as implying weakness, frailty, and imperfection, both physical and moral.<sup>16</sup> It was often connected with the ideas of mutability and degeneracy, the natural defects of the flesh proper. Thus, it was represented as the counterpart of the divine strength, and as the opposite of God, or the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> The flesh designated man because

man appears through it, and manifests his nature by it; in the flesh man has life--he is flesh. This attribute he shares with the whole living universe. Flesh is the condition and outward expression of its existence; by the flesh it manifests its solidarity. Thus, as flesh, it is weak and frail. . . . Flesh is not spirit, nor vital power . . . but stands in a living and moral contrast to spirit, the spirit of God . . .<sup>18</sup>

6. Genesis 6:3 appeared to be the only passage in the Old Testament in which the term sarx was used in a sense approaching an ethical meaning:<sup>19</sup> "And Jehovah said, My

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Genesis 2:23; 29:14; Judges 9:2; II Samuel 5:1; 19:12-13.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Genesis 6:3; Deuteronomy 5:26; Psalms 56:4; Jeremiah 17:5.

<sup>16</sup> John McClintock and James Strong, "Flesh," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, III, 593.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 594.

<sup>18</sup> H. Cremer, "Flesh," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1909 edition, IV, 330.

<sup>19</sup> McClintock and Strong, loc. cit.



Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years." When the marginal notes for this verse were substituted, it read as follows: "And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not rule in (or abide in) man forever, for in their going astray they are flesh: therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years." It seemed as if God set forth in this verse that because man was straying away from his Creator and following his own sinful desires, he (man) was denominated flesh, and his days upon the earth were limited. In all other cases the Old Testament "only uses the word flesh in the physical and metaphysical senses."<sup>20</sup>

## II. VARIED USAGE IN THE NON-PAULINE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

The investigation of the non-Pauline New Testament books was not exhaustive, but it was complete enough to show the most important uses of and meanings for the term sarx by the various writers of these books.

The word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  appeared one hundred and forty-seven times in the Greek New Testament.<sup>21</sup> Found fifty-six times in the non-Pauline books and ninety-one times in the Pauline epistles, it was translated flesh one hundred and forty-five

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<sup>20</sup> McClintock and Strong, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix B.

times, "carnal" once,<sup>22</sup> and "fleshly" once.<sup>23</sup> In the non-Pauline New Testament books, sarx was used, with only two exceptions,<sup>24</sup> in some relation to man or the human race. This was a very significant fact, for it revealed that the New Testament writers followed very closely the Old Testament usage of the word sarx.<sup>25</sup> "The development of the term in the New Testament and especially in Paul may be traced directly to this Old Testament conception . . ."<sup>26</sup>

Since the New Testament use of sarx was based and built upon the Old Testament usage, one would naturally expect the word to be used with a similar meaning. However, for the purpose of this study, the investigator felt that a brief examination of the non-Pauline<sup>27</sup> usage in the New Testament would present additional valuable background for the chapter to follow.

In the Synoptic Gospels and in the book of Acts, sarx appeared only fourteen times, but in the few places where it did occur, most of the traits of the Old Testament

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<sup>22</sup> Hebrews 9:10.

<sup>23</sup> Colossians 2:18.

<sup>24</sup> Hebrews 9:13 and Revelation 19:18.

<sup>25</sup> See p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Cremer, loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of this study, Paul was not considered the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

conception were present.<sup>28</sup> Sarx was used to denote the substance of the human body.<sup>29</sup> It was also used as a designation for man and humanity.<sup>30</sup> Again, it was used to indicate the difference between man and God,<sup>31</sup>

and carries on the thought farther to denote the perverted relationship of man to the divine principle of life, and to the inward man as ruled thereby, Matt. xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38.<sup>32</sup>

The Apostle John used the word sarx generally to indicate humanity under the conditions of this life.<sup>33</sup> Sarx was used to designate the great idea of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. The "Word," which "was with God" and which "was God," became flesh.<sup>34</sup>

The phrase 'the Word became flesh' means more than that He (Jesus) assumed a human body--He assumed human nature entire, identifying Himself with the race of man, having a human body, a human soul, and a human spirit.<sup>35</sup>

Sometimes John gave a more definite hint at the sinful and

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<sup>28</sup> Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, trans. Wm. Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), p. 851.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Luke 24:39; Acts 2:26, 31.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Matthew 19:5-6; 24:22; Mark 10:8; 13:20; Luke 3:6; Acts 2:17.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 16:17.

<sup>32</sup> Cremer, loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner, 1908), II, 93.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., John 1:14; 6:51; I John 4:2; II John 7.

<sup>35</sup> Vincent, op. cit., p. 51.

fallible nature of humanity,<sup>36</sup> and twice he used sarx as opposed to pneūma, spirit.<sup>37</sup>

In the writings of Peter, the contrast between sarx and pneūma appeared. Once it referred to Christ,<sup>38</sup> and once to those people who would accept the Gospel message and "live according to God in the spirit."<sup>39</sup> Peter also used sarx in relation to the sinfulness and defilement of fallen man apart from the grace of God. He used such expressions as "the filth of the flesh," "after the flesh in the lust of defilement," and "in the lusts of the flesh."<sup>40</sup> Surely, any Bible student would recognize here a deeper meaning than any physical or metaphysical use of the term flesh. The sinfulness of the sarx in these verses could not be explained alone by the metaphysical distinction between God and finite man.

While the use of the sarx by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was limited to the idea of corporeity, it was not used merely as an equal to sōma (body). It designated man's earthly being.<sup>41</sup> Twice sarx referred to

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<sup>36</sup> E.g., John 8:15; I John 2:16.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., John 3:6; 6:63.

<sup>38</sup> I Peter 3:18.

<sup>39</sup> I Peter 4:6.

<sup>40</sup> I Peter 3:21; II Peter 2:10, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Cremer, op. cit., p. 852.

the earthly life of Christ,<sup>42</sup> once to the relationship of men in this earthly life,<sup>43</sup> and once to both men and Christ as partakers of "flesh and blood."<sup>44</sup> "That 'flesh and blood' does not imply a sense of inherent sinfulness is . . . shown in all passages where Christ is declared a partaker of such nature . . . ."<sup>45</sup>

The general survey of the Old and New Testament use of the flesh revealed the fact that several different meanings were given to the Greek term sarx by the authors of these books. However, it showed that for the most part, the term was used in some relation to man and his earthly life. In some passages a part of the human body was intended. In others the whole body was meant, while in still others the human race or humanity as a whole was intended. Within these general areas, various shades of meaning, by accommodation, were given to the term sarx. With the possible exception of Genesis 6:3, sarx was not used in the ethical sense within the Old Testament Scriptures. However, in the non-Pauline writings of the New Testament, sarx was used, at times, with reference to man's fallen and sinful condition, which does approach the ethical idea.

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<sup>42</sup> Hebrews 5:7; 10:20.

<sup>43</sup> Hebrews 12:9.

<sup>44</sup> Hebrews 2:14.

<sup>45</sup> Luering, loc. cit.

## CHAPTER III

### AN INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE TERM "FLESH" WITHIN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

The inductive study of the term flesh within the Pauline Epistles was divided into two parts. The first phase included a general survey of the Epistles. This was made to ascertain the varied meanings which Paul gave the word sarx in his writings. The second phase was a more detailed study of those passages wherein Paul used sarx in setting forth his doctrine of sin and salvation from sin. This chapter includes the results of the entire investigation of the Apostle Paul's use of the term flesh or sarx.

#### I. A GENERAL SURVEY

##### OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S USE OF THE TERM "FLESH"

According to Joseph Henry Thayer,<sup>1</sup> the word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  seems to have been derived from the verb  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omega$  which is related to  $\sigma\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ . The latter ( $\sigma\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ ) means "to draw" or "to draw off," and  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$  signifies what can be stripped off from the bones. With this as a brief explanation of the word  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\varsigma$ , the results of the general survey of Paul's use of the word flesh will be presented.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: Harper, 1889), p. 569.

Because many people have the mistaken idea that words in the Scriptures always have the same meaning, no matter where they are found, it was important to show that such a conclusion is not always entirely valid. The purpose was not to present every fine distinction which might be possible, nor to enter into needless arguments, but rather to show that the Apostle Paul did not always mean exactly the same thing each time he used the term sarx.

First of all, Paul used the term flesh (sarx) to designate the soft substance, permeated with blood, which forms the covering of the bones of the human body.<sup>2</sup> Only once did Paul ever use sarx to designate other than human flesh in this respect.<sup>3</sup> In several of the passages of Scripture noted above,<sup>4</sup> he used sarx in relation to the Jewish rite of circumcision, which was performed on a portion of the fleshy part of the human body.<sup>5</sup> In Galatians 4:13-14, Paul used sarx when referring to an infirmity in his physical body: "an infirmity of the flesh."<sup>6</sup> From this very real and initial use of the term, sarx came to mean by

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Romans 2:28; II Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 4:13-14; 6:12-13; Ephesians 2:11; Colossians 2:13.

