

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

TOB 55, General Audience of Feb. 4, 1981

## 1 Cor. 12:18, 22–25

- “God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he willed...The members of the body that seem to be weaker are more necessary, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater reverence, and our unpresentable members are treated with greater modesty; whereas our more presentable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the member that lacked it, that there may be no disunion within the body, but the members may have care for one another”

# Introductory Points

- Presents the body with a realism, but cannot interpret the text here strictly in terms of natural science
- This realism is presented with evangelical value
  - This means that the text must be interpreted according to the redemption of the body
- The problem is not the body, but man who expresses himself through the body
- The perennial task of culture is to evaluate man who expresses himself through the body through literature, sculpture, painting, dancing, theater, and daily life in private and society
  - More on this theme at the end of this chapter, TOB 60-63
- 1 Cor. 12's description of the text
  - Corresponds to the reverence for the body due to holiness
  - Avoids the errors of Manichaeism (cf. TOB 44-45) and the naturalistic cult of the body

# The Unpresentability of Some Members of the Body

- The text presents the whole truth of the human body, the whole reality of the person and his dignity
- The text is in reference to the body of historical man
- “Unpresentable members”, “weaker”, “less honorable”
  - This is a testimony of shame, that shame is impressed into all of historical man as a fruit of concupiscence
  - This unpresentability is not due to science or physiology
  - This unpresentability is due to the existence of shame which perceives certain members of the body as “unpresentable”
- From shame comes reverence of the body

# Reverence of the Body

- From shame comes reverence of the body
- This reverence towards the weaker parts of the body corresponds to God's original vision
- “God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the member that lacked it, that there may be no disunion within the body, but the members may have care for one another” 1 Cor. 12:24-25
  - This disunion within the body is a statement of man's state in original sin, that some parts of the body are weaker, less honorable
  - Shame is connected with this disunion of the body
  - The man of original innocence did not feel this disunion (Cf. Gen 2:25)
  - The harmonious purity of heart corresponds to the objective harmony of the body in original innocence
- To achieve victory over the disunion of the body, it is realized through the purity of heart, keeping the body with holiness and reverence

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