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# Faith and Body: Embracing the Theological Creed's Corpus in Disability Amicable

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## Abstract

*Our bodies tell God's story. The Church regards the human body as sacred, intended for ultimate union with God, and anticipates it to be treated as a temple. The narrative suggests that we ought to regard our bodies with reverence and integrity, while anticipating their eventual resurrection. This appears to be a triumphalist perspective regarding the church's stance on the body. This theological conception has significantly influenced Church members in their pursuit of complete holiness throughout their lives, yet it has also resulted in serious repercussions, specifically subtle dualism and the issue of bodily imperfection. The Church's emphasis on the unity of body and soul, alongside the concept of the soul's immortality, generates a tension regarding the precedence of the soul's salvation over the body's welfare. This results in a disjunction between the ideal church and the actual church, leading to diminished attention towards non-triumphalistic groups, specifically individuals with disabilities. The corporeal form that narrates God's story is also the anthropological entity. The intersection of theology and anthropology in spirituality necessitates a discussion on both the sacramental essence of the body and the theological design for the body, culminating in the same conclusion: the body as a symbol of salvation rather than condemnation. This paper presents novel theological concepts that advocate for the marginalized, specifically individuals with disabilities. This paper aims to demonstrate that God's plan of salvation for His people, as articulated in the Nicene Creed and informed by John Paul II's theology of the body, is applicable both communally and personally, particularly concerning individuals with disabilities. Employing a theological framework, this paper identifies dualism's effects on individuals with disabilities. Key findings reveal that embracing inclusivity aligns with divine love. The conclusion calls for recognizing every body as a vessel of God's grace.*

## Keywords

*Disabilities, dualism, human body, marginalized*

## INTRODUCTION

In Christian theology, the human body is esteemed as a sacred vessel, intricately integrated into the narrative of divine purpose and grace. The Church asserts that our

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bodies are not simply physical structures but sanctuaries designed for a deep communion with God. It is important to respect individuals with healthy organs or physical disabilities, regardless of their physical condition, as they are the perfect image of God.[1] This concept emphasizes a significant theological truth: our physical existence possesses spiritual importance and is a fundamental component of God's redemptive plan. Nonetheless, this theological idea may inadvertently entail a triumphalistic viewpoint. The Church's triumphalist view of the flesh reveals the notion that physical existence serves as a conduit for manifesting divine glory and conquering sin and death. This perspective frequently emphasizes spiritual goals at the expense of corporeal experiences, fostering a dualistic interpretation that distinguishes the physical from the spiritual. This perspective may result in the oversight of the intricacies of human experience, especially for individuals with impairments, by depicting the body solely as a conduit for the soul's redemption. This viewpoint may unintentionally marginalize persons whose bodies deviate from conventional standards, highlighting the necessity for a more inclusive and empathetic comprehension of the human experience in theological discussions. In other words, the Church's triumphalist perspective on the body urges adherents to maintain their physical forms with dignity and respect, in anticipation of their eventual resurrection with their souls. This viewpoint profoundly impacts the spiritual journey of numerous followers, cultivating a dedication to sanctity and moral excellence.

This elevated perspective of the body is not devoid of complications. The triumphalist perspective on bodily sanctity has, over time, fostered a nuanced dualism—an underlying conviction that the spiritual domain is superior to the physical domain. This dichotomy may compromise physical well-being in pursuit of spiritual elevation, frequently marginalizing individuals whose bodies do not conform to dominant standards of perfection. Individuals with disabilities encounter a dual challenge: they must contend with their physical realities while also confronting a Church that may unintentionally prioritize spiritual ideals over their actual experiences and needs. Clapham states that the attitude of differentiating people according to their circumstances is actually an act of discrimination by underlining the following, “discrimination is prohibited with regard to the enjoyment of all rights”.

[1] Megawati Naibaho and Antonius P Sipahutar, “Perempuan Disabilitas Dan Hubungannya Dengan Teologi Belas Kasih Katolik,” in *Studia Philosophica et Theologica*, 24/1 (2024).

