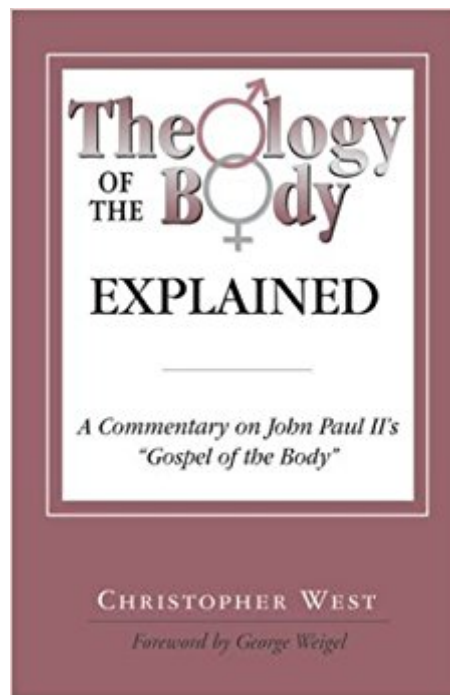




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# Theology Of The Body Explained: A Commentary On John Paul II's "Gospel Of The Body"



## Synopsis

If Pope John Paul II's theology of the body is a "theological time bomb set to go off" (George Weigel), this book lights the fuse. With clarity and precision Christopher West unpacks the pope's weighty talks and translates them into a much more accessible language. *Theology of the Body Explained* makes the perfect companion to the Pope's text. For the first time ever, readers have a commentary that follows the complete series of general audiences, explained in an appealing way. Scholars and average readers alike will find this commentary greatly rewarding. "In my biography of the Pope, I wrote that the theology of the body needs explication for those who aren't specialists in biblical studies, theology, or philosophy. I am delighted that Christopher West has taken up that challenge. With intellectual care, with the experience bred of long years of teaching this material in the classroom and the parish, and taking account of his own experiences as a husband and father, Christopher West has put us in his debt by making the "Theology of the Body" available to a wide and, I hope, appreciative readership." -George Weigel

About the author: Christopher West is a research fellow and faculty member of the Theology of the Body Institute. He is also one of the most sought after speakers in the Church today, having delivered more than 1000 public lectures on 4 continents, in 9 countries, and in over 150 American cities. All three of his books – *Good News About Sex & Marriage*, *Theology of the Body Explained*, and *Theology of the Body for Beginners* – have become Catholic best sellers. Christopher has also lectured on a number of prestigious faculties, offering graduate and undergraduate courses at St John Vianney Seminary in Denver, the John Paul II Institute in Melbourne, Australia, and Creighton University's Institute for Priestly Formation in Omaha. Hundreds of thousands have heard him on national radio

## Book Information

Paperback: 552 pages

Publisher: Pauline Books & Media; 2nd Printing edition (July 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0819874108

ISBN-13: 978-0819874108

Product Dimensions: 1 x 6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #807,504 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in Books > Christian

Books & Bibles > Catholicism > Theology #474 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Biographies > Popes & the Vatican](#) #539 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Angelology & Demonology](#)

## Customer Reviews

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I am a huge fan of Christopher West. I am very familiar with his work so I bought this book as a sort of reference material. Mr. West is very consistent with his explanation of John Paul II's Theology of the Body, so navigating through this book is very easy. You might want to buy a pack of highlighters with this book because you will be highlighting things that appeal to you and apply to your life or something that you might want to share with someone else. West writes in a plain and easy style to understand and he does a great job of breaking elements down at a level anyone can understand. I

highly recommend this book to everyone whether you're Catholic, Non-denominational, or non Christian, it will give you a new or fresh perspective on God, yourself, and your relationships with others.

Recommended reading by protestant clergyman. Integrates spirituality, physicality, theology and behavior well. West provides adequate context for John Paul's message to be understood by the western layman as well as the theologically trained and biblically literate.

It was nice to read this and see what I may have missed trying to read the original.

This is the best book on marriage ever written, in my opinion. It explains how God views marriage and the beauty of the sexual union that was designed by God.

