

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

TOB 24, General Audience of Apr. 16, 1980

# The Sermon on the Mount

- Matt. 5:27-28:
- What is the Sermon on the Mount
- Christ's words are a fundamental revision of the moral understanding in the Old Covenant
- This applies in order to the following commandments
  - 5th commandment, not kill
  - 6th commandment, not commit adultery
  - 8th commandment, not swear falsely

# Normativity

- Matt 5 along with Matt 19 has explicit, normative content
- Matt 5 confirms the 6th commandment and gives it its full meaning
- Two aspects of fulfillment
  - 1) The question of adhering to God's meaning
  - 2) Fulfilling the justice man is called to
- The Sermon on the Mount is the heart or form of human ethos
- Living ethos:
  - Has norms but not norms alone
  - Has existential meaning
    - Existential: “concerned with existence”, “relating to existence”, Oxford Dictionary
    - Norms must be lived

## Deciphering Some Text

- “The morality in which the very meaning of being human is realized—which is, at the same time, the fulfillment of the law by the ‘superabounding’ of justice through subjective vitality—is formed in the interior perception of values, from which duty is born as an expression of conscience, as an answer of one’s own personal ‘I’. Ethos makes us, at one and the same time, enter into the depth of the norm itself and descend into the interior of man, the subject of morality. Moral value is connected with the dynamic process of man’s innermost [being]. To reach it, it is not enough to stop ‘on the surface’ of human actions, but one must penetrate precisely the interior.” TOB 24:3, (p. 228)
- Max Scheler, German philosopher, realist phenomenology, 1874-1928

# Revision of Moral Understanding in Matt. 5

- Christ connects the commandments of not desiring the neighbor's wife and not committing adultery
- These are further connected with the dimension of interior action made visible in the acts of the body
- Old Testament focused on exterior conditions which led to legal loopholes
  - This led to compromises and the hardness of heart
  - Compromise and the hardening of the heart led to a deformation in understanding the moral law and promoted a legalistic attitude
- Christ shifts the essence of morality to the inner dimension of the heart and appeals to this dimension
  - “Whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”
  - “Has already made her an adulteress in his heart”

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