

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

TOB 45, General Audience of Oct. 22, 1980

# Manichaeism

- Manichaeism in brief
  - Previously mentioned in TOB 36, 41, 44
  - Believed that matter, the body, and sex were evil
- Question: is the Sermon on the Mount supposed to be interpreted in this manner?
  - No, it is impossible to understand the New Testament in terms of Manichaeism
- Question now is how to understand the accusation of the heart
  - He who looks at a woman with desire commits adultery in his heart

# The Accusation of the Heart

- The accusation of the heart is the heart of the man of concupiscence
  - This is a call to self-critical examination, determining whether one is yielding to the concupiscence of the flesh
- The judgment about concupiscent desire is not a negation but an affirmation of the body
  - The body together with the spirit determines man's ontological subjectivity
  - This judgment is distinct from Manichaeism
- The body in its masculinity or femininity is called to manifest spirit
  - It does this through the conjugal union, and in doing so, becomes a sacramental sign
  - Christ defends this union
  - Christ's judgment of the flesh is an affirmation of the truth of the body and the conjugal union
- The New Testament ethos is opposed to Manichaeism because of the redemption of the body
  - Man lost a clear sense of the spousal meaning of the body due to sin

# Manichaeism versus Christianity

- Manichaeism requires the annihilation of the body since the body is seen as evil
  - Sex has a negative value
  - The body and sex are antivalues
- Christian ethos
  - Goal is to transform human consciousness and attitude to express and realize the values of body and sex according to God's original vision
  - The body and sex are under-appreciated values

# The Accusation of the Heart as an Appeal

- The Sermon on the Mount is more so an appeal to overcome the evil of concupiscence
  - Man must detach from the evil of acts, which includes the interior act of concupiscent desire
- It is invalid to transfer the negativity of an act to the object
  - Doing such introduces a variant of Manichaeism
  - Such a transference is not a true moral victory over evil
  - This transference conceals the danger of justifying actions that are detrimental to the object
- The fact that an act is evil does not mean that the object of that act is also evil

# The Sexual Revolution is a Kind of Manichaeism

Act	Object	Effect
Contraceptives	Procreation	Children are seen as evil
Abortion	Procreation, offspring	Children are seen as evil
Transgenderism	Sex (Masculinity/Femininity)	One's sex is seen as evil
Divorce	Marriage	Monogamy and the indissolubility of marriage are viewed as evil
Liberalization of sex	Marriage	Marriage is seen as evil

# The Distinction between Accusation and Appeal

- The same words of the Sermon on the Mount express both accusation and appeal
  - These words are a call to discover the full meaning of the value of the objects that the man of concupiscence does not fully appreciate
- The adultery in the heart is devaluation and impoverishment of authentic values
  - This is an intentional privation of dignity
- We are called to discover and affirm the value of the body and sex within the dignity of the personhood of the man and woman as an integral whole
- We are called to master concupiscence, and in doing so we make such an affirmation of the body, sex, and person
- Manichaeism is in essence an error

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