[2] Furthermore, discrimination causes a person or group, certain because of the situation they have, to not receive what is the right to live. Ignoring the rights that should be received is a crime. Even Andre emphasized, "Discrimination is also central to the concept of genocide."[3]

The focus on the unity of body and soul, along with the belief in the soul's immortality, creates an intrinsic tension within religious teachings. This can sustain a narrative in which the salvation of the soul takes precedence over the care of the body, creating a disconnection between the ideal Church—thriving in holiness—and the actual Church, which may neglect its most vulnerable members. This disconnect impedes the Church's mission to embody the inclusive essence of Christ's love and undermines its role as a sanctuary for all believers. Human being granted by God a gift of freedom to necessarily develop relations and involves responsibilities to others. Bacik underlined that our greatest mission is to practice our gifts and talents to construct up the communities that form and cherish all members of the Church.[4]

The body is fundamentally an anthropological entity that conveys the narrative of salvation. The relationship between theology and anthropology necessitates a reassessment of the body's role in spirituality. Perceiving the body as a sacramental and essential component of our communion with God contests dominant ideas of condemnation and repositions the body as a potent emblem of salvation. Engaging with the writings of theologians such as John Paul II, whose insights on the body highlight its sanctity and significance, allows us to reconceptualize our comprehension of divine love in a manner that respects every human experience, particularly those frequently neglected. In line with Pope John Paul's idea of the need to value the experiences of others, especially those who are neglected, Burns said that, "The ability to act virtuously cannot be achieved through human effort alone it has two points of origin, in that it is the product of divine grace and human effort."[5]

This essay seeks to offer innovative theological perspectives that support marginalized groups, specifically emphasizing individuals with disabilities. It

[2] Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 143.

[3] Clapham, *Human Rights*, p. 144.

[4] James J. Bacik, *Catholic Spirituality, Its History and Challenge* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 146.

[5] Charlene P.E. Burns, "In the Image and Likeness: Theological Reflections on the Science of Habits," in Gregory R. Peterson et al. (ed.), *Habits in Mind: Integrating Theology, Philosophy, and the Cognitive Science of Virtue, Emotion, and Character Formation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 215.

contends that God's plan of salvation, as expressed in foundational documents such as the Nicene Creed, is not merely a communal aspiration but a personal commitment pertinent to each individual. By reclaiming the body as a conduit of divine love and mercy, we can cultivate a more inclusive Church that acknowledges the dignity and value of all its members, encouraging a more comprehensive engagement in the narrative of God's redemptive story. Thus, despite their physical disabilities, every person is recognized and loved as a precious image of God.[6] This qualitative study employs a theological framework, analyzing texts on body-soul dualism and disability. It synthesizes theological perspectives and scriptural interpretations, aiming to illuminate the Church's inclusive practices for individuals with disabilities, fostering a re-evaluation of traditional doctrines.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE: A CHURCH THAT CONSISTENTLY EVOLVES

Not long after Jesus died and rose, His disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, began to spread the good news of the work of salvation that God had and always bestowed upon mankind, His creation. Since then, Christianity – followers of Christ – has multiplied. In line with the development of Christianity, theological differences also emerged, leading to 'doctrinal' differences. These differences of course led to practical differences in practicing faith.[7] So as recorded in history, in 325 AD the Bishops gathered in the City of Nicaea (now known as Iznik, Turkey) to resolve the conflict, especially the conflict regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ and His relationship with God the Father. Arius, a priest from Alexandria, taught that Jesus Christ, although the Son of God, was not equal to God the Father and had a beginning. Arius' teachings caused controversy and division within the Christian congregation.[8]

This council produced what is now known as the Nicene Creed, which states unequivocally that Jesus Christ is "of the same substance as the Father" (*homoousious*).[9] In short, it reaffirmed the divinity and equality of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe in with God the Father. Of course, the council also addressed other

[6] Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 124.