<sup>3</sup> I Corinthians 15:39.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Romans 2:28; Galatians 6:12-13; Ephesians 2:11.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Galatians 6:12-13; Ephesians 2:11.

synecdoche the whole body itself. Paul used sarx in reference to his whole body in Galatians 2:20 when he spoke of "that life which I now live in the flesh." It is even possible that a few of the above references may have included in them something of this same idea. Thus the transition in meaning, from a purely fleshy portion to the whole body, is evident and has been acknowledged by most lexicographers.<sup>7</sup>

In connection with this use of sarx as equivalent to the body (sōma), Marvin R. Vincent made a very helpful observation in his study of the two Greek words.

Sarx differs from σῶμα in that, it can only signify the organism of an earthly, living being consisting of flesh and bones, and cannot denote 'either an earthly organism that is not living, or a living organism that is not earthly'.<sup>8</sup>

This limitation of the word sarx, set forth by Vincent in the above quotation, was not true in connection with the term sōma. Sōma was sometimes used to denote both the organism of the plant<sup>9</sup> and the celestial bodies.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 569-571. Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner, 1908), III, 74-77. Hermann Cremer, Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, trans. Wm. Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), pp. 844-856.

<sup>8</sup> Vincent, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., I Corinthians 15:37-38.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., I Corinthians 15:40.



Hence the two conceptions are related as general and special: σῶμα body, being the material organism apart from any definite matter (not from any sort of matter), σάρξ flesh, the definite, earthly, animal organism. The two are synonymous when σῶμα is used, from the context, of an earthly, animal body. Compare Philip. i. 22; 2 Cor. v. 1-8.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to its use in reference to the whole body of man, sarx was also used to mean the whole living being, the man, who, in his nature, was distinct from God and all other non-terrestrial beings.<sup>12</sup> The term πᾶσα σάρξ (all flesh) was used as the equivalent to "all men."<sup>13</sup> In this same class may be included the combination σάρξ καὶ αἷμα (flesh and blood) which carries practically the same meaning as πᾶσα σάρξ (all flesh).<sup>14</sup> The Apostle Paul used the term sarx to designate the whole man, the human family as a unit, or human nature without reference to specific individuals.<sup>15</sup> He also used sarx to denote natural or physical relationship, especially relation to the Jewish segment of the human race.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Vincent, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Cremer, op. cit., pp. 853-854.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Friedrich Schmid, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (third edition; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), p. 448. Cf. Romans 3:20; I Corinthians 1:29; Galatians 2:16.

<sup>14</sup> Cremer, op. cit., p. 354. Cf. Galatians 1:16; I Corinthians 15:50; Ephesians 6:12.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Romans 1:3; 3:20; 4:1; Galatians 1:16; 2:16.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Romans 1:3; 9:3, 5; 11:14; Galatians 4:23, 29; I Corinthians 10:18. Cf. Vincent, loc. cit.

In Romans 4:1 and Galatians 2:16 the word sarx was used in the ethical sense. "The word 'flesh' here denotes man's incapacity for good apart from divine aid."<sup>17</sup> In these verses, Paul meant that sinful man could not be justified apart from faith in God. "We see, then, that the meaning of the word flesh was . . . gradually extended from the physical to a metaphysical, and finally to an ethical sense."<sup>18</sup>

Since this general investigation showed that the Apostle Paul used the word sarx to express different phases of truth, depending upon the setting in which it was found, it also made evident the fact that every true Bible student should be careful to rightly understand the Apostle's use in each instance. Unless these distinctions are made, Paul will be misunderstood and grievous error may result. From a review of Scriptural passages which have been cited, it seemed evident that "no definition of the sarx can be given which will be equally applicable to all the uses which Paul makes of the word."<sup>19</sup> Sometimes Paul had in mind just the physical body, either in part or as a whole. In other

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<sup>17</sup> John McClintock and James Strong, "Flesh," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, III, 594.

<sup>18</sup> Loc. cit. Cf. Thayer, op. cit., p. 571.

<sup>19</sup> George Barker Stevens, Theology of the New Testament (International Theological Library. New York: Charles Scribner, 1899), p. 342.

references the whole man was intended. In still others he rose above the individual man and meant, in a generic sense, the human family. When Paul used sarx in relation to sin or salvation, he sometimes gave it an ethical meaning.

## II. DETAILED STUDY OF THE MORE PERTINENT PASSAGES

In the previous section of this chapter it was shown that the Apostle Paul gave several different meanings to the term flesh (sarx). That phase of the investigation was made to set forth the fact that when Paul used sarx in one place, in speaking of the human body, it did not necessarily mean that the same definition or interpretation would be true in other passages of his writings. Following the general survey of the Pauline Epistles, a study was made of those Scriptures wherein Paul identified sarx with the sin problem of man. The report of that investigation will be presented in this section.

Certain individual verses of Paul's writings were not given much prominence, in order that the more important areas might be given special emphasis. The passages in Paul's writings which most clearly present his doctrine of sin in relation to the word flesh are: Romans, chapters seven and eight and Galatians, chapter five. The detailed study centered around these Scriptures in particular. Other passages were investigated when it was felt that they would

furnish additional light.

Romans, chapter seven. In Romans 7:5, Paul used the word sarx in the following phrase: "when we were in the flesh." Whatever he meant by the flesh in this verse it was a situation or condition of the past, and the Greek verb ἦμεν, being imperfect, indicated a continuing state in past time.<sup>20</sup> According to Chr. Wordsworth, Paul meant by ἐν τῇ σαρκί "while we were in the carnal state. . . . When we were as yet in a carnal state, and had not as yet received the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . ." <sup>21</sup> D. D. Whedon said Paul meant: "when we were unregenerate, before our conversion."<sup>22</sup> A. M. Hills believed that Paul described the state of the unregenerate.<sup>23</sup>

In verse fourteen of this chapter Paul stated: "I am carnal, sold under sin." The Greek word used here was sarkinos which meant "not carnal in action but carnal 'in nature'."<sup>24</sup> Paul made his meaning even clearer in verse

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<sup>20</sup> J. Gresham Machen, New Testament Greek for Beginners (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> Chr. Wordsworth, The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Original Greek (new edition; London: Rivington's, 1877), II, 233.

<sup>22</sup> D. D. Whedon, Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1871), III, 334.

<sup>23</sup> A. M. Hills, Establishing Grace (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene [n.d.]), p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

eighteen, when he said: "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." According to Paul, an alien element or principle was present in his life, which he called the "sin which dwelleth in me."<sup>25</sup> He found himself enslaved by this principle of sin, and because of this slavery he called himself "carnal" (sarkinos).

This blind slave works out the will of his master, follows the blind instincts of corrupted nature which drags him along into evil, and when he sees the result he abhors it.

Here begins the battle of the I's. It is the corrupt I of carnality and indwelling sin asserting its law in the members, and overwhelming the I of conscience, awakened by the Spirit. What I wickedly do, I consciously ALLOW NOT. He has in him a tyrant who forces him to act in opposition to his better wishes. What humiliation! What misery!<sup>26</sup>

Paul contrasted sarx and nous (mind) in this seventh chapter,<sup>27</sup> and stated that because he was under the power of the sin principle, he was in the flesh. He did not say his body or his human nature was necessarily sinful and carnal, but rather that they were in that condition because of the sin which dwelt in him. The problem as to whether Paul depicted his regenerate or unregenerate state will not be discussed here beyond the following quotation from the Greek exegete and lexicographer, Marvin R. Vincent.

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<sup>25</sup> Romans 7:17.

<sup>26</sup> Hills, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> George Allen Turner, "Is Entire Sanctification Scriptural?" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Harvard University, March, 1946), p. 71.

I hold that in this chapter, Paul is describing the condition, not of the regenerate man struggling for sanctification, but the unregenerate. . . . 'It was once my true self, it is no more my true self which works the will of sin.' Dr. Dixon says: 'Hardly any recent exegete of mark, except Philippi and Delitzsch, lends countenance to the view that Paul is depicting the experiences of the believer under grace in conflict with sin'.<sup>28</sup>

According to Paul, in verse twenty-four, deliverance from being "in the flesh" was possible "through Jesus Christ our Lord".

Romans, chapter eight. In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul contrasted sarx, not with the human mind as in chapter seven, but with the Spirit, the Spirit of God. Verse three of this chapter revealed the need for careful discrimination concerning sarx, when Paul said that Jesus came in flesh, but not in sinful flesh (or flesh of sin). Jesus partook of human nature, actually and really, but it was a nature free from the pollution of sin common to the descendants of Adam.<sup>29</sup> "The flesh (sarx) here means 'the seat of passion and frailty,' and then figuratively, 'the carnal and rebellious principle itself' (Clarke)."<sup>30</sup>

Paul contrasted the "mind of the flesh" with the

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<sup>28</sup> Vincent, op. cit., p. 81. Cf. Hills, op. cit., pp. 50-58. Joseph Agar Beet, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans (sixth edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1887), pp. 217-222.

<sup>29</sup> Vincent, op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>30</sup> Hills, op. cit., p. 67.

"mind of the Spirit" in verse six; the difference between them being that the former was "death," while the latter was "life and peace." "To live under the influence of the carnal mind is to live in the state of condemnation, and consequently liable to death eternal . . ."<sup>31</sup> The Apostle gave the reason for this great difference between the flesh and the Spirit when, in verse seven, he said: "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." Here Paul identified the mind of the flesh with the principle of sin. The very essence of sin is irreconcilable and implacable hatred, and Paul said that the mind of the flesh could not be subjected to the law of God.

