

Considerations on the Theology of the Body

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” (Psalm 139:13-14)

- I. Overview: “Theology of the body”—study of God while studying the body.
 - a. A Lutheran Approach
 - i. Through creedal lenses: The Apostles’ Creed.
 - ii. A creedal perspective provides avenues of comprehensive consideration.
 - b. First Article: God the Father, creator of the body.
 - c. Second Article: God the Son Incarnate, the redeemer of the body; (human flesh becomes hinge of salvation).
 - d. Third Article: God the Holy Spirit: the sanctifier of the body (who also raises the body from the dead).

- II. First Article Perspectives: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.” *What does this mean (for the body)?*
 - a. “I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land animals, and all that I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this he does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.” Small Catechism
 - b. Gen. 1:25-31: Sixth day; male and female created in the image of God: ³¹“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”
 - i. We are embodied souls—No separation of body and soul.
 - ii. The body is not divine but is a sign of the divine mystery.
 - iii. God made humankind male and female fully sexual prior to sexual union.
 1. The image of God (imago Dei):
 - Ontological (state of being)
 - Functional (purpose)
 - Relational (relationships: marital sexual love as icon or physical image of the inner love of the Trinity—language of Nicene Creed)
 2. The reflection of God’s image sexually through human bodies.

- Single bodies: bodily devotion of men and women to God like Jesus, as his brothers and sisters (1 Cor. 7:32-35).
 - Married bodies: one flesh union in marriage to mirror the one flesh union of Christ with the church (Eph. 5:25-32).
 - Both single and married bodies: bodily participation in Christ's purity and holiness through His body and blood.
- c. The body is a good gift of creation (though now corrupted by sin and defiled by sinners).
- i. Sin brings: 1) disorder, 2) disease, and 3) death to the body.
 - ii. Considerations on the body in culture today:
 1. medical/health: how the body is treated by medical community and health industry. Diet pills, books, and body altering procedures.
 2. sexual: how the orgasm of your choice now effectively added to the Bill of Rights.
 3. mental: how we think about our body has become disordered—same sex marriage, gender dysphoria, eating disorders.
 4. emotional: how we feel determines how we treat our own body and the body of others, and now even dictates public policy (abortion, marriage definition, transgender rights; MN—driver's license now provides a third option, M F X, bathroom regulations).
 5. spiritual: worship of God involves the body (use of all senses), and the remission of sins are delivered to the body by physical signs and seals connected to God's promises (baptism & Lord's Supper).
- d. The body was specifically designed with the one flesh union in view (Gen. 2:18-25; Mark 10:2-16).
- i. Sexual identity is not a social construct but is rooted in creation.
 - ii. Our sexually explicit culture has objectified the body and torn sex apart from marriage and procreation.
 - iii. Living chastely in a male or female body is the vocation of every Christian.
 - iv. Luther in WA 34:15.15-19: *When a husband looks at his wife as if she were the only woman on earth, and when the woman looks at her husband as if he were the only man on earth; yes, if no king or queen, not even the sun itself sparkles more brightly and lights up your eyes more than your husband or wife, then right there you are face to face with God speaking. God... actually gives your spouse to you, saying; The man shall be yours; the woman shall be yours. I am pleased beyond measure! Creatures heavenly and earthly are jumping for joy.*

- v. C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, 88: *The old Christian teachers said that if man had never fallen, sexual pleasure, instead of being less than it is now, would actually have been greater. I know that some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they are wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions that thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy.*
 - vi. “The problem with our sex-saturated culture, then, is not that it overvalues the body and sex. The problem is that it has failed to see just how valuable the body and sex really are.” Christopher West, *Theology of the Body for Beginners*.
 - vii. Porn industry has wreaked havoc on the body, marriage, and the family.
 - viii. The transgender movement impacts everything from parenting to education to politics/policies. How do we compassionately and yet truthfully respond?
- III. Second Article Perspectives: “And in Jesus Christ His only son our Lord...” *What does this mean (for the body)?*
- a. “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.” Small Catechism
 - b. The incarnation of Christ is the profound and powerful mystery that makes human flesh the hinge of salvation: “*He took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own. Nor did He will merely to become embodied or merely to appear; had that been so, He could have revealed His Divine majesty in some other and better way. No, He took our body.*” St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation, Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*
 - c. Martin Chemnitz: *The Two Natures of Christ*:
 - i. “*The Son of God is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). To be sure, man in the beginning was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), but in Adam we lost this, as Irenaeus says... Therefore, when God had determined to rescue the human race and to restore it to his image, He wished that person*