My book came faster than the date it was supposed to arrive on. Exactly what the description says. A trusted seller :)

Christopher West is a well-established name as a popularizer of John Paul II's Theology of the Body. This book differs from West's other works in being a systematic commentary on the pope's 129 noontime talks on the meaning of the human body according to Catholic Christianity, which were given over five years early in his pontificate (1979-1984). The organization of the book is impeccable. The book is divided into six "cycles", which are formed according to the main themes of John Paul's talks, which I list below:

1. "Original Man": Adam and Eve before the Fall, and how their integrity as individuals and in their relations with each other and God contrast with our imbalanced, Fallen condition.
2. "Historical Man": our current, fallen state. West explains the Pope's penetrating analysis of how exactly sin touches our lives.
3. "Eschatological Man": a stirring vision of how our form is divinized (which reminds me of Eastern theology's emphasis on the Transfiguration) and how marriage is consummated with our perfect communion with God in heaven.
4. "Celibacy for the Kingdom": one might wonder how celibacy fits into the picture after the Pope does so much to elevate the dignity of marriage, but in fact here West shows how celibacy and marriage complement each other.
5. "The Sacramentality of Marriage": this treats John Paul's study of St. Paul, including a wonderful explanation of an unpopular phrase from Ephesians: "Wives, be submissive to your husbands..."
6. "Love and Fruitfulness": West looks into John Paul's closing reflections on *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical of Paul VI that raised a fury among Catholics who were disappointed by the

papacy's continued stance against artificial contraception. The cycles are in turn broken down into sections, each of which generally comments on one or two of John Paul's noontime audiences. Everything is scrupulously referenced not only to the Theology of the Body talks (which Pauline Press also publishes) but also to the Catechism and pertinent encyclical letters on sexuality and the human person. At the end of each cycle, West also has a review section, summing up the key points of that particular cycle. In this book, West recounts how the Theology of the Body had helped him heal from a long period of being a lapsed, worldly Catholic, and this sense of wonder and freedom permeates the book. There is food for the mind and the heart, as I have grown to appreciate the dignity of marriage, celibacy, and the human person in a way I would never have expected just a few years ago. The very methodical organization and annotation of this volume might lead one to suspect that this book is dry, but it in fact reads wonderfully. In the space of a few weeks I read the entire book, in spite of a busy schedule as a medical student. While it is best to read this book along with the original talks of the pope themselves, this commentary could be read on its own with great profit, as I have done. I am working on the original talks, but I read way ahead with West's book, loving every minute of it, and shall return to John Paul's masterpiece with that much more understanding and appreciation. Professor West has done the world a great service in promoting John Paul II's magnificent celebration and defense of the human person.

In this book, Christopher West handles the Theology of the Body by John Paul II in a way that respects the beauty and seriousness of the subject. He also brings John Paul II's very thick language down to earth so that your average person can fully grasp the details of the Theology of the Body. At the very beginning of the book, Christopher West covers John Paul II's impact on religious studies. He provides a fantastic, well thought out picture of John Paul's development into the Phenomenological and Personalistic giant that led him to develop the Theology of the Body. This study gave me an understanding of the importance of John Paul's general teachings and what brought the Theology of the Body into existence. The book is complete in its coverage of the Theology of the Body, ending with how it follows on *Humanae Vitae*. And the Theology of the Body is a great follow up to Karol Wojtyla's (John Paul II's) 1960 book entitled *Love and Responsibility*. The book is solid, full of details and captures the depth of TOB. If one is looking for a less detailed (summary) view of TOB, see Christopher West's "Theology of the Body for Beginners."

Theology of the Body Explained is a gallant and partially successful effort by Christopher West to make Pope John Paul II's talks on this subject more accessible for those Catholics who aren't

theologians. It is very serious, very careful and pretty ponderous. The book really doesn't take off until you've slogged through 70+ pages. This is a mighty subject and an important one and West deserves praise for trying to get the message to the people but except for highly motivated grad students or those who want to really wow them down at the parish hall, *Theology of the Body Explained* is a bit more than most folks can digest. Christopher West wrote another book, *Theology of the Body for Beginners* that is much shorter and far more lay person friendly.

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