

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

TOB 38, General Audience of Sept. 3, 1980

“But I say unto you...”

- Christ’s words here from Matt. 5 are
 - 1) A polemic against the teachers of the law
 - 2) A polemic against the ethos of the Old Testament
 - 3) A transition to a new ethos that
 - Leaves behind the legislative-casuistic view
 - Returns to the interpersonal relationship between husband and wife
- “Whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already made her an adulteress in his heart”
 - 1) Emphasizes that this is an interior, one-side act
 - 2) Introduces a distinction between adultery of the heart and adultery of the body
- Question: How can a sin of the body become a sin of the heart?
 - By shifting the meaning of adultery from the body to the heart on the basis of the concept of desire

Christ's Listeners

- “Whoever looks to desire” informs us that the man of desire is the man of concupiscence
- Desire has both a psychological and theological interpretation, both of which interpenetrate
 - Both meanings are defined in audience 40
- Christ appeals to his immediate listeners and to all people of all time in his Sermon on the Mount
 - This is a universal message
 - Christ's immediate listeners probably understood his words within the context of the Wisdom Tradition
 - Wisdom Tradition of the Old Testament: Song of Songs, Job, Psalms, Wisdom, Sirach, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes

Lessons from the Wisdom Tradition

- Women are viewed as
 - 1) Seducers that men need to be on their guard against
 - 2) Praised in several eulogies on being the perfect companion and praise of the good wife
 - Cf. TOB 38.4 for several Biblical references
- “A modest wife adds charm to charm, and no balance can weigh the value of a chaste soul. Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so the beauty of a good wife adorns her house. Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so the beauty of a good wife adorns her house. Like the shining lamp on the holy lamp stand, so is a beautiful face on a noble figure. Like golden pillars on silver bases, so are graceful legs and steadfast feet. A wife’s grace delights her husband, and her knowledge strengthens his bones.” Sir. 26:15-18.

Lessons from the Wisdom Tradition Cont...

- The frequent warnings contrast with these eulogies of the good wife
 - These warnings are against the beauty and charm of women who are not one's wife, which is the motive for temptation and occasion for adultery
 - These warnings speak with a particular knowledge of the heart and are close to Christ's appeal from the Sermon on the Mount
- The transformation of the Old Testament ethos which the Wisdom Tradition is a witness to had to wait for Christ and the Sermon on the Mount
- The Wisdom Tradition prepared the listeners of the Sermon on the Mount for understanding correctly the right meaning of the adultery of the heart

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