to be made incarnate who is the very image of his substance. (Heb. 1:3).” p. 46

- ii. *“Of such importance it is to recognize rightly the human nature in Christ. For in the flesh of Christ God condemned sin (Rom. 8:3) and in the body of His flesh we are reconciled (Col. 1:20). We are justified in His blood (Rom. 5:9). He has laid down his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). The Son of God is born of a woman in order that we who were under the Law might be redeemed and receive the adoption (Gal. 4:4-5).” p.49*
- iii. *“Therefore the Son of God took on our entire human nature with all the conditions or properties which are proper to and characteristic of our nature, in order that we might have a sure pledge of the restoration of our entire corrupt nature, whose cure He as our physician undertook, having given definite proof, when He in himself as the Head first reformed and, as it were, refashioned it in its entirety. Moreover, the statement of Nazianzus is most significant, a statement which all antiquity accepted, namely, that that part of human nature “which was not assumed by Christ was not healed”. p.60*

- d. The family as the backdrop of redemption history.
 - e. Through His physical suffering, shed blood, and death, Christ attains remission of sins and healing for sins of the body (those both committed and/or received).
 - i. Moral infraction vs. spiritual contamination (of the body).
 - ii. Defilement and desecration of body. All sins are equally condemning but not all are equally defiling. Sins of the body defile one as the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).
 - iii. Suffering in body and soul, as difficult as it is, brings us closer to our Lord through the shared pain of suffering. Jesus sanctified suffering ahead of you.
 - f. Theology of the body lies at the core of evangelism today.
 - i. Confessing “the Word made flesh” (John1:14) to a secular world.
 - ii. The Christian response to both materialism and spiritualism is the Incarnation.
 - iii. The Incarnation brings hope to a sexually defiled and confused generation.
- IV. Third Article Perspectives: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.” *What does this mean (for the body)?*

- a. “I believe that I cannot by own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal live to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.” Small Catechism
 - b. The Holy Spirit delivers and enacts faith as well as the resurrection of the body.
 - c. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper sanctifies (makes holy) our bodies for life and service in His kingdom, both here in time, and there in eternity.
 - d. Worship in spirit and truth includes our bodies.
 - i. We are not to be mere spectators.
 - ii. Bodily position helps focus what’s occurring in the Divine Service.
 - iii. Pastoral bodily movements point to what’s occurring in the Service.
 - iv. Receptive spirituality includes the body.
 - v. I serve God and neighbor with my sanctified body.
 - vi. Sacraments are especially for the body.
 - e. Pastoral care with a robust theology of the body.
 - i. Listening with your whole body.
 - ii. Oral enactment of the Word of God.
 - iii. Prayer and blessing over and upon the body (i.e. bodily ritual).
- V. Preaching and Teaching this in the parish
- a. Intentional planning: Know your nomenclature and your audience.
 - b. Careful Congregational Collaboration: the words and descriptions of a sexually disordered and transgendered culture can make people uncomfortable, so start small and begin working with elders, council, youth and family boards.
 - c. Implement Parent Partnership Workshops.
 - d. Sermon outline from Series B, Epiphany 2, Epistle reading: 1 Cor. 6:12-20.

Sermon theme: **“Glorifying God with Your Body”**

Key opening verses: ¹⁹*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

- I. The body as temple of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. What does this mean?
 - b. When does this happen?
 - c. It begins in baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - d. Psalm 139:13-14 declares you are wonderfully made.
 - i. Example: 270 bones in the body; 60,000 miles of blood vessels; 1—billion microscopic cells called neurons.
 - ii. Gen. 1:27 wonderfully made in the image of God

- II. How do you treat your body? 1 Cor. 6 Paul talks about food and sex.
 - a. Drug abuse: in 2016, 64,000 people died from a drug overdose. That same year over 1.5 million people were put in prison for drug use.
 - b. Eating disorders: over 30 million people in the U.S. suffer from an eating disorder. Every 62 minutes someone dies from an eating disorder.
 - c. Sexual immorality: STD’s (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) are at an all-time high in the U.S., nearly 20 million new cases reported each year.
 - d. All sins are equally condemning, but not all are equally defiling. Sins of the body are specially contaminating because they defile the temple of the Holy Spirit.
 - e. Hence Paul says: “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.” 1 Cor. 6:18
 - f. Like vultures that flock to a foul rotting carcass, so the devil and his demons flock to defiled and contaminated bodies in order to tempt you, deceive you, and mislead you into all kinds of false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice.

- III. Your body is precious in God’s sight!
 - a. Cleansed by Christ: on the cross He took onto His body the defilement of yours.
 - b. Baptismally sanctified by the Spirit—bones, vessels, neurotransmitters and all.
 - c. 1 Cor. 6: ¹³“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.”