[7] H. Rolfus, *An explanation of the apostles' creed: A Thorough Exposition of Catholic Faith with Numerous Examples from Holy Scripture, the Father, and Other Sources* (New York: Benziger Bros, 1907), 31-32

[8] Peter J. Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess: a Catholic Guide to the Apostles' Creed.* Notre Dame (IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), 48

[9] Benjamin Myers, *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018), 12

important aspects of the Christian faith, such as the recognition of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the emphasis on Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and the hope of eternal life.[10] This creed is the earliest and most widely accepted confession of faith in all of the Christian tradition.

Although differences, controversies, and conflicts cannot be resolved by a single council, at least the Council of Nicaea has provided a kind of "framework" for subsequent councils to resolve theological disputes, differences, and debates that actually occur in the field.[11] For example, the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, which expanded and clarified the Nicene Creed by further defining the role of the Holy Spirit in the concept of the Trinity. In addition to being a "framework", the Council of Nicaea also signified unity and solidarity among Christian churches, and became a theological pedagogy to deal with teachings that were not in accordance with orthodox doctrine.[12]

From the brief history above, one can realize that the Council of Nicaea is a real history of the struggle of early Christians in responding to the real challenges of the times. At that time, one of the greatest challenges faced by the church was 'heretical' teachings that led to division.[13] Until now, the Nicene Creed has become an integral part of liturgical practice and confession of faith in many Christian traditions throughout the world. The church finally realized the need for doctrinal (of course other needs too) in facing the signs of the times. In this world that is always spinning and changing, the church is committed to maintaining, caring for, and preserving the integrity of the teachings of the Christian faith while responding to the different needs in each era. In other words, the Nicene Creed serves not only to articulate the Catholic Church's body of faith but also to address the evolving needs of its contemporary context. Nevertheless, there is one thing that may not have been considered a problem when this creed was formulated: the question of the body. Despite their

[10] Myers, *The Apostles' Creed,* 29-33; Peter J. Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess: a Catholic Guide to the Apostles' Creed*. Notre Dame (IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), 48.

[11] Myers, *The Apostles' Creed,* 12-13; Peter J. Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess: a Catholic Guide to the Apostles' Creed*. Notre Dame (IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), 9-10.

[12] Peter J. Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess: a Catholic Guide to the Apostles' Creed.* Notre Dame (IN: Ave Maria Press, 2008), 9-10.

[13] Vaghi, *The Faith We Profess*. 9-10.

physical disabilities, every person is recognized and loved as a precious image of God.[14]

A pivotal element of the Creed is its emphasis on the incarnation of Christ, alongside His suffering, resurrection, and ascension, culminating in the proclamation of His return for judgment. The affirmation of "belief in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the absolution of sin, *the resurrection of the body*, and everlasting life" represents the apex of this process. The salvation of the soul was accorded considerable significance in the Church. The teachings of Jesus Christ highlighted the importance of repentance, faith, and the quest for holiness. Salvation is regarded as the paramount objective an individual can pursue in life. Early Christian writings, especially those authored by the Church Fathers, often underscored the imperative of spiritual metamorphosis and moral integrity as essential conditions for eternal life. This was particularly evident in the context of the Church Fathers.[15] But, on the other hand, this emphasis can be ascribed to humanity's dual nature, consisting of both the corporeal and the spiritual. In other words, one consequence of prioritizing spiritual transformation and ethical perfection as prerequisites for eternal life is the resultant neglect of the body, which is regarded as secondary to the primacy of the soul. The Church hopes that faith in Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection will bring hope for a "resurrection of the body." In a specific sense, what is expected is a "perfect body."