As it is not subject, and cannot be subject to the law of God, it must be destroyed, else it will continue to rebel against God. It cannot be mended, or rendered less offensive in its nature, even by the operations of God; it is ever sin, and sin is ever enmity . . .<sup>32</sup>

In verse eight Paul explained that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Here the word flesh could not possibly mean "body," for Jesus dwelt in a physical body and yet was without sin. Neither could flesh mean essential human nature, because Jesus not only took upon Himself a human body, but He also indwelt human nature. Thus, the

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<sup>31</sup> Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, with a Commentary and Critical Notes (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury [n.d.]), VI, 95.

<sup>32</sup> Loc. cit.

best interpretation seemed to be that Paul meant, by the phrase "in the flesh," to be in subjection to the sin principle.<sup>33</sup> Paul believed that a person in subjection to the principle of sin could not please God. He said, in verse nine: "ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Since these two principles, according to the Apostle, were opposed, the Spirit of God could not dwell in the life of a man unless the mind of the flesh was first removed. "This principle of sin that infests our being must be condemned, and executed, so that we may be wholly loyal and well-pleasing to God."<sup>34</sup> Apparently Paul used the term flesh (sarx) to identify the principle of sin which, when operative in the life of the individual, made him unpleasing to God.

Galatians, chapter five. In Galatians 5:17, Paul personified sarx as he used it in opposition to the Spirit (Holy Spirit).<sup>35</sup> Here he presented the flesh as lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. According to verse thirteen, Paul was writing to Christians,

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<sup>33</sup> Hills, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>35</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament (New York: Harper, 1931), IV, 311.



to believers who had accepted Christ as their Savior.<sup>36</sup> However, in verse sixteen, he warned the people to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Apparently a battle between the flesh and the Spirit was being waged in some believers.

In the unregenerate, the conflict was really between the mind and the flesh, whereas in the regenerate it was a conflict between the flesh and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the flesh could not mean unregenerate human nature, but necessarily referred to the principle of sin which was not removed in regeneration. Paul did not say that the believer was lusting against the Spirit, but rather that the flesh was lusting against the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:19-23, Paul contrasted the "works of the flesh" with the "fruit of the Spirit," and included in this list several categories which were purely moral and not physical. These were "enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties (or heresies), envyings." Also, in Romans 13:13-14, Paul listed "strife and jealousy" as works of the flesh to be renounced. In First Corinthians 3:3, Paul called his readers "carnal" (σαρκικός )

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<sup>36</sup> Otto Schmoller, Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, trans. C. C. Starbuck, ed. by M. B. Riddle (vol. VII, John Peter Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, trans. Philip Schaff, seventh edition, 24 vols.; New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 18 - ), pp. 140, 144.

because of their jealousy and strife.<sup>37</sup> From these verses, it became apparent that Paul believed that the Christian, who still possessed this flesh, needed to take great care to walk in the Spirit and not give way to the desires of the carnal principle.

Paul presented the fact of warfare between the flesh and the Spirit, and warned the Galatians that whosoever practiced the works of the flesh would not inherit the Kingdom of God.<sup>38</sup> However, he did not leave them with the idea that this was a condition or state which must exist throughout the earthly life. Rather he presented the fact that while this was the condition of many believers, it was not the ideal situation. In Galatians 5:24, Paul explained the means whereby the believer could be freed from this warfare: "And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."

The verb here is not the perfect . . . but the aorist, which does not denote time, but instantaneity and completion, setting forth the fact that all the elect of Christ were legally crucified with Him, which is in due time verified by grace being summarily executed and completed in a moment.<sup>39</sup>

The verb comes from *σταυρώω* and implies destruction

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<sup>37</sup> Turner, loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Galatians 5:21b.

<sup>39</sup> W. B. Godbey, Commentary on the New Testament (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1899), IV, 534.

accompanied with intense pain.<sup>40</sup> According to Paul, even though it was not allowed to express itself in "works", the believer did not need to live with the flesh present. He could crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts and thus live and walk by the Spirit.<sup>41</sup>

Deductions. As a result of this more detailed study of Paul's usage of the term flesh, certain conclusions were reached.

1. Paul did not identify the body and sin.

2. Paul did not identify sarx with the material body. Neither did he associate sin exclusively and predominately with the body.

3. Paul sometimes used sarx as an equivalent to human nature (body, soul, and spirit), separated from God, and under the dominion of the principle of indwelling sin.

4. There was also evidence that when Paul used sarx as "enmity with God," as having a "mind," as having "affections and lusts," as having "works," and as lusting "against the Spirit," he had in mind more the idea of a principle which could in no wise be subjected to the law of God, but one that must be eradicated, destroyed, crucified: inbred sin, inherited depravity, the body of sin. If the

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<sup>40</sup> H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1946), II, 448.

<sup>41</sup> Galatians 5:25.

flesh was not always essentially identified with the body or human nature, then the way was left open for deliverance from "the flesh" in which man "cannot please God."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Romans 8:8. III.

## CHAPTER IV

### A SURVEY OF THE THEOLOGICAL USAGE OF THE TERM "FLESH"

In the previous chapter<sup>1</sup> evidence was set forth showing that, within his Epistles, Paul gave several different meanings to the term flesh (sarx). Following the inductive study of Paul's use of the word flesh, a survey was made of the versions which some of the leading theologians have given to his usage of the flesh. The study was confined primarily to the interpretations concerning Romans, chapters seven and eight and Galatians, chapter five.

The first section of this chapter contains the results of the survey made of the non-Wesleyan writers. The second section contains the results of the study of representative writers who followed the tradition of John Wesley. Some outstanding theologians did not preserve in writing their interpretations of Paul's use of the term flesh, and, therefore, it was impossible to include them in this report. An effort was made, however, to include only men of influence.

#### I. BY NON-WESLEYAN WRITERS

Charles Hodge (1797-1878). Charles Hodge was the

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III.

chief figure in the group of theologians known as the Princeton School. Ranked as "the most internationally known and influential Calvinist theologian in the United States since the days of Jonathan Edwards,"<sup>2</sup> he was a professor in Princeton Theological Seminary from 1822 to 1878.<sup>3</sup>

Hodge rejected the idea of the Apostle Paul using the word flesh in an evil sense, in the doctrinal portions of his Epistles, when he referred to the physical body or the merely sensuous nature of man.<sup>4</sup> Rather, he believed that by the flesh, unless the word was limited by the context, Paul meant "our fallen nature, i.e., our nature as it is in itself, apart from the Spirit of God."<sup>5</sup> Sometimes carnal meant "to be entirely or exclusively under the control of the flesh or fallen nature." In other instances, it was applicable to those who, although under the dominion of the Spirit, were still polluted and influenced by the flesh.<sup>6</sup> "When we speak of 'saints and sinners' we do not mean that saints, such as they are in this world, are not sinners."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vergilius Ferm, editor, Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Hodge, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (new edition; New York: Robert Carter, 1886), p. 359.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), III, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> Hodge, Romans, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

Charles Hodge interpreted Romans, chapter seven, as Paul's description of the experience of a true believer. He said the passage was inconsistent with the experience of unrenewed men.<sup>8</sup> The conflict between the mind and the flesh in this chapter was not that of the reason opposed to the sensual passions, but rather, the higher, renewed principle opposed to the law in the members, or indwelling corruption. In this relation, the flesh meant indwelling sin.<sup>9</sup> Although Hodge believed that by the flesh Paul meant corrupt nature or indwelling sin, he denied that there was any deliverance from this corruption in the earthly life.

The doctrine of Lutherans and Reformed . . . is, that sanctification is never perfected in this life; that sin is not in any case entirely subdued; so that the most advanced believer has need as long as he continues in the flesh, daily to pray for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>10</sup>

The conflict in Galatians 5:16-18, was interpreted by Hodge as the description of the experience of the true believer, and he believed this conflict to be identical with the one described in the seventh chapter of Romans.<sup>11</sup>

Concerning Galatians 5:24, Hodge said:

. . . they [the believers] have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. They have renounced the authority of the evil principle; they do not willingly,

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<sup>8</sup> Hodge, Systematic Theology, op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>9</sup> Hodge, Romans, op. cit., pp. 375-376.

<sup>10</sup> Hodge, Systematic Theology, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>11</sup> Hodge, Romans, op. cit., p. 381.

or of set purpose, or habitually yield to it. They struggle against it, although it may die a long and painful death.<sup>12</sup>

According to Hodge's theology, the flesh, although crucified, was never actually put to death in this life.

The following is one example of what at least appeared to be inconsistencies in Charles Hodge's theology. In one place he made the statement: "Salvation in sin, according to Paul's system, is a contradiction of terms."<sup>13</sup> Later, in the same book, he said the believer found that "he is often, even daily, overcome so as to sin in thought, word, and deed . . ."<sup>14</sup> Although Hodge identified the flesh and indwelling sin, his conception of salvation prevented him from seeing any real escape from the flesh in the present life.

