

READING GUIDE: THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Karol Wojtyła wrote the first draft of *Male and Female He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (or TOB for short) in the 1970s while serving as archbishop of Kraków, Poland. He had two doctorates, in philosophy and theology, and had already written a book on human sexuality in 1960, *Love and Responsibility*. But his plans for publication were interrupted when he was elected pope in 1978. Pope John Paul II delivered the Polish manuscript as a series of Wednesday catecheses in Italian off and on between 1979 and 1984. The first Italian publication was in 1985; the authoritative revised English translation based on the original Polish layout appeared in 2006 and is over 600 pages long. In the words of biographer George Weigel in 2004, TOB is “a kind of theological time bomb set to go off with dramatic consequences . . . perhaps in the twenty-first century.” It is arguably the most important Christian book published in our lifetimes. John Paul II was declared a saint in 2014.

Part 1: The Words of Jesus on Marital Union

- *Original humanity*: marriage and the beginning: Mt 19:8, Mk 10:6-9, Gen 2
 - Original solitude, unity, and nakedness (TOB 1-13)
 - The spousal meaning of the body (TOB 13-16)
 - The mystery of original innocence (TOB 16-23)
- *Historical humanity*: adultery in the heart: Mt 5:27-28
 - Concupiscence: Shame and insatiability (TOB 24-33)
 - Looking at the body: commandment and ethos (TOB 33-43)
 - Reading the body: purity or suspicion (TOB 44-63)
- *Eschatological humanity*: the resurrected body: Mt 22:30, Mk 12:25, Lk 20:35-36
 - Divinization and the new meaning of the body: 1 Cor 15 (TOB 64-72)
 - Continence for the kingdom of heaven: Mt 19:11 (TOB 73-81)
 - Virginity and marriage: 1 Cor 7 (TOB 82-86)

Part 2: Marital Union as Sacrament of the Church

- *Marriage as primordial sacrament*
 - The “great mystery” of Christ and Church: Eph 5:21-23 (TOB 87-93)
 - Marital union as sacramental act (TOB 94-99)
 - Sacramental redemption of the body (TOB 99-102)
- *The language of the body*
 - Reading the body through promise and in truth (TOB 103-107)
 - Language of the body as poem: Song of Songs (TOB 108-113)
 - Language of the body as liturgy: Tobit (TOB 114-117)
- *Ethics of marital union*
 - Responsibility for fertility (TOB 118-125)
 - Conjugal spirituality (TOB 126-132)
 - On *Humanae Vitae* (TOB 133)

TOB is a rich and challenging work of theology that has long roots in Catholic tradition and even engages modern thinkers like Kant, Marx, and Freud. But as the outline makes clear, in practical terms it was composed as a series of exegeses of important passages from the Old and New Testaments, especially Genesis, Matthew, Corinthians, Ephesians, and Song of Songs. It unfolds in two parts. The first part wrestles with Jesus's difficult sayings on marriage and celibacy in the Gospel of Matthew. The second part explores Paul's mysterious teaching in the Letter to the Ephesians about the symbolism of husband and wife.

For our Seminar we will read selections from two of the sections in the outline above: on "original humanity," or the goodness and meaning of sexual difference in creation (TOB 9-10, 13-14, 17-19); and on "eschatological humanity," or the role of sexuality in the resurrected body in union with God (TOB 66-69). Together they depict the purpose of our bodies across the whole story of creation and redemption, from their beginning to their ultimate end. Here are some questions to guide your reading. (Terminological note: the word "sex" in this translation designates male and female sex characteristics, not sexual union per se, which is typically called "conjugal union.")

TOB 9-10

1. What is the "communion of persons" and how does it relate to humanity as image of God?
2. What does sexual difference (male and female) reveal about humanity?
3. What does conjugal union reveal about humanity?

TOB 13-14

4. Why is it important to read the body through the "hermeneutics of the gift"?
5. What is "reciprocal gift" and how does it relate to the "communion of persons"?
6. What is the "spousal meaning of the body" and why is its freedom essential? (cf. TOB 15)

TOB 17-19

7. Why is it important that the gift of male and female be an "exchange"?
8. How do innocence and shame enter into the gift?
9. Why is the visibility of the body (in its nakedness) important?
10. Why is conjugal union the "primordial sacrament"?

TOB 66-69

11. What happens to male and female identity in heaven? What is the "spiritualization" of the body?
12. What happens to self-giving and communion of persons in heaven?
13. What is the "intersubjective" fulfillment of the spousal meaning of the body?
14. Why is there no procreation in heaven? What does this teach us about the body on earth?