In the Catechism entitled *An Explanation of The Apostles' Creed*, regarding "the resurrected body", it is explained that "only the Good shall Rise Glorious… the bodies of the just will arise immortal and inorruptible, all beaming with supernatural beauty, capable of enjoying eternal happiness".[16] It is further explained that, "Our Lord Jesus Christ,… will reform the body of our lowliness made like to the body of His glory."[17] In short, the church represented by this catechism describes that there is a guarantee for Christians, in the resurrection the physical body of man will be perfected and glorified for those who are worthy. What is being taught here is the emphasis on physical transformation: while people realize that this temporary (earthly) body will be decomposed, there will be a restoration of the same body, gathered by God and

[14] Kristine Meneses, "L'Arche, a Radical Reversal: Fearless Dialogue between Foucault and Vanier with the New Testament," in *Journal of Disability & Religion*, 24/2 (2020).

[15] H. Rolfus, *An explanation of the apostles' creed*, 48-49.

[16] H. Rolfus, *An explanation of the apostles' creed*, 343-348.

[17] H. Rolfus, *An explanation of the apostles' creed*, 343-348.

reunited with the soul. The resurrected body will be free from suffering and infirmity. Ward underscored that, "The providence of God is not a destroyer of the nature of things, but their preserver." [18]

For centuries the Church considered the body to be a materialistic dimension and subject to the laws of the sensible world. The body was created for natural life only: it does not feel, think, will, but is merely visible and palpable. This is different from the soul which is the breath of God, spiritual, and not materialistic. The soul is immortal and was created for spiritual life. So, while man has a soul/spirit, God is a spirit, having no body. This difference between body and soul will be very visible at the time of death: "the dust returns into its earth, from whence it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."[19] At the time of resurrection, the soul will be reunited with the body, as man was destined, with his body and soul.

This dualism of body and soul in the ancient church resulted in – naturally – the neglect of the bodily aspect of human life. In a certain sense, the body was even understood as something that actually "obstructed" the path to the perfection of the soul. Violent practices against one's own body can be seen as clear evidence of how the body was seen as a means to the holiness of the soul.

This concept of a "perfect body" was later heavily criticized. Wolfhart Pannenberg in "The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions" interprets the event of Christ's resurrection, and by extension the resurrection of believers, as a transformation into a truly new form of life, rather than merely "earthly life".[20] Based on the "spiritual body" of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 (*soma pneumatikon*), Pannenberg describes the spiritual body as a life united with the source of creative life (God's spirit), a life that cannot be ended by death. This means that the spiritual body is not a disembodied spirituality but a radically transformed existence.[21]

What is meant here is that the emphasis is no longer on perfection but on transformation. While the resurrected state is a new and different life, Panenberg focuses on the radical transformation from the present mortal body to an immortal, spiritual one, rather than just a perfection of the current physical form. From the brief

[18] Etienne Gilson, *Moral Values and the Moral Life: The Ethical Theory of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by C.S.C Leo Richard Ward (Mississauga: The Shoe String Press, inc, 1961), p. 67.

[19] H. Rolfus, *An explanation of the apostles' creed*, 47.

[20] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in Light of Today's Questions* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 98

[21] Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed*. 98.

explanation above, it is clear that there are changes in perspective that always accompany the journey of church's history. The Church always tries to answer the challenges of the ever-changing times.

It is of utmost importance to acknowledge that while theological doctrine emphasizes the necessity of spiritual renewal and moral integrity in attaining eternal life, this emphasis may inadvertently result in the marginalization of the body, which is deemed subordinate to the significance of the soul.