Julius Müller (1801-1878). An influential European theologian, contemporary with Charles Hodge in America, was Julius Müller. During the middle years of the nineteenth century he was professor of theology in the University of Halle-Wittenberg in Germany.<sup>15</sup> In the first volume of his

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<sup>12</sup> Hodge, Systematic Theology, op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>15</sup> Ferm, op. cit., p. 570.



work on the doctrine of sin,<sup>16</sup> Müller set forth his interpretation of Paul's use of the term flesh, in relation to the doctrine of sin and salvation.

Müller said that when sarx was used to refer to the outward sphere of human existence, as distinct from the inward, or to human life, as distinct from the divine life in God, it did not carry the ethical meaning.<sup>17</sup> The ethical meaning was only included when Paul's usage passed beyond the bounds of the Old Testament use of bāsar (flesh), and "when that necessary and sinless distinction becomes a separation and an actual opposition."<sup>18</sup> Sarx

. . . is now no longer a special, yet perfectly legitimate, department of human life; it denotes a tendency, that tendency which turns towards the things of the world in desire and in lust, and is thereby turned away from God.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, Müller believed that when sarx was used in relation to the sinfulness of man it denoted a tendency toward things opposed to God.

Julius Müller opposed those theologians who interpreted Paul as positing evil or sin in man's body or his sensual nature, and denied that Paul used sarx to denote

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<sup>16</sup> Julius Müller, Christian Doctrine of Sin, trans. William Urwick (Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Vol. 1. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885), I.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>18</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 325-326.

the sensuous nature.<sup>20</sup>

Müller interpreted the sarx in Galatians 5:13-25 as meaning man's habit of life and conduct in this present world. Thus, it was man's habit of life which was to be crucified, and not the sensuous nature.<sup>21</sup> He believed the antagonism between the flesh and the Spirit<sup>22</sup> had reference to the life of the regenerate. He confined the meaning of sarx in Romans 7:18 to the non-moral natural part of human nature. "It denotes the whole outward and manifest life of the man, his worldly life in all its bearings."<sup>23</sup>

Although Julius Müller did not identify sarx and the human body, or man's sensuous nature, it was doubtful, to this investigator, if he ever actually identified sarx and indwelling sin. However, he came very close to the idea, and recognized a close connection between sin and sarx. He called sarx a moral principle,<sup>24</sup> and said that it was "not a merely anthropological notion, its meaning is to be found in the depths of the religious consciousness."<sup>25</sup> In his final analysis, the flesh was human nature itself, alien to God

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 321-322.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>22</sup> Romans 8:5-8 and Galatians 5:13-24.

<sup>23</sup> Müller, op. cit., p. 330.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

and a servant of all that was worldly.<sup>26</sup>

George Barker Stevens (1854-1906). George Barker Stevens was professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School from 1886 to 1906. While he was not entirely representative of the Reformed tradition in some of his views, he nevertheless was an influential man in the field of New Testament theology. If not a true representative of Reformed theology, he was at least, to a certain extent, a product of it. One biographer called him "an esteemed teacher and contributor to New Testament theology."<sup>27</sup>

Stevens believed that in certain instances Paul used sarx as man's creaturely weakness in contrast to God. However, he rejected the idea that this interpretation was true in Paul's usage as a whole. Stevens believed first that Paul's ontological dualism of flesh and spirit easily emerged into an ethical dualism.<sup>28</sup> This idea was further developed in his interpretation of Romans 7:18-25. The terms "the good will," "the inward man," "the mind," or the "law of the mind," were interpreted by Stevens as synonyms of τὸ πνεῦμα (the spirit). Therefore, the conflict

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<sup>26</sup> Julius Müller, Christian Doctrine of Sin, trans. William Urwick (Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Vol. 2. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885), II, 277.

<sup>27</sup> Ferm, op. cit., p. 735.

<sup>28</sup> George Barker Stevens, Theology of the New Testament (International Theological Library. New York: Charles Scribner, 1899), p. 342.

between the flesh and the spirit was not one between a sinful nature and the Spirit of God. Rather, Stevens interpreted the spirit as that immaterial and imperishable part of man which related him to the eternal world. This human spirit thus stood in opposition to the corruptible flesh which had no future.<sup>29</sup>

The flesh is subject to decay, but the spirit is kindred to God, and bears within itself the potency of an endless life. Hence to live or walk according to the spirit means to cultivate the higher nature and to realize the life of fellowship with God.<sup>30</sup>

Stevens always identified Paul's use of the term "spirit" with the "higher nature," rather than with the Holy Spirit.

But wherever the contrast between flesh and spirit is spoken of in connection with the moral and religious life, the basis of that contrast is the conflict in human nature, as it actually is, between sensuous impulses which become incentives to wrong choice and action, and the higher moral nature which knows and approves the right.<sup>31</sup>

For Stevens the flesh became a synonym for the lower nature of man in general. He believed that Paul never identified the flesh and sin.<sup>32</sup> Since Stevens always identified the word sarx with the body or sensuous nature, it was understandable that the flesh and sin would not be identified.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>30</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

The following is a summary of George Barker Steven's interpretations of Paul's use of the term sarx.

1. Primarily, sarx referred to the material body, generally considered as the seat of impulses which became motives to sin. Sometimes it was a symbol of creaturely weakness.

2. Sensuous appetites and passions might enter into natural alliance with sins of disposition. Thus, sarx became a synonym for the lower nature of man, in contrast to the better self, or the moral and religious nature.<sup>33</sup> "Metaphysically considered, the flesh is neutral; empirically considered it is sinful."<sup>34</sup>

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937). J. Gresham Machen was professor of New Testament Greek at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1905 to 1929. He left Princeton because of theological differences and founded the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Machen was not a theologian in the strictest sense of the word, but, as a student of New Testament Greek, he was a great defender of the Christian faith and Calvinistic theology.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 346-347.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>35</sup> Ferm, op. cit., p. 460.

When he interpreted those portions of the Epistles of Paul in which the flesh was presented as an evil thing, Machen rejected the idea that Paul thought the human body was necessarily sinful.<sup>36</sup> He also rejected the view that the conflict between flesh and spirit was between the physical and the spiritual part of man's nature. In those passages wherein this conflict was set forth, he said the flesh "designates not the physical nature of man or the animal nature of man, but the whole nature of man, as that nature now is, in its fallen condition, separate from God."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit was a conflict between the man and the Spirit of God.

Machen interpreted First Corinthians 3:3 as having reference to those Christians who were walking according to men and were thus carnal or fleshly. Those Corinthians were therefore people who were controlled, or acted as if they were controlled, by their fallen human nature rather than by the Spirit of God.<sup>38</sup> J. Gresham Machen did not believe that Paul ever used the flesh as equivalent to indwelling sin. To him, the flesh designated "all of man's nature, in its

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<sup>36</sup> J. Gresham Machen, Christian View of Man (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 213.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 215-216.

present sinful state, as over against the divine holiness."<sup>39</sup>

H. A. Ironside (1876-1951). H. A. Ironside was professor of Biblical Literature at the Evangelical Theological College, in Dallas, Texas, from 1925 to 1931. In 1930 he became pastor of the Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>40</sup> For several years he was a member of the Salvation Army, and during this time he earnestly sought the experience of entire sanctification. When he failed to realize such an experience in his own life, he resigned from the "Army," and later became a promoter of the doctrine of the two natures theory of Christian experience. According to this theory, every believer has two natures: the old carnal, Adamic nature, as well as a new divine nature implanted by God in regeneration.<sup>41</sup>

Ironside declared that the conflict between these two natures was the experience of every believer. He cited Paul's teaching in Galatians 5:16-17 as proof of his claim, by interpreting the flesh to mean "not the body of the believer, but the carnal nature."<sup>42</sup> In these verses, according to Ironside, Paul taught that every Christian must

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>40</sup> Who's Who in America, 1940-1941 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis, 1940), p. 1362.

<sup>41</sup> H. A. Ironside, Holiness, the False and the True (New York: Loizeaux [n.d.]), pp. 125 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

experience this conflict. He said Paul gave no instruction as to how the flesh might be eliminated: the Christian was simply told to walk in the Spirit and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.<sup>43</sup> He apparently failed to recognize the truth of Galatians 5:24: "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof."

The conflict presented by Paul in Romans, chapter seven, was interpreted by Ironside as undoubtedly the experience of a child of God, and probably the experience of the Apostle Paul himself.

Paul is describing the inevitable conflict that every believer knows when he undertakes to lead a holy life on the principle of legality. He feels instinctively that the law is spiritual, but that he himself, for some unexplained reason, is fleshly, or carnal, in bondage to sin. . . . He finds himself doing things he knows to be wrong, and which his inmost desires are opposed to; while what he yearns to do he fails to accomplish, and does, instead, what he hates.<sup>44</sup>

What Ironside may have meant when he called the flesh the carnal nature was not entirely clear to this investigator. He never clearly defined the term. However, carnal nature, according to his theory, was an essential part of man's earthly existence, and could not be eliminated in this life. Certainly, in this interpretation, man could not be freed from indwelling sin while in his earthly body.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-127.



