

Le Nouvel Esprit:
A Video Series on the Theology of
the Body

TOB 50, General Audience of Dec. 10, 1980

The Sermon on the Mount

- Matt. 5:27-28 informs us that
 - Concupiscent desire is opposite of purity
 - Moral demand of purity
- Matt. 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God”
- The Sermon on the Mount is an invitation to the heart
- The heart is the wellspring of purity and impurity

Matt. 15:11,18-20

- “Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth defiles a man. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what makes a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, prostitution, theft, false witness, blasphemy. These make a man unclean, but to eat with unwashed hands does not make a man unclean”

The Old Testament and Purity

- To dirty, means “to make unclean, to pollute”
 - Example is seeing oneself as unclean when the body is unclean and so must wash self
- The Old Testament had ritual washing
 - Many washings were prescribed due to sexual impurity
 - This was understood physiologically
 - These were hygienic washing
 - Possessed indirect religious meaning due to being prescriptions of God
 - Concern for ritual purity
- Old Testament lead to a wrong understanding of moral purity
 - The concept of purity appeared to be tied exclusively with what is external and material
 - Fn 58
 - Three schools within the Old Testament for understanding purity: prophetic, priestly, and legal
 - The legal tradition appeared to give rise to this wrong understanding

Christ and Purity

- Christ opposed this external, physiological interpretation of moral purity
 - It is what is inside of man, not outside, that makes him unclean
 - The wellspring of moral purity arises from the heart, the interiority of man
 - The ethical meaning of purity cannot be connected with the physiological understanding
- Matt. 15:18-20
 - Stresses importance of moral purity in the inner dimension of man
 - Moral purity is connected with the concept of virtue
 - Analogy, purity with moral goodness, dirty or unclean with moral evil
 - Christ does not speak of any particular sin, but of sin in general
 - Purity and impurity are spoken of in general
 - Every moral good manifests purity and every moral evil manifests impurity

St. Paul

- 1 John 2:15-16 speaks of the threefold concupiscence as the antithesis within man between God and the world
- St. Paul describes a tension between life according to the flesh and life according to the Holy Spirit
 - Key texts will be Gal. 4:16-17 and Rom. 8:5
- Task is to demonstrate that the purity of heart described in the Sermon on the Mount which is connected with the concept of concupiscence from 1 John is realized in St. Paul's "life according to the Spirit"

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