## THE DUALITY OF BODY AND SOUL IN CHURCH TEACHING AND ITS IMPACT ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The dichotomy of body and soul in ecclesiastical doctrine has historically been a pivotal theme in Christian theology, profoundly influencing the perception and treatment of individuals with disabilities within faith communities. This relationship is analyzed in two principal texts: *Human Disability and the Service of God*, edited by Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers, and Eiesland's own *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*. These writers provide insight into how the duality of body and soul affects religious perspectives, which may either perpetuate marginalization or foster inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

The concept of body-soul dualism has historical roots in philosophical discourse, significantly shaped by Platonic thought, which frequently regarded the soul as superior to the body.[22] In The Disabled God, Eiesland observes that Christian interpretations of disability often characterize it as a moral deficiency or a manifestation of divine retribution.[23] This perspective creates a link between a person's physical state and their spiritual value, perpetuating stigma and hindering the community's capacity to accept individuals with disabilities. In contrast, a more integrative theological perspective posits that both body and soul collectively constitute the totality of human experience and spirituality. Eiesland contends that the conventional dichotomy between body and soul undermines the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and negates the intrinsic dignity conferred by God's creation upon all bodies, irrespective of their physical abilities[24]. Acknowledging the *imago Dei* present in all bodies, including those with disabilities,

[22] Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (eds). *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 127 (especially footnote 8)

[23] Eiesland and Saliers, *Human Disability,* 127.

[24] Eiesland and Saliers, *Human Disability*, 110.

necessitates a reassessment of theological education that effectively integrates the narratives and experiences of individuals with disabilities.

Historical scriptural interpretation regarding healing, disability, and community has contributed to the marginalization of individuals with disabilities.[25] Specific biblical verses, frequently interpreted as endorsements of disability as a manifestation of divine retribution, can perpetuate exclusionary practices within the church. The wirters advocate for a reevaluation of these texts from the perspective of disabled individuals' experiences. This approach allows for the reinterpretation of perspectives to promote inclusion and justice. They also analyze the ramifications of scripture's use in shaping narratives surrounding disability, emphasizing the need for a liberatory theology that prioritizes the perspectives and experiences of individuals with disabilities. As an open conclusion, Eiesland and other wirters contend that acknowledging disability as a fundamental aspect of human experience confronts theological paradigms that define worthiness according to physical capability.[26]

Christian teachings on redemption frequently emphasize the resurrection of the body and the assurance of physical completeness in the afterlife. Nonetheless, an undue focus on the notion of a "perfect" body may result in the marginalization of individuals with disabilities. Eiesland contends that disabilities should not be viewed solely as flaws requiring remediation, but rather as integral components of the rich tapestry of human diversity. The authors emphasize the concept of embodiment, linked with redemption, asserting that all bodies manifest God's creativity and possess intrinsic goodness. This viewpoint promotes the acceptance of physical differences while valuing the spiritual depth that various forms of embodiment contribute.

The ramifications of these theological discussions manifest in the practices of churches. Frequently, faith communities have adopted a dualistic perspective on body and soul, leading to the separation of services or restricted engagement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Numerous churches persist in confronting challenges related to accessibility and inclusion, as physical obstacles frequently impede individuals from fully engaging in worship and communal activities. Eiesland and her colleagues underscore the essential requirement for environments where individuals with disabilities are not only accommodated but also

[25] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 101

[26] Eiesland and Saliers, *Human Disability,* 127.

honored as integral members of the faith community.[27] Encouraged by an inclusive theological atmosphere, such environments are vital for dismantling the systemic obstacles that lead to both physical and spiritual exclusion.

Embracing a transformative approach necessitates recognizing that individuals with disabilities offer distinct experiences and viewpoints that can enrich theological dialogue. By positioning these individuals at the core of theological exploration, churches can foster a more comprehensive and inclusive comprehension of faith that values the entirety of humanity. Eiesland's depiction of the "disabled God" underscores this viewpoint, asserting that the incarnation of God in Christ emphasizes the spiritual importance of corporeal experiences, including those related to disability. Recognizing this prompts individuals without disabilities to acknowledge the fragility of their own bodies and to partake in the shared experience of human limitation.