What a relief it is, after the vain effort to eradicate sin from the flesh, when I learn that God has condemned it in the flesh, and will in His own good time free me from its presence, when at the Lord's return He shall change these vile bodies and make them like His own glorious body. Then redemption will be complete.<sup>45</sup>

## II. BY WESLEYAN WRITERS

John Wesley (1703-1791). John Wesley was a graduate of Oxford (Christ Church) and Fellow of Lincoln College, England. He was a thorough scholar, as well as an expert linguist and grammarian. He was the leader of the Eighteenth Century Awakening in England and revived the Biblical doctrine of entire sanctification by faith.

Wesley was not a theologian in the strictest sense of the word, but was more of a Bible expositor and preacher. He did not, however, ignore theology, but since his writings were of an expositive nature, he did not always systematize his doctrines as well as his followers might have desired. Wesley was included in this survey because he was the originator of the movement which bears his name--the Wesleyan Movement.

John Wesley said that the flesh, in the usual language of the Apostle Paul, signified corrupt nature.. He rejected the idea that a phrase such as "they that are in the flesh" meant those who were in the physical body. He

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

said it no more meant the body than it did the soul. Rather he felt that Paul meant that such people were unbelievers, in their natural state, and without God in the world.<sup>46</sup> Wesley interpreted Romans, chapter seven, as an account of the experience, not of a regenerate Christian, but of a man in his natural state, before he believed in Christ. Therefore, in this chapter, the flesh signified the whole man apart from God.<sup>47</sup>

Wesley's interpretation of Paul's use of the term flesh, in relation to its conflict with the Spirit, also gave, most clearly, his own concept of the term. Wesley recognized that, even in believers, the flesh, or evil nature, was opposed to the Holy Spirit. He said the works of the flesh, as Paul referred to them in Galatians 5:19-21, were the manifestations through which the inward principle of corrupt nature was discovered.<sup>48</sup>

Some of the works here mentioned are wrought principally, if not entirely, in the mind. And yet they are called works of the flesh--Hence it is clear, the Apostle does not by the flesh mean the body, or sensual appetites and inclinations only, but the corruption of human nature, as it spreads through all the powers of the soul, as well as the members of the body.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions (New York: Phillips & Hunt [n.d.]), II, 172.

<sup>47</sup> John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (eighteenth edition; New York: Eaton & Mains [n.d.]), pp. 379-380.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 485.

<sup>49</sup> Loc. cit.

John Wesley identified the flesh, or corrupt nature, as Paul used it in relation to sin and salvation, with "the root of bitterness,"<sup>50</sup> "inward sin,"<sup>51</sup> "the corruption of human nature,"<sup>52</sup> and "that inward principle."<sup>53</sup> He believed the flesh could be crucified.

True believers in him [Christ], have thus crucified the flesh--Nailed it, as it were, to a cross, whence it has no power to break loose, but is continually weaker and weaker . . .<sup>54</sup>

William Burt Pope (1822-1903). William Burt Pope studied theology at Richmond College, England. After serving as a Methodist pastor from 1841 to 1867, he became professor of theology in Didsbury College, Manchester, England.<sup>55</sup>

Pope, one of the leading Wesleyan theologians of the nineteenth century, identified the flesh or sarx as fallen human nature. Flesh was the whole being of man (body, soul, and spirit), separated from God and subjected to the

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<sup>50</sup> John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions (New York: Phillips & Hunt [n.d.]), I, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Wesley, Notes, loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>55</sup> "Pope, William Burt," New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1911 edition, IX, 133.

creature.<sup>56</sup> He seemed to feel that Paul's admission that he was carnal or fleshly was a pointing to an inherent quality of fallen nature. Flesh, therefore, became a designation of depraved humanity, enslaved to sense.<sup>57</sup> However, Pope was not too clear in setting forth his interpretation of Paul's use of the term flesh, and whether or not he ever actually identified sarx and corruption, or indwelling sin, was questionable. One statement, concerning Galatians 5:24, seemed to hint that he may have come very close to the idea, even if he did not make the identification: "Here the union is the continuous mortification and death of the old man or the corrupt nature, signified by flesh, still remaining in the believer."<sup>58</sup>

William Burt Pope was a very strong exponent of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, and believed that Christians could be made holy in this present life.

Henry E. Brockett (      -      ). Henry E. Brockett is a present-day minister in England. As an exponent of the Wesleyan interpretation of Bible holiness, he has both defended and proclaimed the doctrine of "Scriptural Freedom from Sin."

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<sup>56</sup> William Burt Pope, Compendium of Christian Theology (New York: Phillips & Hunt [n.d.]), II, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

Brockett, who so capably challenged H. A. Ironside's unscriptural presentation of holiness,<sup>59</sup> interpreted Paul's use of the word flesh in a somewhat different manner than did John Wesley. He said the flesh was never used by Paul as a synonym for indwelling sin.<sup>60</sup> Although the flesh and the sin were closely related they were never to be used interchangeably. Rather, according to Brockett, the flesh, in the Pauline sense of the word, was simply human nature in its fallen condition and was regarded as being apart from divine grace.

Thus 'the flesh' includes spirit, soul, body, reason, affections, appetites, but there is 'a hateful intruder' within--the sin in the flesh--and this 'sin' exercises its sway over the whole man. When therefore 'the flesh' is spoken of in the evil sense as in Galatians 5:17 and 19, it means human nature, as a whole, regarded as apart from divine grace, and, as such, the seat of sin and the sphere in which sin exerts its power in antagonism to God.<sup>61</sup>

Having accepted this view as the only interpretation of Paul's use of the word flesh, Brockett then denied that there was any instruction in the Epistle to the Galatians pertaining to the elimination or destruction of the flesh. He argued that, since the flesh, in its full meaning, included human nature, God would not destroy the flesh,

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<sup>59</sup> Ironside, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup> Henry E. Brockett, Scriptural Freedom from Sin (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1941), p. 121.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 122-123.

because He would not eliminate human nature.<sup>62</sup>

Brockett was forced, by this very real connection of the sarx and human nature, to interpret the conflict in Galatians 5:17 as an actual one, between the believer and the Holy Spirit. He said this conflict with the Spirit could only be remedied by the "crucifixion" of the flesh. However, in interpreting Galatians 5:24, he was practically forced to a renunciation of the flesh, or human nature, because it was the seat of indwelling sin.

Looking upon 'the flesh,' that is, what he is in his fallen condition and apart altogether from divine grace, he sees in the Spirit's light, that 'the flesh' is the sphere and instrument of indwelling sin and, in effect, he says, 'Thou worthless "flesh" with all your affections and desires, the home of indwelling sin, I nail you to the cross. I do not own or recognize you.' It is the keen desire of the Spirit to bring the believer to this attitude to 'the flesh,' and when the believer is brought to this point he no longer antagonizes the Spirit, but is brought into harmony with the Spirit's desire and the state of conflict with the Spirit ceases.<sup>63</sup>

In spite of this view of the flesh, Henry E. Brockett is a great exponent and promoter of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification.

A. M. Hills (1848-1937). A. M. Hills is today considered one of the leading theologians in the holiness movement. Another outstanding promoter of the Wesleyan

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

doctrine of entire sanctification, he believed that God could deliver a man from all sin in this life.

Hills, in his interpretation of Paul's use of the term flesh in Romans 8:5-14, identified the flesh with the sin principle that dwelt within the unsaved or unsanctified man. Three short quotations from his writings will set forth his position.

'In the flesh,' like the phrase 'after the flesh,' means to be in subjection to this sin principle, which perverts and deranges all our sensibilities, prompting obedience to them rather than obedience to right reason, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup>

"The flesh, the sinful principle, possesses men, ruling sinners and tormenting unsanctified believers, opposing everything good within them."<sup>65</sup> "This principle of sin that infests our being must be condemned and executed, so that we may be wholly loyal and well-pleasing to God."<sup>66</sup>

A. M. Hills certainly believed, on the basis of his study of the Epistle to the Romans, that Paul sometimes identified sarx with the indwelling principle of sin.

H. Orton Wiley (1877- ). H. Orton Wiley is an outstanding theologian of the present-day Wesleyan movement. For many years president of Pasadena College in Pasadena,

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<sup>64</sup> A. M. Hills, Establishing Grace (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene [n.d.]), p. 72.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

California, he now holds the position of president emeritus. He is an ordained minister of the Church of the Nazarene, and a strong promoter of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification.

Wiley said Paul probably used the term flesh more than any other New Testament writer, and that, as he used it, he referred to the depraved nature of man--especially to the propagation of a corrupted nature.<sup>67</sup> In this connection he referred to such Scriptures as Romans 8:5, 8-9, 13; Galatians 5:24; and Romans 7:17-18. He also felt that the nature of inbred sin was that of a bondage of the higher nature to the lower nature.

This lower nature in its entire being--body, soul, and spirit--is called by Paul, the flesh or sarx (σαρξ). In this sense, the 'flesh' is the nature of man separated from God and become subject to the creature.<sup>68</sup>

Wiley appeared always to distinguish between the flesh and the principle of sin. The "works of the flesh" manifested a secret filthiness of the flesh. This filthiness, therefore, was the fountainhead, or source, of the outward carnal manifestations. Consequently, the filthiness, or inbred sin, as a principle, could only be known through the works of the flesh or depraved humanity.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1946), II, 100.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 139.