In conclusion, the dichotomy of body and soul, as expressed in ecclesiastical doctrine, profoundly influences the perception and inclusion of individuals with disabilities within faith communities. Both Human Disability and the Service of God and The Disabled God urge a reevaluation of theological traditions that have systematically marginalized disabled individuals. By embracing a more expansive conception of embodiment that recognizes the imago Dei in every individual, churches can foster more compassionate and equitable environments. These texts promote a transformative transition from exclusionary practices to comprehensive participation and acceptance, benefiting not only individuals with disabilities but also enhancing the entire faith community. In doing so, churches accomplish their mission to exemplify justice, grace, and love for all members, mirroring the abundance of life that Christ extends to everyone, irrespective of ability.

What is being said here is that the church needs a theological basis for an attitude of openness to the real bodies of its congregation. As a comparison, we can start from how this effort was carried out by John Paul II in what is commonly called “a gospel of the body”.

## JOHN PAUL II'S INTERPRETATION OF THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

The Theology of the Body (TOB) is a significant body of work created by Pope John Paul II during the initial years of his papacy, expressed through a series of

[27] Eiesland and Saliers, *Human Disability,* 20, 28.

lectures given from 1979 to 1984. This theological framework directly pertains to the significance of human sexuality, love, and the intended role of the human body within the divine design.[28] The TOB signifies a substantial transformation from previous conceptions of the body and sexuality, advancing towards a comprehensive perspective that amalgamates faith with the experiential realities of love and relationships.[29]

Before the tenure of John Paul II, the Catholic Church's doctrines regarding the body and sexuality were frequently perceived as constrictive or excessively centered on sin and morality.[30] The doctrines of earlier generations, especially prior to the Second Vatican Council, predominantly highlighted the procreative function of sexuality, neglecting its unitive and relational dimensions. The sexual revolution of the 1960s and the ensuing societal transformations left numerous individuals perplexed about their identities, relationships, and ethical frameworks concerning sexuality. In response, John Paul II aimed to provide a more thorough understanding that not only validated the significance of the human body but also confronted the modern challenges related to love, sexuality, and human dignity.[31]

In contrast to previous doctrines that frequently separated the body and soul, John Paul II presented a comprehensive viewpoint. He asserted that the body is not simply a vessel for the soul but an essential component of the human being that embodies and articulates the *imago Dei* (image of God). The TOB aims to harmonize the spiritual and physical realms, depicting the body as a medium of communication and a fundamental element of human dignity. Conventional doctrines regarding sexuality often prioritized regulations and constraints, neglecting to thoroughly examine love as a reciprocal offering. In the Theology of the Body, John Paul II defines love as a self-donation—an effusion of oneself for the benefit of another.[32] This profound comprehension of love and sexuality emphasizes the relational dimension, contesting the egocentric viewpoint frequently present in modern interpretations.

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[28] John Paul, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Sebastopol: Pauline Books and Media, 2011), 4

[29] Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2003), 5

[30] West, *Theology of the Body.*5.

[31] Christopher West, Our Bodies Tell God's Story: Discovering the Divine Plan for Love, Sex, and Gender (Michigan: Brazos Press, Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 17

[32] Christopher West, *Theology of the Body Explained: A Commentary on John Paul II's "Gospel of the Body"* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2003), 95

Whereas earlier doctrines predominantly positioned sexuality in relation to procreation, John Paul II broadens this perspective to encompass the unitive dimension of conjugal love. He asserts that sexual union within marriage serves as both a symbol and a method of conveying mutual love and is intrinsically receptive to the gift of life; however, he contends that the principal aim of sexual intimacy is to enhance the bond between spouses. Additionally, John Paul II's Theology of the Body examines current matters related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and the difficulties presented by contemporary cultural narratives. He expounds a theology that addresses the intricacies of contemporary existence, contending against the reductionist perspectives on the body and sexuality that dominate secular culture.