We have seen that the 'flesh' as St. Paul uses the term, includes both the spiritual and physical nature as under the reign of sin. The corruption extends to the body as well as the soul. The depravity of his spiritual nature may be removed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but the infirmities of flesh will be removed only in the resurrection and glorification of the body.<sup>70</sup>

According to H. Orton Wiley's development, thus far, of Paul's use of the term flesh, he did not believe that Paul ever used the term as an equivalent to inbred sin, the evil principle and intruder into human nature. Later, however, in the same book, he referred again to Galatians 5:24, where Paul said: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." In his interpretation of this verse, Wiley said:

A distinction is made here between the carnal mind as the principle of sin, and the works of the flesh which flow from it. These works of the flesh are put off in conversion. But now the carnal mind itself, as the underlying principle of sin (the flesh or σάρξ with its inordinate affections and outreachings, which though existing are not allowed to express themselves in works, or actual sinning) is to be crucified (from στυγνάζω implying destruction accompanied with intense pain).<sup>71</sup>

The thought seemed warranted, from this statement, that Wiley believed Paul sometimes used sarx or flesh to designate the carnal mind or principle of sin. In other instances, he apparently believed that Paul used the term to mean depraved human nature. He recognized that the flesh (σάρξ, not σῶμα or body) was to be crucified, and that the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 448.

use of the aorist tense ( $\epsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\upsilon\rho\omega\sigma\alpha\iota$ ) indicated a single definite and completed act.<sup>72</sup>

### III. CONCLUSION

Certain conclusions were reached during this survey of the theological usage of the term flesh, and they have been summarized in this section.

Non-Wesleyan writers. Study of the non-Wesleyan theologians revealed the following facts.

1. Most of these writers did not actually, in their writings, identify the flesh and the human body as Paul used sarx in connection with sin. However, George Allen Turner said:

The Augustinian interpretation, preserved in Lutheranism and Calvinism, by its identification of the 'flesh' and the 'body,' necessitates the deferring of deliverance from sin until the next life when the body is no longer a hindrance.<sup>73</sup>

2. Some non-Wesleyan writers identified the flesh with fallen human nature, from which deliverance must be deferred until the future life.

3. Some non-Wesleyan writers, if the words they used rightly convey their meaning, did believe that Paul used the

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<sup>72</sup> Wiley, loc. cit.

<sup>73</sup> George Allen Turner, "Is Entire Sanctification Scriptural?" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Harvard University, March, 1946), p. 73.

term flesh to identify the corrupt principle of indwelling sin, the intruder into human nature. However, their doctrine, that sin could not be separated from the believer in this life, caused them to deny any possible deliverance from the flesh in which man cannot please God.

Wesleyan writers. Investigation of the Wesleyan writers brought forth the following information.

1. The Wesleyan writers denied that Paul taught that the human body was essentially sinful.

2. Some of the Wesleyan writers limited Paul's use of the flesh to the depraved human nature, apart from God. A few writers interpreted the flesh as essential human nature and denied any deliverance from the flesh in this life. In this relation, they did not identify sarx with sin, but taught that sin could be separated from the flesh or human nature.

3. Other Wesleyan writers identified the flesh in Paul's usage as a designation for the principle of indwelling sin. They realized this was not the only meaning for the flesh, but rather that it was frequently used in this manner.

4. Although the Wesleyan writers essentially agreed that sin could be separated from believers in this life, they did not always agree concerning Paul's use of the term flesh. Also, their interpretations have not always been carefully defined. Some tried to make one meaning of sarx

stand for all of Paul's usage of the term. If the flesh (sarx) was not always identified as essential human nature, by Paul, then the way was left open for deliverance from the flesh which "lusts against the Spirit."

## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION OF THE WESLEYAN DOCTRINE OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IN RELATION TO THE TERM "FLESH"

The results of the inductive study of the Pauline Epistles and the investigation of the theological usage of the term flesh have been presented in previous chapters.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will contain the evaluation of the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification in relation to the term flesh. This critical evaluation was made for two reasons. First, to learn whether or not the traditional Wesleyan doctrine was Scriptural in its usage of the term flesh. Second, to ascertain whether or not the men who have followed the Wesleyan tradition have correctly set forth the Scriptural doctrine of the flesh.

The procedure in this phase of the study was as follows: (1) The doctrine of entire sanctification was defined; (2) Wesley's own understanding of the flesh in relation to his doctrine of entire sanctification was investigated; (3) A summary analysis was made of how Wesleyan writers have used the flesh; (4) Certain conclusions were reached and formulated.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapters III and IV.

## I. THE DOCTRINE DEFINED

Before the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification could be evaluated, it was necessary to define it. H. Orton Wiley had already defined it, carefully and completely, and his statement was the one used in this study.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.<sup>2</sup>

From this definition the following facts were noted.

1. Entire sanctification is a work of God.
2. Entire sanctification is subsequent to regeneration.
3. Entire sanctification is for believers.
4. Original sin continues to exist in unsanctified believers.
5. Believers need to be freed from original sin.
6. This work of God is instantaneously wrought by faith while the believer is in this present life.

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<sup>2</sup> H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1946), II, 466-467.

## II. WESLEY'S VIEW OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION AND THE FLESH

John Wesley's interpretation of the term flesh was presented in an earlier chapter of this study.<sup>3</sup> Wesley maintained that salvation consisted of two parts, justification and sanctification, both attainable, with faith as the only condition.<sup>4</sup> Justification was another term for forgiveness of sins, or pardon. Sanctification was the full salvation from the sin which remained in the believer after justification. Wesley taught that indwelling sin was "suspended" in justification, but was "destroyed" in entire sanctification.<sup>5</sup> George Allen Turner, in commenting on Wesley's sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," said: "In none of Wesley's writings are two 'works of grace' more clearly distinguished."<sup>6</sup>

Wesley distinguished sin in believers from actual sins, when he described it as pride, self-will, anger, unbelief, and the carnal mind.

The repentance consequent upon justification . . . implies no guilt. . . . It is properly a conviction,

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. ante, pp. 47-49.

<sup>4</sup> John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions (New York: Phillips & Hunt [n.d.]), I, 385.

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> George Allen Turner, "Is Entire Sanctification Scriptural?" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Harvard University, March, 1946), pp. 233-234.

wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the sin which still remains in our heart; of the φρόνημα σαρκός, the carnal mind, which 'does still remain. . . . even in them that are regenerate;' although it does no longer reign; it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proneness to evil, of a heart bent to backsliding, of the still continuing tendency of the flesh to lust against the Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

Here Wesley clearly identified the principle of indwelling sin with the "carnal mind," or the mind of the flesh, in the eighth chapter of Romans, as well as with the flesh which lusts against the Spirit as described in the fifth chapter of Galatians.<sup>8</sup>

The Apostle here Galatians 5:17 directly affirms that the flesh, evil nature, opposes the Spirit, even in believers; that even in the regenerate, there are two principles, 'contrary the one to the other.'<sup>9</sup>

Wesley firmly believed that the moment the believer exercised faith in God, for cleansing from this indwelling sin, the work was done.

To this confidence, that God is both able and willing to sanctify us now, there needs to be added one thing more, a divine evidence and conviction, that he doeth it. In that hour it is done: God says to the inmost soul, 'according to thy faith be it unto thee!' Then the soul is pure from every spot of sin; it is clean 'from all unrighteousness'.<sup>10</sup>

George Allen Turner stated in his doctrinal dissertation, presented to Harvard University, that John

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<sup>7</sup> Wesley, op. cit., p. 389.

<sup>8</sup> Cf., Turner, op. cit., pp. 234-235; 287; 288-289.

<sup>9</sup> Wesley, op. cit., p. 109. Cf., Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 391.



Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification, as a second definite work of grace, was never successfully refuted from a Scriptural standpoint.<sup>11</sup> Wesley agreed with the Apostle Paul that inward sin, symbolized by the term sarx, remained in the unsanctified believer. He also agreed with Paul that the flesh was opposed to the Holy Spirit and must be crucified before the believer could be free from sin. Thus, Wesley's interpretation of the sarx, as it related to the Pauline doctrine of sin and salvation from sin, was both logical and Scriptural.

### III. A SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF HOW WESLEYAN WRITERS HAVE USED THE "FLESH"

Evidence has been presented above to show that John Wesley was Pauline in his interpretation of the term flesh. He rightly related the flesh to Paul's doctrine of salvation from sin, and recognized the necessity of the flesh being crucified, if the believer was to be wholly "of Christ" and able to live in and walk by the Spirit. Wesley believed that when Paul spoke of the flesh, as a principle in opposition to the Holy Spirit and "enmity with God," he referred not to the human body, nor human nature, but rather to a principle of indwelling sin which remained in the believer and desired expression through the human nature

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<sup>11</sup> Turner, op. cit., p. 271.

(body and soul).

Comparatively few writers, of the thousands within the Wesleyan Movement, have developed any adequate interpretation of the term sarx in their writings. Many books have been written on the subject of entire sanctification, or holiness of heart, without even a mention of Paul's use of the word flesh in relation to that doctrine. The interpretations which do exist, written by men who attempted a doctrine of the flesh, were found to be widely varied and often contradictory.

However, an evaluation of the interpretations of some of the more prominent Wesleyan writers, concerning the term flesh, has been included in this section. This evaluation was made on the basis of the Wesleyan and Pauline usage of sarx in relation to salvation from sin. Men, who have agreed that the doctrine of entire sanctification is Scriptural, have disagreed widely in their statements concerning the flesh (sarx).

W. B. Godbey was a Biblical expositor who recognized and experientially embraced the doctrine of entire sanctification. He also recognized that the Apostle Paul sometimes used the term flesh to designate the principle of indwelling sin. However, Godbey was an illustration of one who carried this truth to an extreme, and said that "nineteen out of twenty times when sarx is used it means

depravity or inbred sin."<sup>12</sup> Godbey took a partial truth and tried to make it a whole truth.

Henry E. Brockett, in his zeal to promote the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, carried his interpretation of the sarx to the other extreme. He maintained that the flesh, in its full meaning, always included human nature, never indwelling sin. This was another example of a partial truth being made the whole truth. In taking this extreme view of sarx, Brockett was forced to an unwholesome concept of human nature (which he called the flesh) in his interpretation of Galatians 5:24. In commenting on this verse, where Paul said the believer should crucify the flesh, Brockett said the believer should regard his human nature as worthless and fit only for a shameful, contemptible death.<sup>13</sup> In sharp contrast to this view, the Apostle Paul prayed for the Christians at Thessalonica: "the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>14</sup>

Between these two extreme positions stood the other

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<sup>12</sup> W. B. Godbey, Commentary on the New Testament (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1899), IV, 526.

<sup>13</sup> Henry E. Brockett, Scriptural Freedom from Sin (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill, 1941), pp. 123, 131.

<sup>14</sup> I Thessalonians 5:23. (The underlining is the investigator's).

writers on the subject. William Burt Pope<sup>15</sup> and H. Orton Wiley<sup>16</sup> represented men who defined the flesh as fallen human nature, deprived of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, depraved. They recognized that Paul sometimes designated fallen human nature as the flesh. Whether or not they followed Wesley's interpretation of the flesh, as equivalent to indwelling sin, was not clear to this investigator.

Adam Clarke did follow Wesley's interpretation of the Apostle Paul's use of the flesh. He believed Paul sometimes used sarx to denote the rebellious principle of indwelling sin.<sup>17</sup> A. M. Hills also agreed with Wesley that the sarx signified the principle of indwelling sin.<sup>18</sup>

Richard Watson was a great Wesleyan theologian of the nineteenth century who never developed a clear doctrine of the flesh in his writings. However, in his Biblical and Theological Dictionary, he noted that the sarx was sometimes used by Paul to denote moral evil or depravity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> William Burt Pope, Compendium of Christian Theology (New York: Phillips & Hunt [n.d.]), II, 27, 54, 65-66, 396.

<sup>16</sup> Wiley, op. cit., pp. 100, 138-140, 448.

<sup>17</sup> A. M. Hills, Establishing Grace (Kansas City, Missouri: Nazarene [n.d.]), p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Watson, Biblical and Theological Dictionary (revised; New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), p. 382.

In 1945, Claude A. Ries, professor of Greek and Biblical Literature at Houghton College, Houghton, New York, presented a doctrinal dissertation to Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, entitled "A Greek New Testament Approach to the Teaching of the Deeper Spiritual Life." In this research effort there was evidenced an inadequate, if not superficial, treatment of the term sarx. The only source to which particular reference was made was Stevens' Pauline Theology. Apparently, Ries interpreted the sarx, in relation to sin, simply as meaning unregenerate human nature.<sup>20</sup>

One of the most recent works of research, by a Wesleyan writer, was George Allen Turner's doctoral dissertation, presented to Harvard University in 1946.<sup>21</sup> A section of this dissertation was devoted to a brief, but scholarly, study of the Pauline usage of the term sarx in relation to the doctrine of sin and salvation. Turner agreed with Wesley that Paul used the sarx in the ethical sense. Used in this sense, sarx sometimes denoted unregenerate human nature. At other times it was equivalent

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<sup>20</sup> Claude A. Ries, "Greek New Testament Approach to the Teaching of the Deeper Spiritual Life" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, May, 1945), pp. 33-35.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, op. cit.

to the principle of indwelling sin.<sup>22</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In evaluating the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, in its relation to the term flesh, certain conclusions were reached and formulated.

1. John Wesley was Scriptural in his interpretation of the term flesh and its relation to the doctrine of entire sanctification.

2. The majority of Wesleyan writers have failed to even consider the flesh (sarx) (σάρξ) in their books on entire sanctification as a second, definite work of grace.

3. Great variations and even contradictions were apparent in the writings of those men who have written concerning the term flesh.

4. Few of the writers who have presented interpretations of the flesh have adequately and clearly set forth the Pauline doctrine.

5. In the opinion of this investigator, the men who most closely followed, and carefully presented, the Wesleyan doctrine of the flesh were Adam Clarke, A. M. Hills, and George Allen Turner. Perhaps if William Burt Pope and H. Orton Wiley had more clearly formulated their doctrines, it would have been discovered that they were also in essential

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-76. Cf. pp. 198, 234-235, 239, 287-289.

agreement with this same doctrine of the flesh.

6. The present-day Wesleyan Movement needs to clarify the understanding of Paul's use of the term flesh, in its relation to the doctrine of full salvation from all sin.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### I. DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE STUDY

There were some distinctive features of the study which warranted special mention.

The extent of material surveyed in the research included, perhaps for the first time, in such a context, a comparative study of Greek words used in the Old Testament Septuagint as equivalents for the Hebrew word bāsār (בָּשָׂר). This helped to provide the background for a better understanding of the New Testament use of the term flesh (sarx).

A comparative study of the theological usage of the term flesh had not been previously conducted, at least in this manner, and the one presented here helped to reveal the development of the doctrine of the flesh within evangelical Protestant denominations. Although the investigation, in itself, was limited, it nevertheless was representative of the Wesleyan and non-Wesleyan traditions. It also provided a means of evaluating the Wesleyan doctrine of the flesh, on the basis of the inductive study of the Pauline Epistles.

The method employed in the entire problem was inductive. In this way, greater objectivity in the handling of material was sought, in an attempt to distinguish the



original thought of the Biblical writers, especially Paul, from the theological concepts which have often been read into their writings.

## II. SUMMARY

The extension in meaning of the word flesh, in the Old Testament, from the fleshy portion of the human body, to the whole body, to the whole person, and finally to the whole human race, was presented in the first section of chapter two. This phase of the research revealed that, with the possible exception of Genesis 6:3, the word flesh was limited to a physical and metaphysical idea, and did not include the ethical concept.

A study of the non-Pauline New Testament Scriptures showed that the New Testament writers based their use of the flesh primarily on the Old Testament background. It also revealed that the writers may have been quite familiar with the Greek version of the Old Testament. The New Testament writers began to include the idea of sinfulness of man in their use of the term flesh. Man was often denominated flesh because of his sinful and fallen condition. Man's separation from God and need of salvation was included as a reason for calling him flesh. The Apostle Peter and the Apostle John, especially, seemed to present the flesh as denoting the sinful and depraved nature of man.

Investigation of his Epistles showed that the Apostle Paul also used the term flesh in all of the shades of meaning familiar in the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul, however, used the flesh in a closer identification with the problem of sin than had previously been done. In fact, he developed much of his doctrine of sin around this word flesh or sarx. He did not identify the human body and sin, but presented sin as a primarily moral depravity.

The survey of the theological usage of the term flesh revealed a great variety of interpretations and theories. The study indicated a need for more objective and inductive investigation of this term, as it is related to sin and salvation from sin. However, John Wesley was found to be in substantial agreement with the Apostle Paul's use of the term flesh in his doctrine of salvation from sin.

Very few of the Wesleyan theologians have objectively faced the problem of the flesh and sin. Most of them have either entirely ignored the problem, or have given it only superficial consideration.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

Certain conclusions seemed warranted to this investigator, as a result of the entire study, and they have been included in this section.

1. No one definition can be given for all the

Biblical uses of the term flesh. The context must be carefully investigated to ascertain the meaning in each instance.

2\* The Old Testament use of the term flesh (sarx) was limited primarily to some relation to man.

3. With the possible exception of Genesis 6:3, the Old Testament writers limited their use of the flesh to the physical and metaphysical idea.

4. The New Testament use of the flesh appeared to be based on the Old Testament background.

5. Some New Testament writers used the flesh to denote the sinfulness and depravity of fallen man. This idea was ethical.

6. The Apostle Paul did not identify sin and the human body. Sin was a moral depravity.

7. Paul did not always identify sarx and the physical body.

8. Paul sometimes used sarx as an equivalent to fallen human nature (body, soul, and spirit), separated from God, and under the dominion of the principle of indwelling sin. He did not always essentially identify sarx with human nature.

9. There seemed to be conclusive evidence that when Paul used sarx as "enmity with God," as having a "mind," "affections and lusts," "works," and as lusting "against the

Spirit," he had in mind the idea of the principle of indwelling sin. In this relation, it appeared that he identified the flesh (sarx, not sōma or body) with the principle of indwelling corruption.

10. Paul often presented the flesh as existent in born-again believers, not as a ruling power, but as a foreign principle which always endeavored to manifest itself through human nature.

11. Paul taught that the flesh, with its affections and lusts, could be crucified in a moment of time. Thus the flesh, or indwelling sin, could and should be separated from the believer in this present life.