A principal assertion in John Paul II's work is that "the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine." This statement underscores the theological significance of the human body as a conduit for comprehending God's love and purpose. The body may be regarded as a sacrament, an external manifestation that symbolizes the profound enigma of divine love. The essence of the TOB is the notion that love fundamentally involves self-sacrifice for another. John Paul II characterizes love as a deliberate choice, a commitment to the welfare of another individual. This concept is essential for comprehending the essence of authentic love and sexual intimacy, which must consistently embody a sincere aspiration for the well-being of the other. Pope John Paul II's view shows a renewed understanding of the TOB as Imago that is more optimistic and aware of the uniqueness of man and the mercy of God. Latinovic further supports Pope John Paul II's understanding by believing that, "aware of human possibilities as it stresses the dynamic notion that being made in the image and likeness of God means a continual improvement of the human condition.[33]

Chastity, frequently misinterpreted as mere abstinence, is redefined by John Paul II as a virtue that fosters genuine love and liberty. He elucidates that authentic chastity entails honoring the dignity of each individual and comprehending sexuality within the framework of love. It urges individuals to surpass superficial physical gratification and foster deeper, more significant connections. Furthermore, John Paul II presents an eschatological viewpoint, situating human relationships and sexuality

[33] Vladimir Latinovic, "Christ as Imago Dei – A Missed Opportunity of Ante-Nicene Christian Theology," in John Loughlin (ed.), *Human Dignity in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition: Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Perspectives* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019), p. 71.

within the overarching framework of eternal life. He emphasizes that the ultimate satisfaction of human desires and relationships resides in God, offering hope and purpose that reinforces earthly experiences of love and intimacy as prefigurations of a future reality of total communion with God.

Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body embodies a revolutionary perspective that redefines human sexuality, love, and the significance of the body within the context of divine intention. By transcending prior interpretations that frequently prioritized rules over relationships, he presents a profound theological framework that addresses the intricacies of contemporary existence. His work promotes the appreciation of human love as a manifestation of divine love, advocating for a life rooted in reciprocal selflessness and dignity. The TOB addresses individual spiritual needs while offering a solid framework for comprehending human identity and relationships in a swiftly evolving world.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper emphasizes the importance of adopting a more inclusive theological perspective that aligns with the experiences of marginalized individuals, especially those with disabilities, in examining the complex relationship between faith and the human body. The Church's historical focus on the soul's supremacy over the body has unintentionally created an atmosphere in which physical differences are frequently disregarded or condemned. This dualistic perspective undermines the biblical concept that every body embodies the divine image and merits respect and dignity. A comprehensive understanding of the body as an essential component of human identity can articulate the profundity of God's love and validate the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the faith community.

Engaging with theological insights from figures such as John Paul II prompts a reevaluation of the importance of embodiment in spiritual practice. Perceiving the body as a sacramental vessel of divine grace contests the dominant narrative of perfectionism, honoring the diversity of human experiences. This reorientation necessitates that the Church establish environments where all members, irrespective of their physical capabilities, can engage fully in worship and communal life, embodying the inclusive essence of Christ's love. This call to action aligns with the Nicene Creed and underscores the central theme of salvation as a collective journey in which each individual plays a vital role. Through the promotion of acceptance and understanding, the Church can achieve its mission of exemplifying justice, grace, and

love, thus enhancing the entire faith community and demonstrating the transformative power of divine love.

This call to action will persist as a "voice crying out from the wilderness," unacknowledged in the tangible realm of Indonesian society, if it remains solely a term in an academic piece. Consequently, to establish a contextual connection between this theological text and the specific circumstances in Indonesia, various strategies may be employed. Initially, incorporate local principles, such as cooperation (*gotong-royong*) and solidarity, to foster inclusivity within the Indonesian church. Secondly, implement interfaith interaction to enhance mutual understanding and combat bigotry. This is a collective issue and concern; therefore, it is essential to engage as many parties as possible. Third, the church must engage the disability community in the theological formulation process to integrate their experiences into theological discourse. Fourth, local churches must employ language and imagery pertinent to Indonesian culture to enhance the accessibility of theological messages. Finally, Indonesia's Catholic Church must formulate, implement, and enhance social initiatives that promote equality and justice for all societal members, particularly for those who are marginalized.

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