12. Both the Apostle Paul and John Wesley believed that sin, as a principle of corruption, did exist in every unregenerate and unsanctified person.

13. Most of the non-Wesleyan writers seemed to be hindered, by theological presuppositions, from objectively interpreting Paul's use of the term flesh. Some of them apparently did identify sarx and indwelling sin, but, because they denied deliverance from sin in this life, they also denied any present deliverance from the flesh. They claimed that deliverance from the flesh must be postponed until the physical body was no longer a hindrance.

14. John Wesley was in substantial agreement with the Apostle Paul in his doctrine of the flesh. He recognized

several different meanings for sarx. One of these was an identification of sarx (flesh) with the principle of indwelling sin, or inward corruption, which was present in both unregenerate and unsanctified persons. Wesley, in his doctrine of entire sanctification, taught that the believer could be separated from inward corruption, by faith, in an instant of time.

15. The followers of John Wesley have not always presented a clear and understandable doctrine of the flesh. In fact, very few Wesleyan writers have considered the problem at all, and fewer still have thoroughly handled the problem of the flesh in its relation to the doctrine of entire sanctification, or salvation from all sin. This investigation has not been reported with the idea that the problem has been solved and final truth attained. It has been an honest effort to objectively face the problem, in its relation to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, as found in the Word of God.

16. In the opinion of this investigator, Adam Clarke, A. M. Hills, and George Allen Turner have most clearly preserved, in writing, the Wesleyan and Pauline doctrine of the flesh in relation to salvation from all sin.

17. The Scriptural doctrine of the flesh needs a clear presentation in our day in order that sin will not be so closely identified with the human body and essential

human nature, that man cannot be freed from sin (the indwelling principle) in this present life.

#### IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

The present study was not exhaustive in its scope of research and a few suggestions for further investigation may aid the interested reader.

1. A study of the use of sarx within the secular Greek writings would be interesting and probably helpful.

2. An investigation of the Apocrypha in the Greek language would aid in giving additional light on the New Testament use of the term flesh.

3. The historical development of the doctrine of the flesh within the Christian Church provides a valuable area for further research.

4. Further investigation and study is needed concerning the relation of the flesh (sarx) (σάρξ) to the regenerated human nature of the unsanctified believer. This is an important area of the doctrine of salvation from all sin in this present life and needs clarification.

5. A more exhaustive study of the Pauline Epistles, than has been possible in this research, should provide additional valuable information and help to more completely solve the problem presented in these pages.

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## APPENDIX

# APPENDIX A

## GREEK SEPTUAGINT<sup>1</sup> EQUIVALENTS

OF THE HEBREW WORD BĀSĀR (בָּשָׂר) "FLESH"

Sarx (σάρξ) (126 times)    Kreas (κρέας) (75 times)    Sōma (σῶμα) (20 times)    Chrōs (χρῶς) (14 times)

### Genesis

2:21, 23, 24;  
6:3, 12, 13, 17,  
19; 7:15, 16, 21;  
8:17; 9:11, 15,  
15, 16, 17; 17:  
11, 13, 14, 24, 25;  
29:14; 37:27;  
40:19.

### Genesis

9:4.

### Exodus

4:7; 30:32.

### Exodus

12:8, 40; 16:3,  
8, 12; 21:28;  
22:31; 29:14,  
31, 32, 34.

### Leviticus

4:11; 12:3; 13:  
18, 24, 38, 39, 43;  
17:11, 14, 14, 14;  
21:5; 26:29.

### Leviticus

6:27; 7:15, 17,  
18, 19, 20, 21; 8:  
17, 31, 32; 9:11;  
11:8, 11; 16:27.

### Leviticus

6:10; 14:9;  
15:2, 3, 3, 13,  
16, 19; 16:4,  
24, 26, 28; 17:  
16; 19:28; 22:  
6.

### Leviticus

13:2, 2, 3, 3, 4,  
10, 11, 13, 14,  
15, 15, 16; 15:  
7; 16:4.

### Numbers

12:12; 16:22;  
18:15; 27:16.

### Numbers

11:4, 13, 13, 18,  
18, 18, 21, 33;  
18:18; 19:5.

### Numbers

8:7; 19:7, 8.

### Deuteronomy

5:26; 12:27;  
28:55.

### Deuteronomy

12:15, 20, 20, 23,  
27; 14:8; 16:4;  
28:53; 32:42.

<sup>1</sup> Bible. O.T. Greek. 1824. Septuagint., 'E Palaiia Diathēkē kata tous 'Ebdomekonta, ed. by Leandri van Ess. (Leipzig [n.n.] 1824).

Sarx (σάρξ) ) Kreas (κρέας) Sōma (σῶμα) Chrōs (χρῶς)

Judges  
8:7; 9:2.

Judges  
6:19, 20, 21, 21.

I Samuel  
17:44.

I Samuel  
2:13, 15, 15.

II Samuel  
5:1; 19:12, 13.

I Kings  
17:6, 6.

I Kings  
21:27.

II Kings  
4:34; 5:10, 14;  
6:30; 9:36.

I Chronicles  
11:1.

II Chronicles  
32:8.

Nehemiah  
5:5, 5.

Job  
2:5; 4:15; 6:  
12; 10:11; 13:  
14; 14:22; 19:  
20, 22; 21:6;  
31:31; 33:21,  
25; 34:15; 41:  
23.

Job  
11:11.

Job  
7:5.

Psalms  
16:9; 27:2; 38:  
3, 7; 56:4; 63:  
1; 65:2; 78:39;  
79:2; 84:2;  
109:24; 119:  
120; 136:25;  
145:21.

Psalms  
50:13.

Proverbs  
4:22; 5:11.

Proverbs  
23:20.

Sarx (σάρξ) ) Kreas (κρέας) Sōma (σῶμα) Chrōs (χρῶς)

Ecclesiastes

4:5; 5:6; 11:  
10; 12:12.

Isaiah

9:20; 31:3; 40: 22:13; 44:16,  
5,6; 49:26,26; 19; 65:4; 66:  
66:16,23,24. 17.

Isaiah

Jeremiah

12:12; 17:5;  
19:9,9,9; 25:  
31; 32:27; 45:  
5.

Jeremiah

7:21; 11:15.

Lamentations

3:4.

Ezekiel

11:19,19; 20: 4:14; 11:3,7;  
48; 21:4,5; 23: 24:10; 39:17,  
20; 44:9. 18.

Ezekiel

18.

Daniel

1:15.

Daniel

10:3.

Hosea

8:13.

Joel

2:28.

Micah

3:3.

Haggai

2:12.

Zechariah

2:13; 11:9; 14: 11:16.  
12.

Zechariah

## APPENDIX B

### GREEK NEW TESTAMENT<sup>1</sup> USE OF THE GREEK WORD SARX (σάρξ) "FLESH"

#### I. NON-PAULINE USAGE (56 times)

##### Matthew

16:17; 19:5; 19:6; 24:22; 26:41.

##### Mark

10:8,8; 13:20; 14:38.

##### Luke

3:6; 24:39.

##### John

1:13,14; 3:6,6; 6:51,52,53,54,55,56,63; 8:15; 17:2.

##### Acts

2:17,26,31.

##### Hebrews

2:14; 5:7; 9:10; 9:13; 10:20; 12:9.

##### James

5:3.

##### I Peter

1:24; 3:18,21; 4:1,1,2,6.

##### II Peter

2:10,18.

##### I John

2:16; 4:2.

##### II John

verse 7.

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<sup>1</sup> Bible. N.T. Greek. [1936] Nestle., Greek New Testament. (Sixteenth edition; New York: American Bible Society [1936]).



Jude  
verses 7, 8 and 23.

Revelation  
17:16; 19:18, 18, 18, 18, 21.

Σαρκικός  
I Peter 2:11.

Σάρκινος  
Hebrews 7:16.

## II. PAULINE USAGE (91 times)

Romans  
1:3; 2:28; 3:20; 4:1; 6:19; 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, 6,  
7, 8, 9, 12, 12, 13; 9:3, 5, 8; 11:14; 13:14.

I Corinthians  
1:26, 29; 5:5; 6:16; 7:28; 10:18; 15:39, 39, 39, 39, 50.

II Corinthians  
1:17; 4:11; 5:16, 16; 7:1, 5; 10:2, 3, 3; 11:18; 12:7.

Galatians  
1:16; 2:16, 20; 3:3; 4:13, 14, 23, 29; 5:13, 16, 17, 17, 19, 24;  
6:8, 8, 12, 13.

Ephesians  
2:3, 3, 11, 11, 15; 5:29, 31; 6:5, 12.

Philippians  
1:22, 24; 3:3, 4, 4.

Colossians  
1:22, 24; 2:1, 5, 11, 13, 18, 23; 3:22.

I and II Thessalonians  
The word does not appear.

I Timothy  
3:16.

II Timothy  
The word does not appear.

Titus  
The word does not appear.

Philemon  
verse 16.

Σαρκεκός

Romans 15:27.

I Corinthians 3:3,3; 9:11.

II Corinthians 1:12; 10:4.

Σάρκιος

Romans 7:14.

I Corinthians 3:1.

II Corinthians 3:3.